

Peebuddy: ladies, it's time to stand-up!

Neena Sondhi and Rituparna Basu

“I need to pick up two packs of Peebuddy. One is for self-use during my upcoming photo-shoot trip in Rajasthan, the other is for my mom – she has arthritis you know – Peebuddy is her best friend when Maya (house help) or I am not at home and she needs to go. I wish more people would think and act pink, like this company,” said Roma, a 24-year-old photographer who worked for a travel magazine as she stood at the billing desk of Modern Bazaar retail outlet, Select City Walk mall, New Delhi, India.

Deep Bajaj, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and founder of Sirona, smiled in delight at the comment as he stood behind the young girl in the billing queue. The guy-next-door looking entrepreneur remembered how he had thought pink (from a woman's perspective) when he saw his wife and friends struggle with thirst as they restrained their desire to drink water fearing the distress of using unhygienic toilets during a road trip in 2013- and ideated Peebuddy. Within a year and half in 2015, the design patent for the product was registered as the product was pilot tested to be launched in the Indian market for the likes of Roma.

The journey that had begun on an accidental note as a desire to solve a personal problem was a runaway success that went on to win many accolades and awards. Bajaj was felicitated by the Economic Times in August 2019 ([Economic Times, 2019](#)) in the “Social Enterprise” category for creating a product that pledged to solve a hitherto unaddressed problem. Peebuddy was recognized as “India's first portable female urination device” that offered women the freedom to “stand and pee in unfriendly toilets”. Evidently, the product caught attention of many and sold over two million units as of date in December 2019.

Thus far, Bajaj's approach had been organic and simplistic in its orientation. In his words [1],

It's been a simple process. Peebuddy was the first one to be born and for the first year we had nothing else in our agenda. We were determined to drive this product-innovation wise and then move to the next and see how it goes.

From a small bootstrapped firm, over a period of four years, Bajaj built Sirona Hygiene Private Limited as a 20-product company riding on the success of the Peebuddy story. Bajaj knew that for the next phase of funding and scaling up, steady growth in sales figure was critical. He believed that out of the 20 odd products in the firm's portfolio, Peebuddy was the one that needed to be showcased as the star. The concern was:

If u look at the Peebuddy customers – their purchase pattern is very occasional. So, how do we make them come back for repeat purchases? Moreover, at present to get new customers on board means spending on awareness. I am looking at doubling the Peebuddy volume by 2021 [1].

This was a huge challenge with a product that existed in an intimate and almost taboo space.

Bajaj had to weigh Peebuddy's potential amongst individual as well as institutional buyers such as event management firms organizing mega outdoor events, hospitals and transport service providers such as railways and metros. Besides, he had to arrive at a sharply

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designed and cost-effective strategy as there were several me-too products entering the market. To take Peebuddy to the top of the curve as well as create a moderate-to-high repurchase cycle, the product now needed a clear portrayal of its lead user. Who was she? Despite the user's enthusiasm, as the purchases continued to remain sporadic, one also had to figure out what could probably impede the adoption of a visibly advantageous but unconventional product such as Peebuddy? The challenge for this spunky new product that offered a rather awaited solution but challenged cultural prototype was considerable. Bajaj knew that while growing his market reach seemed like a mammoth task, the need to increase consumer adoption was paramount as he was determined to scale up the commercialization of Peebuddy to its next level.

Women in India: classifying the opportunity

India with a population of 1.38 billion was classified as the second most densely populated country in the world after China. The numbers looked astonishing if one realized that the country had 2.4% of the world's inhabitable area and accounted for 17.8% of the world population. A total of 68.86% of the Indians resided in rural areas, whereas 31.14% lived in urban areas ([Statistics Times, 2020](#)). As the employment opportunities in urban India far outweighed that in rural areas, there was huge exodus of population from rural to urban areas. In the 2011 census, it was observed that close to 78 million people migrated from rural to urban areas ([Live Mint, 2019](#)). Interestingly, 55% of these migrants were women who left their rural homes to secure a livelihood to support their families back home. They worked as house maids, saleswomen in small and big retail stores, service employees in salons, spas and restaurants or in small and medium enterprises as unskilled and semi-skilled workers. The rural female migrants were mostly unmarried girls in the age bracket of 18–25 years. These girls when exposed to the urban metro lifestyle, tried to “fit in” by adopting the urban way of living, in terms of dressing style, eating habits as well as better sanitation and hygiene-conscious practices as compared to their rural counterparts.

In terms of demographics, India had 63.72% of its population classified as economically active ([Statistics Times, 2020](#)). A total of 50% of this active group was in the age group of 20–39 years who spent considerable time outside the house – for professional, personal activities as well as leisure. India also had better longevity, as the country reported 10.12% of its population in the 60+ age group. Economic conditions and standard of living in the country also improved over the past decade. However, on the flip side, adoption of fast-paced urban ways of life led to a high prevalence of lifestyle diseases such as high blood pressure, obesity, thyroid, diabetes, kidney problems and arthritis. A total of 70% of the urban Indian population suffered from obesity, which was a major cause of lifestyle diseases ([TNN, 2018](#)). According to a report by the Indian Council of Medical Research, the incidence of deaths because of non-communicable and lifestyle diseases rose from 37% in 1990 to 61% in 2016 ([Business World, 2019a](#)). In a recent report by GOQ [2], that surveyed its 5 million registered users living across 16 cities in India, it was found that 62% of its users were in the high risk or borderline health assessment category with more women in the group ([Telliss, 2020](#)).

