
SILK CUT ULTRA
ADVERTISING RESEARCH DEBRIEF
8TH MAY 1997

Calcraft Buck
1-2 Bromley Place
London W1P 5HB
Tel: 0171-637 3616
Fax: 0171-637 3627

CONTENTS

- Objectives
- Sample and Methodology
- Response To The Ad
- Low Tar and Silk Cut Ultra
- Summary

OBJECTIVES

- Overall, to assess awareness, knowledge and attitudes towards Silk Cut Ultra and to assess responses to the new poster / press execution
- More specifically,
 - To investigate the new ad in terms of clarity, communication and tone of voice
 - To gauge awareness and understanding of the Silk Cut range
 - To assess imagery of low tar brands - especially Silk Cut and Marlboro Lights
 - To investigate reasons for trial and / or rejection of Silk Cut Ultra

SAMPLE AND METHODOLOGY

- 4 standard group discussions as follows :

1	Men	18-25	BC1	Marlboro Lights	Greater London
2	Men	25-45	BC1	SCKS / SCEM	South East
3	Women	20-35	C1C2	SCKS / SCEM	Greater London
4	Women	30-45	C1C2	Other low tar	South East

- All to have smoked most often brand for at least 6 months
- Maximum of 3 SCEM in groups 2 and 3
- Mix of brands in group 4

RESPONSE TO THE AD

AWARENESS OF CIGARETTE ADVERTISING

- Awareness of cigarette advertising relatively limited
- Nearly always focused on posters rather than press
- Awareness dominated by Silk Cut for most
- For some, historic B&H posters even more well remembered
- Beyond this, some recall of Marlboro posters
- Occasional mention of current B&H and Marlboro Lights
- Sports sponsorship (Formula 1, snooker, cricket) also emerged especially for men

SILK CUT POSTERS

- Broad awareness of wide range of “purple and white” posters
- But relatively low spontaneous recall of specific executions - some mention of scissors; needle and thread
- Central idea of posters being visual representations of the brand name generally well understood
- No evidence of any awareness that some posters are for Ultra (or Extra Mild)

PREVIOUS ULTRA POSTERS

- High recall of “needle and thread” and some recall of “CK” when shown
- Apparently very few, if any, aware that these ads were specifically for Ultra
- Most had assumed they were simply further executions in the Silk Cut campaign
- On probing, little sign that ads were any different to other Silk Cut posters other than in the pack featured
- In isolation of rest of range, Ultra pack often (at first sight) seen as a “normal” Silk Cut pack (see later)

“ONLY ONE” - INTRODUCTION

- New ad was shown to respondents near the beginning of each group after brief discussion of general advertising
- Initially presented only briefly to attempt to replicate experience of poster media
- After initial responses were noted, ad was then exposed at greater length

INITIAL RESPONSE

- Immediately seen as a Silk Cut ad by all
- However, not clear which particular product is being advertised (see below)
- This due to colours, health warning and pack
- Generally seen as bold and eye-catching
- This exclusively related to the size and colour of headline
- Little sign of any strong reactions or involvement (c.f. more cryptic current ads)

COMMUNICATION

- Ad is initially assumed by most to be for Silk Cut King Size
- Very few noticed the 1mg or the fact that the pack is Ultra (and those that did tended to have been previously aware of Ultra)
- Communication is consequently focused on an assertion of uniqueness (and implied “bestness”) of Silk Cut
- On more extended exposure, most noticed the 1mg in the E and realised there was more to the ad than they had thought
- Once this happens, communication is quite clear
- All pick up the communication of “It only has 1mg”
- Most also quickly get the second meaning of uniqueness (i.e. “It is the only one with only 1mg”)

APPEAL

- Little sign of any strong appeal or involvement
- Ad seen by many as lacking interest
- This especially true in the context of generally involving and clever SCKS posters
- But also in the context of cigarette advertising in general
- However, for some, straightforwardness and simplicity is appreciated (versus, for them, impenetrable or overly clever historic ads)
- For all, boldness and eye-catching colours likely to get it noticed

