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Durex Play /

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Birth of a Brand / Durex Play: to break rules; to have fun; to explore; to experiment; to feel confident; to inspire: to laugh; to connect /

By Mark Critchley /



In 800BC, the ancient Greeks used olive oil as a lubricant and sex aid, and condom use can be traced back to as early as 1220 BC. This year global brand Durex celebrates its 80th birthday. We've come a long way from 'something for the weekend sir?' to proudly placing an orgasm gel on supermarket shelves nationwide. Only a few years ago, vibrators were a taboo subject and it's not by chance that you can now fling a cock ring into your trolley along with your broccoli. So how did we do it?

Durex has seen a shift in brand positioning over the last few years. From our roots in barrier protection, Durex is moving towards products which allow people to fulfil their individual needs and desires. The new Durex Play range underlines our commitment to encouraging people to have better love lives. We're proud of the fact that the word 'Durex' has become so synonymous with condoms, that our brand name is often used in place of the word condom in the UK. Historically, the condom was the only product Durex made, and our core target age-range were 16-24 year olds. Our new vision was to become the world's number one authority on sexual wellbeing, dedicated to inspiring people to have better sex.

Sex plays a fundamental role in our physical and emotional wellbeing. Durex believes that a healthy and fulfilling sex life should be everyone's to enjoy. As the leading global condom brand our commitment is, and always has been, to produce quality products which enhance sex lives and promote safer sex. The introduction of Durex Play is an extension of this.

In-depth consumer research revealed a love, trust and respect for the Durex brand, but simply less of a need for condoms as people got older. As our consumers were finding themselves in established, monogamous relationships, knowing their partner's sexual history, perhaps trying for a family, they would be less likely to use condoms.

Sex is for everyone

Step forward Durex Play, the birth of a category that would project Durex into the household of consumers across the world, regardless of age, relationship status or sexuality. We wanted to make sure that Durex had a role to play in our consumers' lives as they got older and went through various life changes. We wanted to go on this journey together with our consumers and help them to not just have safer sex, but also better sex. We knew that sex sold, but we wanted to sell it on a high street near you. Sexual wellbeing is a balance of physical, emotional and sociological factors. It's about protecting and nurturing the sexual health of both you and your partner, getting the most from your sex life and feeling confident and happy about yourself.

Lubricants and vibrators were the most logical products that we could introduce. Consumer research revealed that when people thought of lubricants, they could only name one competitor, and described a clinical, cold, unemotional product. A problem/solution that you might request in a whisper from your pharmacist. It would have been easy to play it safe and launch a 'me-too'.

Instead, we launched a range of lubricants under the Durex Play umbrella, including Durex Play Feel, Durex Play Tingle and Durex Play Warming. More recently we introduced Durex Play 2-in-1 personal lubricant and massage gel. It's a unique gel, which has the sensual properties of a silky smooth lubricant allowing for greater sexual enhancement and hands-on pleasure in a single product. It didn't come encased in an outer box

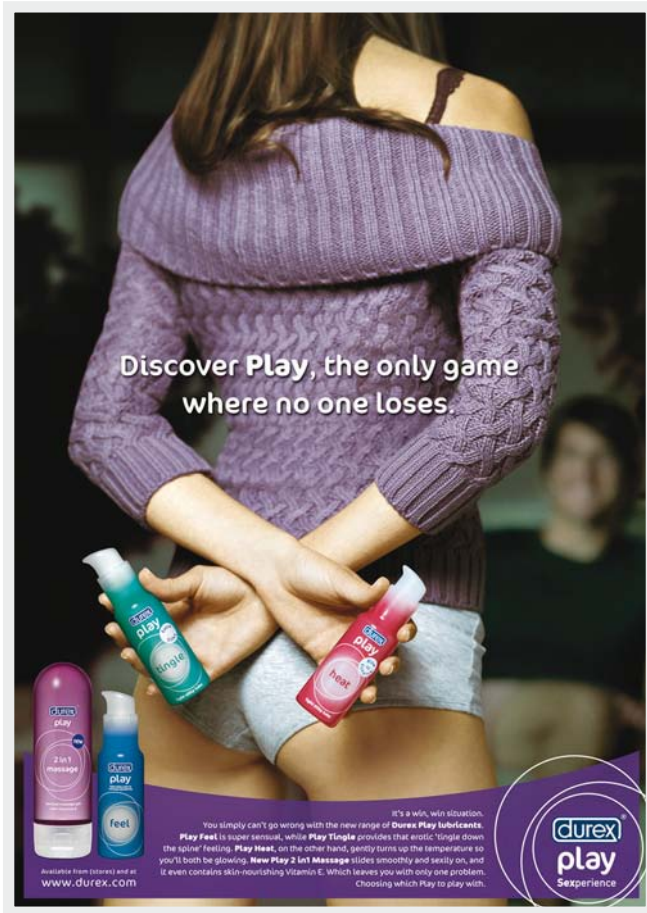
but instead a handy squeeze bottle through which you could see the product. We also wanted to veer well away from the current market offerings for sex toys, which were often pink, phallic-looking and cheaply made. We wanted people to experiment and enjoy, for sex to be normalised, to break down barriers and dissolve boundaries that can get in the way of a healthy, happy sex life.

