

Product character and life cycle analysis



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Good Hair Day (GHD) Hair Styler

Since January 2001 [2], what has been the fastest selling product in the hair styling market? The GHD Hair Styler. According to www.fastrack.co.uk [3] (in association with the Sunday Times Newspaper), GHD:

“ Sales have rocketed 365% a year, from an annualised £459, 000 in 2001 to £46. 1m in 2004”.

What is the function of the GHD Styler?

Most styling tongs made in such a shape as shown in [Figure 1] are created only to straighten the hair by running it through two hot plates. However the GHD Styler was created not only to straighten hair but also to curl and wave hair, for a variety of styles.

Context:

Who will use the styler? Initially, GHDs were targeted at the female market however men have started to straighten their hair too. In 2005 there were “ sales to more than 10, 000 professional British Hair Salons” [3], this shows that Hair Salons are now using the Stylers as well. So the main users are Female, Male, Hair Salons in general.

What is the Styler for? GHD Stylers are used to straighten, curl and wave hair.

Where are GHDs used? They are mainly used at home but also in the work place (hair salons). They are sold worldwide and are therefore being all over the world.

When are the Stylers used? This information depends upon the user:

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- Hair salons tend to use them daily
- Consumers who use them at home vary; some use them everyday whereas others use them less than once a month or only for special occasions.

Why do consumers use this product? With changing cultures and appearance becoming more important to some consumers, the GHDs can be seen to be improving ones appearance. Therefore I think the main reason this product is used is to improve the appearance of hair.

Materials and Manufacture processes:

The materials used to create GHDs go under a lot of strain at a very high temperature; the plates reach an average temperature of 175 – 185⁽⁰⁾C [4]. According to Jemella Ltd; the manufacturer's of GHDs, the ceramic technology used consists of “ aluminium-alloy styling plates” [4]. The ceramic material used on GHD stylers was created so that ions are emitted which “ can assist in protecting hair” [4].

Ceramics are known for being a very tough material which is why they have been used for these Stylers. It is stated that an “ aluminium-alloy” [4] has been used for the plates; this means metals have been combined with aluminium to create the plates.

Aluminium oxide is said to have a very high melting point of 2050⁽⁰⁾C [5] which is ideal for the plates as they need to reach 175 – 185⁽⁰⁾C. Smallman and Bishop (1995, p336) [5] discuss the idea of Alumina being a material with good electrical insulating properties as the type of atomic bonding which occurs means there are no free electrons.

Usability:

Physical Matches: Physical matching is vital with the use of hair stylers, especially for people who use them regularly because if they are used incorrectly they could cause RSI (Repetitive Strain Injury) or even back problems from an incorrect posture. GHD have had to think about the size and weight of the product in conjunction with the consumer so that it is not too heavy to hold whilst styling hair. Having closely inspected the stylers, they have great physical match, they are not too heavy, easy to hold and have great grip for creating different styles.

Information Transfer: There is text written to signal where the on/off switch is, this switch also has a helpful LED light; so when the stylers are switched on the light will come on a constant red with a single "beep" noise. Once the stylers are heated up and ready to use the LED will be flashing red and make a double "beep" noise.

Environmental Disturbance: Jemella Ltd (the company who created GHD), have actually considered the environmental effect on the GHDs themselves to stop any damage occurring. There is an operation called Shiver mode which is designed to protect the inside of the stylers. When the temperature is anything lower than 8⁽⁰⁾C, the GHD will shut down to prevent condensation from happening inside. [4]

Personality:

Aesthetics: The colour of the plates is sleek beige while the holding handles are a darker brown colour. The plates are really smooth so that they glide through your hair with minimum damage whilst the grip is strong so that they are easy to hold.

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Associations: The product can be associated with celebrity fans, when GHD first came out it was printed all over magazines that Madonna was one of the first celebrities to purchase the product and that she swore by them. The product has been advertised to give rich looking, luxurious hair.

Perceptions: The clever way in which the product is advertised gives the perception of being popular, having luxurious celebrity style hair and being beautiful. The reality of owning them is that you have to have plenty of practice before you achieve celebrity style hair.

Figure 2 is a chart showing Sales Volume vs. Year. GHD do not have this information open to the public hence I conducted my own research to find this valuable information to analyse. The blue colour shows the sales volume of GHD and the red shows the sales volume of all other stylers, GHD almost always has a higher sales volume right from its' second year on sale.

Volume sold (out of 87 consumers)

There are 5 different stages which can be shown in a product life cycle chart; Development (research and development/marketing schemes), Introduction into the market, Growth -an increase in the sales, Maturity where the sales stop increasing and tend to stay level and finally Decline where sales begin to decrease.

In Figure 2, it is clear to see that in 2001, GHD is going through its development stage as there are zero sales according to my data. This is where consumers are yet to find out about the product and there are marketing schemes to try and increase brand power.

Then by 2002 to 2004 GHD have entered the Introduction phase where the product begins to enter the market and consumers become more aware of it.

There is a clear increase in sales in 2005 showing the Growth period. There is a slight decline in 2006. I think the maturity phase occurs between 2007 and 2008 where the sales are neither increasing nor decreasing. There are many reasons that could be affecting this. There has been a recession therefore consumers have less disposable income to spend.

However in 2009 there are clear signs of an increase in sales. This does not follow the trend of the product life cycle as there is no real decline; the reason for this is because GHD will have predicted a decline in their sales and began some new marketing schemes. It is important that a company can predict when there will be a decline because it can prevent the product from failing. Luckily for GHD because it has become such a popular product it owns a large share of the hair styler market therefore even in a recession it was able to survive with ease.

I think the major influences on the life cycle of this product come from the quality of the product. Many of the consumers I have spoken to mention that after roughly 4 years the product has failed however they did not think twice about purchasing another brand. They insisted that GHD was a quality brand and they could achieve lasting results with the product. GHD have built up a strong brand name which I think has kept the sales from dramatically declining.

References:

1. [http://www. contest. co. nz/freebies-giveaways/20496-free-70nzd-off-ghd-trade. html](http://www.contest.co.nz/freebies-giveaways/20496-free-70nzd-off-ghd-trade.html)
2. [www. ghdhair. com/about](http://www.ghdhair.com/about)
3. “ Fast Track 100 ranks Britain’s hundred private companies with the fastest growing sales over the last three years. Sales growth ranged from 53% pa to 225% pa, with sales typically between £10m and £50m.” [http://www. fasttrack. co. uk/Fasttrack2002/migration/dbDetails. asp? siteID= 1&compID= 1733&yr= 2005](http://www.fasttrack.co.uk/Fasttrack2002/migration/dbDetails.asp?siteID=1&compID=1733&yr=2005)
4. This information was either on the box of the product or inside the box.
5. Smallman, R. E and Bishop R. J 1995, Metals and Materials – Science, Processes, Applications, Butterworth-Heineman Ltd