UNIQUENESS

- Communication of the uniqueness of Ultra obviously dependent on respondents realising the ad is for Ultra at all (rather than SCKS)
- Once this is understood, uniqueness claim is picked up by many over and above the statement of tar content
- Most respondents seemed happy to believe Ultra is the only 1mg cigarette
- A few less convinced due to low level awareness of other 1mg products or assumption that there surely must be others

UNDERSTANDING OF 1MG

- Whilst many were unaware of the actual tar content of the brand they smoked, most were aware that 1mg was very low
- General belief that low tar cigarettes contained around 3mg - 7mg of tar and full strength somewhere in the low teens
- Hence, 1mg was clearly low relative to their current brand
- Little sign of any prior awareness of Ultra containing 1mg of tar

TONE OF VOICE

- Ad seen by most as bold, assertive and informative about the product
- For some, overly brash, again especially in the context of historic Silk Cut ads
- Lack of visual intrigue or word play can lead to sense of straightforwardness and even dullness
- Certainly no sign of cleverness or wit
- Equally, however, no sign of ad appearing apologetic or weak

SUMMARY

- Overall, ad seen as bold and eye-catching
- However, generally assumed to be for SCKS rather than Ultra
- As such, possibly a victim of the successful branding of SCKS via purple and white ads
- Communication consequently seen as quite assertive and straightforward - “Silk Cut is the only choice”
- When 1mg is picked up, communication changes and is again clear - “It’s got only 1mg”
- Double meaning also often picked up at this stage - “It’s the only one with 1mg”

SUMMARY (CONT.)

- “Ultra” name only really picked up by those previously aware of it
- Lack of visual intrigue or wit can limit appeal and involvement
- No sign of ad being apologetic
- However, large type can simply seem brash/bold rather than proud or enthusiastic

LOW TAR AND ULTRA

LOW TAR SMOKERS

- Clear and consistent central reasons for smoking low tar cigarettes
- Balance for most between rational and emotional reasons

Rational

Health

Taste/lack of harshness

Emotional

Self-esteem

Stage to quitting

Substitute for not quitting

RATIONAL REASONS

- Health issues frequently seen central to justify choice of low tar (rather than full strength)
- Generally expressed as “they’re not as bad for you”
- Clear link between this view and seeing low tar as a substitute for quitting
- Taste/lack of harshness also frequently surfaces as a reason for low tar (rather than full strength)
- Common view that full strength cigarettes are unpleasantly strong tasting and can be very harsh
- Marlboro often mentioned as being particularly harsh

EMOTIONAL REASONS

- Less harmful low tar cigarettes hence can be associated with higher self-esteem
- A minority saw low tar cigarettes as a stage on the way to quitting smoking
- However, more common was sense that low tar was a way of making quitting less urgent or necessary
- All of the above largely related to concerns over health



THE LOW TAR CATEGORY

- Clear that low tar exists as a category in the cigarette market
- And as such, seen as distinct from full strength category
- For low tar smokers, the low tar category generally seen as : big, mainstream, growing
- No sense of low tar being a quirky or minority choice
- In comparison to full strength category, low tar seen as : younger adults, more modern, more fashionable, more up market
- But can also be seen as : weaker, more feminine, less manly

AWARENESS OF TAR LEVELS

- Few respondents were confidently aware of the tar level of their brand
- And some confusion apparent over tar and nicotine
- However, general “order of magnitude” awareness of low tar and full strength tar levels
- Low tar frequently “known” to be 3mg - 7mg and full strength around 10mg - 15mg
- Hence, (as mentioned earlier), 1mg is seen as “very low”

LOW TAR BRANDS

- Low tar brands split into “imagery” brands and “price” brands
- “Imagery” brands dominated by Silk Cut and Marlboro Lights with occasional mention of Camel Lights
- “Price” brands less front of mind but include Lambert & Butler, Berkeley, O/L

SILK CUT AND MARLBORO LIGHTS IMAGERY

- Imagery of both brands seen as broadly acceptable by most respondents
- However, when pushed, clear and consistent differences emerge (see below)
- Worth noting that Silk Cut smokers were generally less clear about Silk Cut imagery than Silk Cut non-smokers
- And this not the case for Marlboro Lights smokers
- Silk Cut smokers tended to see Silk Cut as very much the “bland leader” - mainstream; inoffensive; good quality; for everyone
- This corresponds to impression that Silk Cut often a more passive choice than Marlboro Lights

SILK CUT AND MARLBORO LIGHTS IMAGERY (CONT.)