Considering changing mindset as a function of economic well-being, it was evident that with better employment opportunities and economic independence of women in emerging markets such as India and China, awareness about personal well-being and hygiene amongst women showed considerable rise. Subsequently, demand for better quality products and solutions to take care of their intimate hygiene needs went up. Interesting trends amongst women across different age groups were noted. The Euromonitor lifestyle survey for 2019 ([Euromonitor, 2019](#)) reported that amongst the millennials, 50% were open to trying new products and most of them sought experiences that were tailored to their tastes. The report also revealed that taking care of oneself was age agnostic. Older women

were as aware and conscious about taking care of their health as their younger counterparts. India Ageing Report 2017 found that the elderly population in India was on the rise and was projected to reach around 300 million by 2050, accounting for 20% of the country's total population (Arora, 2019). As a result, the general mindset of consuming class in the country was undergoing change, riding on the consumerism trends of this emerging class of 60+ consumer segments. The potential of this market was further accentuated by the presence of independent empty nesters (households with grown-up kids living in separate independent units) seeking routine consumable items as well as those related to age-specific issues. Several products and services were targeted to the senior consumers who were interestingly open to try out new offerings as well. Akin to global trends, with improved longevity and awareness, comparable trends toward healthy lifestyle and lifestyle products among consumers of emerging markets such as India were largely expected (Euromonitor, 2019).

Female hygiene in India: the changing landscape

India had a slightly skewed gender ratio with 48.5% women (Ministry of statistics and Program implementation, 2019) in the population. The gender contributed to 25%–30% of the country's economy where the contribution from rural areas was higher than that of urban (Ministry of statistics and Program implementation, 2019). This ratio was steadily increasing as equal education opportunities and gender sensitization drives led to more women seeking out-of-home employment opportunities. However, despite at par technological advancement in India compared to that in the developed countries, indications of strong patriarchal footprint continued to define the society at large. It was evidenced that when urban lifestyles were evolving with emergence of more egalitarian households, the cultural evolution and social parity across genders in the country still remained as a work in progress.

In particular, sanitation and female hygiene had a long way to go. India had a long history of open defecation, with close to 70% rural and 12% of urban population defecating in public. In 2014, the Government of India (Gol) as part of Swachh Bharat Mission (Clean India Campaign) pledged to make India open defecation free by 2019. Community and public toilets were built across the country with a special focus to provide hygienic and accessible toilets for women (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2018). Gol schemes were in place to provide financial assistance for building toilets within the home premises. Though the initiative helped in building community or public toilets and at-home toilet facilities, the problem of unhygienic and poor maintenance remained. This made the women using these out-of-home facilities more prone to urinary tract infection (UTI) and related issues. Studies showed that almost 40% women suffered from UTI and often experienced recurrent infections (Foxman, 2010). Considering that in a typical day a person may urinate four to eight times (Scott *et al.*, 2017), out of which at least 60% of the time the person needed to use public services, the problem became all the more perennial. A survey done on 20,000 Indian women in 2019 showed that 90% of them found the toilets across shopping malls, public places, hotels and even office spaces unhygienic and unsuitable for use (Business World, 2019b). Hence, the women were forced to adopt practices such as not urinating and withholding for long period of time. In extreme cases, they resorted to semi-squatting or cleaning the toilet seats with tissue or paper. All these measures were neither congenial nor healthy with detrimental long-term implications. Further, increasing incidence of lifestyle diseases such as obesity or arthritis or diabetes among men and women added to the inconvenience. Women who suffered from these medical conditions faced additional issues related to frequent urination (diabetes) or difficulty in sitting down on a toilet seat that restricted their out-of-home movement.

Peebuddy: a solution or a revolution?

The birth of an idea: Peebuddy, recorded in the Limca Book of World Records as India's first female urination device (FUD) was the "accidental and personal" creation of Deep Bajaj (see [Exhibit 1: Deep Bajaj – Into the Mind of an Entrepreneur](#)).

As Bajaj was settling from an event management business to a handmade carpets venture, he stumbled on the Peebuddy idea during a road trip. Bajaj shared:

In 2013, my wife and me along with three other couples were on a road trip to Jaipur (Rajasthan). I was joking with everybody saying see men are so blessed because we were drinking whatever we wanted to drink, and girls were not even having water. I even said God made us so special that we can stand and pee anywhere (not that I am proud of it but it is a convenience) and it was then, where a friend's wife suggested that she had seen some trekker in Europe use a contraption to stand and pee. While everybody laughed it off, for me that sentence stayed on somewhere. As the great Steve Jobs said it's only in hindsight one can join the dots.