Research and insight

We're sure that the best way to offer our consumers what they want is to keep right up-to-date with the latest thoughts, trends and innovations – from wherever they may spring. That's why we run an on-going research programme that constantly current consumer needs. We also use a mixture of research tools and intuition to predict the future. We undertake a variety of techniques, including face-to-face interviews which give us key insights into the way consumers really think and feel.

The Sexual Wellbeing Global Survey (SWGS) is just one example of this. In 2006/2007 we interviewed 26,000 people, aged 16+ across 26 countries – representing many different cultures and walks of life. The SWGS included questions on how often people orgasm, how intense they felt their orgasm was and whether they were satisfied with their physical, psychological and emotional health, among others. The results showed that orgasms were seen as being beneficial but they also revealed a global problem – less than half of people worldwide (48%) managed to achieve an orgasm almost every time they had sex.





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The potential for future success is huge. Durex is constantly undertaking research projects and looking for new ways to improve our products or spot new trends in sexual behaviour that may lead to whole new product areas. Sales of Durex Play are currently at £43 million (€50m) globally, a figure which has risen from nothing in the last four years. We aim to continue to normalise sex even further and widen our distribution channels. We are constantly learning and realising new market trends and we don't profess to get everything right first time. For example, historically our core target age range for condoms was 16-24 with a secondary group aged 25-35 who we aimed our Play range at. We have since discovered that teenagers are just as interested in experimenting with and buying cockrings as those in their thirties. These days, our target market is more likely to be 18-45 plus, a much broader segment of society.

Our SWGS survey also revealed that not only do orgasms give you great sexual pleasure, they also help you feel better about yourself. The more satisfied you are with your sex life and your orgasms (frequency and intensity) the better your mental and physical health. Globally, 58% of people who usually orgasm were content with the emotional aspects of their sex life. Only 29% of people who rarely orgasm are. Not only that, but we discovered a massive chasm of difference between the genders on the subject of orgasm. Only 33% of women who answered regularly reached orgasm compared to 67% of men, and 17% of women told Durex they rarely or never orgasm! This feedback led to the creation of the orgasm-enhancing gel Play O that would not only stimulate but also increase a woman's desire and enable her to have the most intense orgasm of her life. We also knew that women know what they want an awful lot better than us men!

Designed, created and tested by women, for women, Durex Play O is a stylish, premium product that looks completely at home amongst higher end cosmetics and perfumes. In other words, it's not a sex toy that's hurriedly pushed under the bed and hidden. Product testing revealed an impressive 79% of women who all claimed to achieve orgasm when using Play O (72% of whom had struggled to reach orgasm previously!). We had succeeded in producing a product that would normalise orgasms and make them accessible.

Timing is everything

It's hard to pinpoint why market conditions were right when we launched Durex Play. These days women are a lot more sexually confident and more likely to speak up about what they want. The growth of 'adult' retail chains such as Ann Summers and programmes such as *Sex and the City* certainly went some way into normalising



sex, which was always our aim. But it wasn't just about jumping on the bandwagon and producing a vibrator - if that was the case we could have just made another Rabbit. Instead we waited until we had the research to back up what our consumers wanted and produced a quality range from a trusted brand.



When marketing and promoting Durex Play, one of the most important objectives for us was to communicate the benefits of each product to the consumer. The name of the brand had to reflect its very essence and we believe that this is exactly what Durex Play does. The name Play was chosen following intensive market research, and the range is about just that: adult play. About not taking things too seriously. About exploring and experimenting with what feels best. Sex should be fun, and we wanted to encourage people to try something new and not feel that they had to follow any prescribed rules on how sex 'should' be.

Innovative packaging communicates the benefits of the product quickly to consumers. They can purchase a bottle of lubricant in a high street store with ease, instead of picking up a medical-looking box and attempting to read the small print. We invest heavily in raising awareness of the brand, widening our distribution channels and communicating through strategic TV advertising, PR, online activity and in-store display promotions and retailer media promotions.

It's hard to say whether there are any lessons that Durex Play may hold for other brands but certainly there are some essential values at the core. When we introduced Play, it was vital that we kept to the original brand values, the 'winning formula' that made Durex the number one choice that it is today. If we were to extend the brand, we had to do it carefully and add value to

it, an imperative ingredient for any brand, no matter how well known. Whilst taking decidedly risky steps by attempting to commercialise sex in the mainstream, Durex has retained consumer trust. We also made sure that we were adding something different to the market. We always use high quality ingredients that have undergone rigorous testing - in fact, if one condom doesn't pass any of our stringent tests, the whole batch of up to 432,000 condoms doesn't leave the factory.

Durex isn't a normal brand. Indeed, sitting in a boardroom and discussing orgasm gel and clitoral stimulation intensity is novel to say the least! Ultimately we've delivered happiness across the globe and we wouldn't have been able to do that had we not listened intently to what our loyal consumers wanted and stayed true to our brand values. We're proud that we were the first company to advertise a sex toy on UK terrestrial television. That we broke down archaic barriers and made the word orgasm not just socially acceptable but also a readily available phenomenon! The past 80 years have been an amazing journey, and we look forward to evolving even further as a brand. ☼

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