

**Category:** *Childcare Products and Accessories*

**Methods:** *Concept Testing, Product Testing, In-Home Usage Testing*

## Summary

A niche company specializing in childcare products and accessories tasked Decision Analyst with conducting multiphased research in order to gain a better understanding of the target market. The research was designed to help diversify, expand and improve the product line, and, ultimately, to refine and optimize the growth strategy that would allow the company to develop into a global brand.

## Strategic Issues

The client's childcare product category is dominated by a major industry player which manufactures an extensive range of baby products and accessories, has a wide distribution network, and enjoys third-party product endorsements. Our client is a niche player in the baby products market who wanted to effectively compete with the market leader. The company's strengths include innovative design and a unique value proposition that is expanding its loyal customer base very quickly.

## Research Objectives

The objectives of the research were to:

- Understand behaviors and usage habits of mothers of babies 0-36 months.
- Gain insight into motivations and needs addressed by the available childcare products.
- Help identify the optimal mix of accessories to complement the units currently on the market.
- Determine which concepts would make the best additions to the current product line.



## Research Design and Methods

The proposed methodology for this research was a two-week in-home usage test, followed by an online concept evaluation. Respondents were recruited from Decision Analyst's American Consumer Opinion® Online proprietary panel, screened, and qualified. Once screened, consumers were asked to participate in a multistage study, involving in-home usage as well as several online surveys. Participants were allowed to retain the tested products upon completion in order to encourage continuous participation.



The study phases were carried out on a “rush” time line, as the client was gearing up for a global strategy meeting.

Product was shipped to participants for in-home testing (mix of brands, child ages, and geography). Moms used the products for two weeks, during which their feedback was collected via an online journal. The in-home usage test was followed by a brief questionnaire and sequential concept evaluation.

Screener questions included current product usage, current brand used, age of baby, and respondents' geography/location. Sequential monadic survey questions included, design elements evaluation (e.g., color, size, functionality, attributes), concept ranking and the reason for ranking, as well as pricing expectations.

## Results

The multiphase research design and the focus on spontaneous, open-ended responses helped provide insight into the different aspects of the consumers' unmet needs, the product usage, and preferences. The study results were positive and indicated probability of success for current accessories, as well as suggested some line extensions.

The survey findings suggested the existence of several market segments with distinct needs which could be fulfilled by introducing two or more accessories providing different benefits. The learnings helped the client streamline and refine their current line of products as well as understand which concepts have the most potential for future introduction to the market. The project also revealed several trends within the category which could be incorporated into the new line of products in order to increase the chances for success.