Bajaj remembered:

At that time, I just paused and went back to several unrelated, but related life-events. I recalled my event organization days. I remembered the time we were organizing an outdoor event with several high-profile guests, another time was the launch event for a new mall in Delhi and there were 10,000 people. And both times, one area where we failed miserably was that we were unable to provide the basics! That is keeping the portable toilets we had hired for the events – clean. To be honest, no one can. Second memory was around the time I was involved in the carpet business. We had a miscarriage and when my wife got pregnant again, she was advised complete bed rest, however an important meeting came up in Dubai & we both had to travel; however, my wife was really terrified of contracting UTIs. So, to ensure she gets better space and a clean toilet – even when we could not afford it, I upgraded her to business class. Still there were the common washroom and it was not clean. As a woman who had a miscarriage earlier this was like the biggest nightmare, I still remember her helpless face. My third memory was of my mother who had arthritis in her knees, so in her case I observed that she had stopped attending any social functions – marriages, funeral everything – and even after she got a knee replacement done the problem persisted because she needed the seat to be six inches raised than the normal seat.

Bajaj added:

So, you see, when this concept was just thrown out as a casual rebuttal to a man, that one sentence opened a world of possibilities for me. This was out of the park, so I was determined that I will work on it. When I thought of doing it, the idea was not that I will create this into a big business. I just thought it is a problem which bothers the women in my life- my colleagues during events, my wife during her pregnancy, and my mother during her arthritis. I wanted to just solve their problem. So, I came back and started doing my own research on how to create the device. I came up with multiple shapes- went back to models of flying planes, paper boats and oil funnels. My dad used to have a scooter and whenever he would run out of fuel there used to be those small funnels. And I said yes this is what is required at the end of the day [3].

This was the time that Bajaj's brother Mohit, a commerce graduate and a yet-to-be Chartered Accountant, joined him to plan out the design. After experimenting with multiple shapes and material, Deep and his brother had ten variations of the product. Finally, they reached consensus and had the prototype for a cardboard made funnel like disposable use and throw FUD. They were also joined by a friend who was initially excited about the idea but then left the business.

Formalizing the idea: Deep knew that unlike his previous stints in events and carpets – this product was unique as nothing like it existed. So, once the product was ready, the brothers' pilot tested, sold and shared it in a close group in 2014. Bajaj candidly shared:

When I started, I made the product soil a lot of clothes of my friends and even friends' wives. Because something like this did not exist at all in India and no one had ever tried it/heard it, there

was no proper R&D lab. The only R&D was 20–30 friends, 10–15 customers and we said – are you willing to take it, and if they were willing – we just gave them to use it. We asked them to come back and share with us what was their experience with it. So, we had these great set of people who believed in me – in Peebuddy, and gave us precious feedback, which helped us improve and be ready to launch it.

As a final call, the product prototype was also validated through a focus-group. Bajaj recounted, “Sixty women from all age groups tested the product and gave their reviews” ([Hustle India, 2016](#)). It was in 2015 that the brothers formally registered the firm after getting a design patent for Peebuddy. Bajaj shared:

That time we did not even know that the world of patents existed to be honest. But today when we come up with anything the first thing I do is, I try to log in a patent. We applied for a patent and the world came crashing down because I was told by my patent lawyers that I am not the only Einstein to have ever thought about this idea. First patent for a FUD goes back to 1919, in the USA but when I searched, there is nothing that existed in India similar to our shape/design, so we got a design patent for the same in 2015.

Wrapping up the idea: Once the product had taken its final shape, it now needed a name and a garb (packaging). Bajaj said:

There is nothing fancy about the story behind this name. We wanted it to be obvious, as something that helps you- so buddy. And the function is to pee- so Pee and Buddy made Peebuddy.

The funnel-shaped cardboard single-use device came in a paper bag, the color was a bright fluorescent green with the name written in capital letters. It stood out from the “pinks” of female products. He added,

The problem we were trying to address with Peebuddy was very simple and so was our solution. With a zero-marketing budget, branding and packaging were the only weapons we had. We thought bold coloring and font would help us break through the clutter. It was our best bet and it turned in our favor. I was very sure that I didn't want to compromise the text in the name of aesthetics. That's why we went all out and printed in bold – FREEDOM TO STAND AND PEE ([Hustle India, 2016](#)) (see [Exhibit 2a](#) Peebuddy – Stock Keeping Units & Price and [Exhibit 2b](#): Peebuddy – Product Design).

Later, it was rephrased as, LADIES, FREEDOM TO STAND AND PEE.

