



Substantiating Consumer Preference Claims in a Competitive Cosmetics Market

The Case Challenge

A national cosmetics brand retained our consumer science experts to conduct sensory research in support of the launch of its “ultimate daily moisturizing lotion.” The client required substantiation for the claim that consumers preferred their new product over a leading competitor. In the highly competitive cosmetics industry, claims regarding product performance are frequently scrutinized by regulators, competitors, and/or consumer advocacy groups.

The Expert Solution

To prove users “liked and preferred” our clients’ new lotion over a named competitor, our team recommended conducting a home-use test, whereby consumers could try products in a natural setting and under conditions most similar to their daily use. The sensory research was designed to ensure compliance with industry and regulatory standards, as well as reliability. Respondents were selected according to the product’s demographic profile, including age, gender, regional representation, income, and existing lotion use. Respondents were also screened twice before being allowed to participate.

Each participant received two bottles of unmarked lotion, packaged identically in weight and appearance, and containing the same formulation intended for market release. Respondents were instructed to use one lotion for four consecutive days, followed by the other for the same period. At the end of the testing period, participants completed an online survey designed to capture perceptions of both products.

The study followed best practices in consumer research. We implemented quality controls, including survey programmers and respondents who remained blind to product identity. Bottle filling was monitored by independent observers; and the survey was pretested before administration.

The Outcome

The research supported the intended claims, and participants rated the lotion higher across dimensions, including scent, absorption, feel on skin, and overall preference. The differences were significantly in favor of the client's product, and based on the sensory research findings, the following advertising claims were substantiated:

- Users preferred the client's lotion overall to that of a leading competitor
- Users preferred the scent of the client's product over the competitor's
- Users reported that the client's lotion absorbed better than the competitor's product
- Users preferred the way their skin felt after using the client's lotion compared to the competitor's
- Users preferred the client's product over their usual daily lotion brand

Data and documentation were delivered to substantiate comparative and superiority claims for the new product launch. The findings supported the advertising campaign and improved the brand's position in the highly competitive cosmetics market.

Substantiate Advertising Claims with IMS

IMS Legal Strategies designs and conducts reliable and defensible claim substantiation research. Our dedicated Litigation Surveys & Consumer Science team designs studies that adhere to the highest standards for regulatory acceptance. Contact us today to substantiate your advertising claims with reliable consumer research.

This case study represents work conducted by MMR Strategy Group, which joined IMS in May 2025.

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