<u>Silk Cut</u>	<u>Marlboro Lights</u>
Feminine Middle-aged Suburban Middle class Respectable English	Unisex Young adults Urban Fashionable Edgy American

- For some, Marlboro Lights seen as too overtly trendy and young adults
- For others, Silk Cut seen as too staid, old and suburban

THE SILK CUT RANGE

- Generally very good awareness of the Silk Cut range amongst current Silk Cut smokers
- Majority of non-Silk Cut smokers also broadly aware of the range but less clear about names including Ultra
- Central position of Silk Cut range in-store seems to be a major source of awareness
- All who are aware of the range also aware of the progression in strength across the range
- And generally aware of lighter pack details (esp. purple) signalling less strong Silk Cut cigarettes

ULTRA

- Awareness of the Ultra product and name high amongst current Silk Cut smokers
- Many non-Silk Cut smokers also aware but with less confidence/clarity
- Little sign of many knowing precisely what Ultra's tar level is
- However, good understanding that it is very low

ULTRA IMAGERY

- Ultra imagery partly related to Silk Cut parentage and partly to very low tar content
- Combination of the two leads to associations such as : feminine, weak, middle-class
- Ultra pack reinforces this imagery and in particular is seen as very feminine and weak (due largely to whiteness)
- Despite this imagery, important to stress that for many, the idea of a very low tar cigarette is so positive as to dwarf any imagery issues
- Also interesting to speculate on the imagery of a Marlboro 1mg

ULTRA IMAGERY (CONT.)

- Amongst non-Silk Cut smokers, Ultra imagery effectively seen as a more extreme version of Silk Cut imagery
- Hence, for male, Marlboro Lights smokers, Ultra seen as particularly feminine, middle class, dull, unfashionable
- For female low tar smokers, seen as particularly suburban, middle class, middle aged
- Imagery consequently not very positive for non-Silk Cut smokers
- Imagery much less of an issue for Silk Cut smokers who see Silk Cut imagery as more normal and acceptable

ULTRA TRIAL

- Signs of quite high trial of Ultra particularly amongst current Silk Cut smokers but also some trial amongst other smokers
- Trial largely driven by health concerns, stage to quitting and/or substitute to quitting
- Amongst non-Silk Cut smokers, these benefits are potentially enough to overcome imagery problems with a Silk Cut brand
- However, consistent problems encountered with the product itself (N.B. sample contained no Ultra loyalists)
- Generally described as “not a cigarette”, “like sucking on thin air”, “impossible to smoke”, “nothing there”
- Hence, rejection always followed trial for these respondents
- No sign of anyone trying Ultra for a significant period to give it more of a chance

SUMMARY

- Clear issues for Ultra in both imagery and product terms
- However, important to note that product proposition is potentially strong enough to overwhelm imagery issues for many, leading to apparently high trial
- Imagery problems are largely related to the parent brand imagery
- For current Silk Cut smokers, Silk Cut is seen as the “bland leader” - acceptable, mainstream, for everyone
- However, for non-Silk Cut smokers, signs that Silk Cut imagery is less positive - too feminine for many men, too middle class and suburban for many women

SUMMARY (CONT.)

- Marlboro Lights imagery much more consistent amongst both Marlboro Lights smokers and non-Marlboro Lights smokers
- Hence, signs that Marlboro Lights is often a more active brand choice than Silk Cut
- However, key issue facing Ultra seems to be product delivery rather than imagery
- An ultra low tar cigarette that tastes good would seem to have great potential due to perceptions of being less harmful / self-esteem / substitute to quitting benefits
- Marlboro Lights imagery suggests that low tar products are not inevitably linked with feminine or weak imagery