Moving into the marketplace: The brand faced a lot of hiccups in the initial stage, there were multiple challenges at various ends. Bajaj affirmed:

One of the major roadblocks we faced was to convince the store owners that it was a viable product. When we got to the big modern stores, we were directly shown the door. Everyone had dismissed us away. The leading stores, even the supposedly hyper-modern stores which were so called 'centred on women's needs' did not accept it. For weeks we couldn't believe that they had turned us down because we had the word 'pee' in our product and because we were talking about 'women peeing standing' ([Hustle India, 2016](#)). Brickbats also came from the male conservatives. People thought this was against religious beliefs as this standing-up business gave undue power to women to challenge authority [4].

Thus, Bajaj decided to adopt a two-pronged strategy to deal with the issue. The first level was to rope in orthopedics and gynecologists who after testing the product themselves recommended this as a viable option to their patients. As a result, “the stores started welcoming us and readily embraced our product. This also helped us make it available on various platforms online” ([Hustle India, 2016](#)). The second level of improving acceptance came from testimonials by their users – and these were women who were trekkers, marathon runners or were out-of-home and not in very congenial places. There were pregnant women or those with arthritis who had used the product and shared their

experience. The user feedback and testimonials were made available on the firms' website as well as Facebook page. The effect was considerable and after dismal sales for the initial two years, the product started picking up on a wider presence as well as acceptability.

Nothing makes us as happy as the 'thank you' mails that hit our inboxes. A cyclist wrote how she is now able to go on a longer circuit. Another customer wrote to us about how Peebuddy helped her through her pregnancy, a time when a lot of women are either prone to urinary tract infections because of using unhygienic toilets or finding it difficult to sit and pee. A cancer survivor said she is now able to travel more often, which was a challenge without Peebuddy, as she had to be very careful about hygiene and sanitation. With clean toilets being a rarity in public spaces in India, traveling was difficult for her. It is in these small victories that we celebrate the success of Peebuddy (Sindhu, 2018).

Crafting the communication: As a bootstrapped company, every opportunity to create awareness and gain acceptance was welcome. Bajaj stated:

We don't say no to anything. As the founder, any visibility for us is good. So, I have a shameless spamming list. Any lady, any person from media or anyone who is interested in our business and whose number I have, I start informing them whenever anything good happens about Peebuddy. This way I broadcast to all these 3000–4000 people whom I have met in various forums. And you will be surprised how it has worked for me. This is why I have stayed relevant and recognized as the Peeman. It will also help me stay ahead of the copycats. So whenever, wherever I get a chance to talk or to share my story I go and I always carry samples of Peebuddy¹.

The brand also gained traction with actresses and social activists tweeting about Peebuddy. Slowly, the brand got more visibility as the entrepreneur and his innovation got extensive national and international coverage through media channels such as BBC, ET Now, Forbes and others. Even many offline and online magazines or platforms talked about the brand and how it was solving one of the most pressing yet least discussed and addressed female problems. Several mega event organizers – Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon, Airtel Delhi Half-Marathon and Bengaluru Marathon – also saw merit in the complementarity of the product and started partnering with the brand for the cause of making basic sanitation safe for women. Bajaj observed:

In big public events, given the diverse profile of audience, no matter how hard the organizers try, keeping toilets clean is a mammoth challenge. That's where a solution like Peebuddy comes to the aid of both the organizers as well as the women attendees (Sindhu, 2018).

The brand created its own dedicated website (www.peebuddy.in/), Facebook page and Twitter handle. This provided a platform for sharing user experiences and testimonials. The website also provided details of reputed doctors, from some of the top-notch hospitals in India, endorsing and recommending the usage of Peebuddy. The website carried short videos that introduced the product and demonstrated how to use it, discussing the merits and the convenience of a use-and-throw device that could serve as a huge preventive solution against unhygienic toilets – viewed as the primary cause of urine infections amongst women. In the pursuit of servicing female problems, the entrepreneur had not lost sight of women from all walks of life. In 2019, after some decent sales success, the start-up initiated three path-breaking initiatives for the sex-workers and other underprivileged women, to address their intimate and menstrual hygiene needs. Bajaj shared:

As I am aging, I realize the frugality of life, and I believe if you have to do something good for people it has to start right at inception and not when we will have profits¹.

Delivering the offering: Bajaj looked at a mixed online–offline model to sell the product. The product was available through the firm's website as well as platforms such as Amazon, Nykaa, Zivame, QTRove, Flipkart, BigBasket and Grofers. In terms of offline, he shared:

We made it available at 500+ stores, this includes high-end self-service-stores like Modern Bazaar, Le Marche, Krishna Marche, 24 × 7, Guardian Pharmacies in the National Capital

Region. We have not gone too aggressive in other cities today as it is a very expensive channel. In modern trade the terms are draconian while the general trade as a channel needs a lot of time. So, may be with our next round of funding we would take care of other cities. However there also I want to do this a little differently. I want to make female hygiene product purchase a ritual, a quintessential experience, where it becomes an exploration of whatever intimate hygiene issues, she is facing. So, there should be experience centers within these stores. The whole range of Sirona female hygiene products including Peebuddy are going to be on the shelf for her to find and serve as a solution to all her problems.

