

Category: Retail—Toys

Methods: Qualitative Research, In-Person Qualitative Research

Summary

An American video production and distribution company had been marketing a line of plush toys to accompany its popular children's television show; however, sales were not as brisk as management had expected. Therefore, the company needed to explore consumer attitudes, usage, and perceptions of this type of toy, in addition to how well it fit with the characters and storylines from the well-loved television show.

Strategic Issues

To succeed at marketing this iconic plush-toy character, the company needed to better understand the target consumer, as well as how to position this product against the competition. The company also needed to explore distribution channels, pricing, and key differentiators.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the research were to:

- Explore general consumer perceptions and attitudes relating to a line of plush toys.
- Examine the plush-toy purchase decision process; that is, determine the major decision criteria and identify the sources of information and influence.
- Explore various marketing options, including product modifications, packaging, promotion, pricing, and advertising alternatives.



Research Design and Methods

A total of six focus-group discussions were conducted in three U.S. markets, and each discussion was two hours in length. All three markets were conducted within a one-week period. Participants were moms aged 18-54 with children aged 18 months to four years old. Ethnic quotas were established to ensure the groups represented each market.



Results

Based on the results of the research, the client understood the optimal age range of the target market for the plush toy, as well as an ideal price to work toward.

After determining that the plush-toy character could deliver a positive experience through shows and videos, the client was able to develop a marketing plan that would allow “live” exposure to the character over time, thus ensuring a longer attachment to the character. For the videos and shows, the client used ideas that were suggested in the research. Some of these ideas included everyday routines that children can relate to over time.

Other insights from the research provided guidance for optimal distribution and promotional activities, as well as line extensions (e.g., variation of characters for specific age groups, special occasion characters, etc.)

In the end, the research generated improvements to the plush toy and its marketing, the TV show/DVDs, and the client’s other products. The client also gained merchandising opportunities as a result of the research.