He further clarified:

So this is my wish list, it can come true only when the channel partner has confidence that the modern Indian woman is – a. Concerned and aware about personal hygiene; b. Recognizes this as essential hygiene expenditure; and c. It is not an occasional but a regular purchase.

Bajaj further shared:

As on date 75% of our sales are online, rest is split between general trade and modern trade. Our expansion will not only be through general trade and modern trade stores, I believe Peebuddy should be sold through dispensers, like a tissue dispenser. If colas and chips can do it then why not essentials like Peebuddy? To give you a sense, we came up with a vending machine which was digitally enabled¹.

In February 2019, Sirona Hygiene (the parent company of Peebuddy) and Stanza Living – a Delhi based start-up providing state-of-the-art bespoke living concept for the student community – launched Sirona Hygiene Pod – first Indian vending machine to provide feminine hygiene products. This was a pilot project at Stanza Living where a girl student had access to all her feminine hygiene supplies 24 × 7 ([Ganguly, 2019](#)). The machine accepted digital payments as well as cash payments. Available here were Peebuddy and Sirona menstrual hygiene products. Bajaj explained:

'Sirona Hygiene Pods' are a step towards disrupting the distribution hassles by bringing products closer to the women, with round the clock access. We loved the ideology of Stanza Living and decided to launch the first ever pod with them ([Ganguly, 2019](#)).

Vending machines seemed to be a costly affair in clustered spaces. Bajaj stated frankly:

We are doing these pilot projects, but these are initiatives that will require more money. So, for the time being the focus is from wherever we can sell, let us focus on growing the revenue from there. Because in order to raise bigger money, we must show a success formula. So, for the time being we are doing everything by the book it also gives us immunity against cash running out. We keep 10–15% of our budget towards these projects like the vending machine or running an awareness campaign about personal hygiene and sanitation in brothel areas – we started with Delhi but now we also partner with organizations working in Sonagachi (Kolkata, West Bengal) and Kamathipura (Mumbai, Maharashtra)¹.

The Peebuddy user: Typically by definition, Peebuddy was a product that served as a solution to a female – teenager and above, who faces the challenge of using dirty toilets as part of her daily routine. Bajaj's perspective on the user was as follows:

This is very personality driven. You could be my chauffeur's daughter who has just taken a BPO job, but you have a set expectation of convenience and comfort in your life. I have people in my circle who earn five hundred thousand rupees a month and who will not buy Peebuddy, I don't need them I can manage; at the same time I have girls who are travelling by metro, earn a salary of thirty thousand and carries a Peebuddy in her bag because her sense of hygiene and convenience is far more evolved than anybody else. What we are saying is that this is a new category and a new way to define target audience needs to be thought through. I think the target group may be looked on as a mindset. Yes, the plus 20-year-old young lady who is out of home is the segment. But it may not be wrong to look at the TG (target group) as a mindset – a woman who challenges the status quo. She could be from any walk of life – urban, rural, anywhere⁷.

Further, the user could also be defined differently. According to Bajaj:

I believe Peebuddy should also be given to people at the time of knee replacement. We are doing that survey right now. Recovery process can become faster for every lady who has had her knee replaced if you give her Peebuddy. We are also trying to do the same with oncology, we have spoken to 150 plus patients at a leading hospital in Saket (locality in South Delhi). As in the OPD, it takes hours to see the doctor, here one needs to use the restroom that happens to be a public washroom. Just understand that when one is going through chemotherapy the person's immunity is at an all-time low. So, for these hospital and clinic trials we are trying to follow parameters to say it is not a B2C (Business to Consumer) product alone. This is something that has never been done in the world, wherein a FUD is a life altering product for a woman with arthritis, pregnancy, or cancer. Likewise in the case of some recovering from an Episiotomy – healing time can come down drastically with something like a Peebuddy. So that is why we may need a doctor to have more clinical interjection into our research in terms of whatever we are trying to do⁷.

The Peebuddy competition: By 2019, there were a plethora of urination devices in the disposable and single use-and-throw category such as BeyBee, SanNap and Sanfe. Additionally, there were variants that had been developed as silicon-based reusable funnel-shaped devices. For those suffering from any medical problem and facing urinary issues, there were medically tested alternative devices from Maddak. Options, such as toilet seat sprays from national, international as well as local players, which were being used by women to spray and sanitize the toilet seats before usage, were also available in the market. However, they failed to solve the issue totally – as the problem of sitting still persisted for the lady who was pregnant or had arthritis.

Even though the product category continued to face the problem of limited awareness and penetration, the me-too products were already entering the market to address the needs of niche segments. Bajaj observed:

There are many people who have copied Peebuddy, including a couple of young engineers from IIT (Indian Institute of Technology – a premier Engineering institute of India). However, it's not about competition. I see this as a positive trend, as many people come into the space, they are spreading more awareness about it. Yet, the key here is, fortunately or unfortunately the last man standing will be the one who is at it the longest. Secondly, we just can't afford to stop, we have to keep innovating and challenging and correcting ourselves. The people who are copying us blatantly are also copying the same mistakes. The point is – we have the faith, the patience to wait and reap the harvest, but the question is will the others also survive this test? Till then, it is good that they are also spreading the word. Earlier, I was the only one boiling my blood trying to explain – do not clean the seat, do not wipe the seat so now a lot of people have jumped in with the same advice. It also strengthens my belief that the problem is real. The category, which some time ago was an element of ridicule and a joke is now being seen as a solution that can work.

What next?

The going had been good so far. Peebuddy in these four-plus years since inception had been able to garner a sales figure of close to two million units reaping the advantage of being the first mover in the category. His aim was to double this figure in the next two years. While Bajaj was already in the process of expanding the Peebuddy franchise as he launched a patented pregnancy testing kit that used the same Peebuddy funnel with an inbuilt HCG [3] strip on it, he also planned a host of well-charted innovative products such as sugar and jaundice testing kits for the market.

Nevertheless, Bajaj knew that Peebuddy was the well-recognized brand in the Sirona product portfolio and needed to emerge as the “star”. He planned to establish the product in the domestic market for the next two years before going international. However, the problem of establishing customer connect and gaining their habitual brand usage made

him think hard. Though sales were good, gaining regularity from the existing users was the need of the hour alongside the long-run objective to drive adoption by new users.

As the first step to the future, Bajaj needed to clearly identify the Peebuddy user – was she the on-the-go young woman who faced the challenge of dirty toilets as she went about her workday and activity? Or was it the older woman for whom dirty toilets and toilet seats were an equal challenge? Based on the user data and consumer insights, the team created two user profiles that seemed to be almost equally promising as lead users for Peebuddy (see [Exhibit 3: Peebuddy – Consumer Personas](#)). The question was – which of them was the right segment for Peebuddy?

The next and equally pressing dilemma for the brand was, how to scale up and increase the usage amongst existing users as well as add to the consumer reach by getting new users on board. As part of collecting consumer insights to help address the issue, focus group discussions were conducted with Peebuddy Aware groups [4] and Peebuddy Non-aware [5] groups (see [Exhibit 4: Peebuddy – Focus Group Discussion Key Insights](#)). While Bajaj wanted Peebuddy to be part of a woman's regular out-of-home ritual when she needed to use the toilet – he wanted to use the insights to understand how he should plan his communication to highlight the key features that would resonate stronger with his target segment. Bajaj knew that there was no time to lose as he was determined to make Peebuddy generic to the category with a sharper positioning stance that would pave way for sustained market success while serving this whole new class of empowered women.

Keywords:
New product development,
Consumer behavior,
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markets,
Marketing,
Product management

Notes

1. Authors' interview with Deep Bajaj, CEO & Founder of Sirona Hygiene Private Limited on August 9, 2019.
2. GOQ was an integrated preventive health-care platform that offered end-to-end solutions to its users.
3. HCG is human chorionic gonadotropin, which is a hormone produced by the placenta of a pregnant woman.
4. This group included those who knew about the product but had not used it as well as existing users of the product.
5. This group neither knew about the product nor had heard about the product.

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Exhibit 1. Deep Bajaj – into the mind of an entrepreneur

Deep Bajaj, a 37-year-old entrepreneur, always had a streak of challenging the regular. A commerce graduate from the University of Delhi, after a short one-year stint in the insurance sector, decided that he was not looking for a stepwise career progression in life and instead decided to pursue higher studies and completed a master's in management from the Australian National University. The predicable path after an international masters was to stay back and seek a management career in Australia. But true to his temperament, Bajaj came back to his home country and co-founded an event management start-up. After a successful five year's stint in organizing fashion shows and mega entertainment events, he decided to sell his stakes and move out of the firm. His wife Rashmi was a carpet designer who started her brand "Carpet Couture by Rashmi" in 2009, and Bajaj joined her to take Carpet Couture international. The Delhi-based firm found its niche in supplying to hotels and customizing handmade rugs for high-end residences. Once the firm had stabilised itself, Bajaj was exploring afresh and was convinced that "I want to do something that does not exist here which is my own and I had no idea what that thing will be."¹⁰ He tried his hands at a couple of more projects, including a home health-care start-up, a coaching centre and even a holiday home project.

The game-changing focus for the entrepreneur came upon as an accidental acquaintance with a "feminine problem" of need-for-urination and the problem of dirty toilets. From the disposable urination device idea in 2013 to the launch of Peebuddy was a journey that gave direction to Bajaj's desire to travel the "untrodden path". So, in July 2015, once Bajaj and his brother got a design patent for Peebuddy – bootstrapped with INR 8,000,000 – First Step Digital Pvt Ltd was formally incorporated to manufacture and market Peebuddy. As stated by Bajaj, "First step because a number of things we were doing were actually first step, an innovation, and we were going to be a predominantly digital firm."

In 2019, the firm was formally re-registered as Sirona Hygiene Private Limited. The firm had three different brands under its umbrella. Besides Peebuddy – the toilet hygiene brand, there was Bodyguard – the family hygiene range that included a range of protective products such as anti-pollution masks and mosquito repellents. The third was Sirona that included a range of menstrual hygiene products from sanitary pads to menstrual cups and tampons. Bajaj shared:

Today I know what I want the firm to be doing. We will become synonymous with solving unique and intimate menstrual hygiene issues faced by women and any extension of the problem faced by women.

The journey that began with a conviction and an idea as a self-funded enterprise with a single product had more than 20 products today with 2 patents and 5 “India’s First” products. Bajaj had been able to raise two successful rounds of funding in 2017 and 2019. Bajaj summarized the journey so far as:

For me the thought or the turmoil started in 2013 that I wanted to do something different. In 2014, I thought this is the time and I know it is the RIGHT time, I do not care what other people do or think. 2015 the company took shape. My decade long journey has taught me very simply, that it is never the idea it is only the execution of the same and your close-knit team. Lastly, if you have the conviction that you have created something unique then you can sell anything¹⁰.

Exhibit 2. Peebuddy – stock keeping units and price (in INR)

| Table E1 | | |
|----------|-----------|-------|
| 1 | 5-funnel | 120 |
| 2 | 10-funnel | 175 |
| 3 | 20-funnel | 325 |
| 4 | 40-funnel | 625 |
| 5 | 80-funnel | 1,250 |

Figure E1 5C framework for Peebuddy under Sirona hygiene

DIRECTIONS FOR USE:

- 1. OPEN**
Gently press the top front and back to pop open the Pee-Buddy.
- 2. PLACE**
Move your panties aside. Place the open end of the funnel/Pee-Buddy between your legs, right under the flow area.
- 3. PEE**
Tilt hips/bend a little, ensure the funnel is tilted downwards. Relax & pee.
- 4. THROW**
Dispose off in the bin.

Source: Company website: Retrieved from <https://peebuddy.in/>

Exhibit 3. Peebuddy – consumer personas

Table E2

| | <i>Informed independents</i> | <i>Troubled twilighters</i> |
|---|---|---|
| Who is she? | Age: 20–39 years Education: graduate and above; 60% with a professional degree Physical/medical issues: none | Age: 60 years and above Education: graduate and above; 25% with a professional degree Physical/medical issues: lifestyle diseases like – arthritis, obesity, cardiac issues, diabetes (frequent urination), cancer, etc. |
| What does she do? | Occupation: Student, corporate trainee, service professional, entertainment industry, sales Part of several social media groups and communities | Occupation: Teachers, doctors, executives, housewives and retired (50% of this group was in this category) Part of several social groups and communities such as rotary, ladies clubs and gardening club |
| Where does she live? What kind of person is she? | Urban metros and tier-II towns An outgoing and socially active person Likes to experiment and is open to new experiences and products High self-confidence and high self-esteem Stands up for what she believes in and is very vocal on both social media and otherwise Is decisive and has a “mind of her own” Independent in thought and spirit and respects others’ independence | Urban metros and tier-II towns An outgoing and socially active person Active influencer in her social group Risk-averse, but is open to new experiences and products if validated by others socially or by experts Medium self-confidence and high-self-esteem Expresses and articulates what she believes in |
| What are her core attitudes, interests and beliefs? | Values her personal well-being and hygiene Pays attention to personal grooming Does not compromise on her core beliefs Likes to be in control of her life Concerned about the environment and cleanliness Likes to go on trips Knowledgeable about issues that interest her and is expressive about her opinion | Pays attention to personal grooming Looks for value in purchase but does not mind spending premium on good quality products Avoids controversies and conflicts Concerned about the environment and cleanliness Well-travelled – domestic and internationally Well-read and knowledgeable about the latest issues in politics, food and cuisine, lifestyle and health related |
| Informed by | Internet (75%); consumer reviews; product browsing and trials; newspaper and magazines | News channels, newspapers and magazines, internet (10%) |
| Influenced by | Friends and social media groups, office colleagues, bloggers | Family (60% named their daughters); doctors, friends and contact groups |
| Shopping habits | Frequency: fortnightly (75%), anytime Place: local market, malls, online (60%–65%) Payment mode: mobile wallets, credit cards (80%), cash (20%) | Frequency: monthly (80%), emergency, festivals and occasions Place: local market, malls (70%) Payment mode: credit and debit cards (40%), cash (60%) |
| Market estimate | 15% of the age demographic | 60% of the age demographics |

Source: Company’s summarized documents on existing consumer profiles

Exhibit 4. Peebuddy – focus group discussion (FGD) key insights

Table E3

| | |
|---|--|
| Sample profile (covered across eight FGDs) | <p>Age group: 52% 25–35 years; 48% 36–55 years Marital status: 65% single and 35% married Education: 45% graduates and below; 55% postgraduates and professional degree Location: Delhi, Gurugram (Haryana), Noida (Uttar Pradesh) Annual family income (INR): 12% – 500,000 and below; 35% – 5,000,000–10,000,000; 25% 10,000,000–15,000,000; 38% – 15,000,000 and above</p> |
| Intimate female hygiene (IFH): what comes to your mind? | <p>Menstrual issues (90%) Menstrual cramps (75%) Vaginal infections (35%) Urine infections and dirty toilets (40%)</p> |
| Views on female hygiene | <p>I have been living in a hostel for a long time now and sharing washrooms which is a cumbersome task. It exposes you to urinary tract infections Female hygiene is not something that one openly talks about it is like a taboo topic Women should be educated about the ill-effects of not maintaining intimate hygiene. Sometimes, fear works in these cases. Women and girls are ashamed of sharing their body issues even with the doctors. So, “prevention is better than cure” should be widely communicated to generate awareness Sometimes when I am in a supermarket and I am looking for such products which will suit my skin-type and solve my intimate problems, there is no one to guide me as to what products I should be buying. So, I just give up and don't buy anything Dirty and unhygienic conditions do not actually affect me as I don't go to these dirty places. I always buy the best female products so this is more related to you know may be maids and all My mother/friend/aunt explained how to maintain personal hygiene and I do it as a ritual, so I am very careful and have not really been troubled by any medical problem I travel a lot and keep looking for ways that I can manage to keep safe. It is very scary and at times I get stomach cramps as I don't use the toilet It is really very unfair how we women have to face all these issues of infections related to bad toilets or menstrual issues. Men are Lucky! I attended a seminar about female hygiene and there are so many alternatives available that it got me curious and I surfed the internet and have tried various products and if I find something will be a good solution I don't mind spending an extra bit for it</p> |
| Awareness and usage of IFH products | <p><i>Awareness:</i> sanitary pads (100%); tampons (85%) and menstrual cups (45%); seat spray (80%); intimate wipes (40%); urination devices (60%-unaware group) Honestly, I am quite comfortable with pads. I have been using pads since I got my first period, also it is very accessible in all the mom and pop stores and pharmacy stores as well. Therefore, I never really thought about shifting to the other substitutes Many of my friends use tampons so even I am curious to try out the product, but then again I would have to go through the hassle of consulting a gynecologist as to what precautions I should take while using the product .So it is ok better to use tried and tested Intimate hygiene wash, trimmers for sensitive areas, roll-ons for period pain are good I have heard there are these toilet seat sprays and urinating products but never really seen any in the shops and never been curious to try. I mean I don't need it so why bother Himalaya has a very nice and affordable range of female hygiene products, Sofy, and Peebuddy also have nice products Yes, I have heard about these stand-up and Pee, but I think it is sick why should you do it you can “Chair” and do it</p> |
| Reactions: Peebuddy Aware group | <p>I have used Peebuddy, I got a free sample in a seminar so used it once. But found it messy as it messes up my salwar (Indian pants) so not really for me I saw a video and got curious, I used it and find it extremely useful. I always carry it with me when I know I am going to be out for long I will never use it I don't like the idea of standing up and doing it. I mean there are things which are Male and others that are female I think the product is good, but I don't need it, I am used to using tissue paper to clean the seat. So maybe like someone who travels a lot it is ok</p> |

(continued)

Table E3

Reactions: Peebuddy
Unaware group

I think it is the best thing anyone could have created. I mean I find it so painful to sit down to do it, so this is my saviour, I use it regularly and buy the pack of 40 (obese woman in late 40s)
I am a sales executive with Amazon. I always have Peebuddy in my backpack. It is bit expensive, so I buy and use carefully
It may be good, but it is embarrassing to go and buy it or tell your dad or brother that I use Peebuddy. I mean think about it, it is like pads you know, you don't like to SAY IT!
It looks quite a revolutionary product. But I do not think it is for me. I mean it is such an embarrassing thing to have and use
I think it looks good, I would be interested to use it and see if it works, I will use it for when I am going to college as our college toilets are the filthiest you can imagine
It requires quite a hassle; I mean you make a funnel then fit it and then do it. It will soil, my dress I would rather chair and do it or better still look for a clean toilet
My friends and my brothers' friends will make fun of me if they know I am using it
I have never heard of this. There is no advertisement or any information about it so did not even know there is anything like this
225 Rupees for a pack of 10! so almost 20 Rupees for a single use that is too expensive!
I think it is worth it and not priced expensive, I mean if it can save me form a urine infection and doctor's fee and medicines, it is nothing! Yes, I am going to try it
This is made of paper! So will get wet and dirty or tear, No! No! Does not look ok! Too messy!
I think it will solve a lot of problems that we as women face in terms of UTI. I can clearly see how it will save me from an infection. Someone has understood a very basic but unsaid woman need
Actually, this will work very well you know for overweight women or you know pregnant women who cannot sit down to do it. Yes, it is a great solution for them

Notes: Four FGDs were conducted, two with women who were "aware-but-not-used" (60%) and those who were "aware-and-used" (40%) Peebuddy. Four FGD were conducted with women who were unaware about Peebuddy. The consolidated findings of the discussions are summarized in the table

Source: Company's summarized documents on FGDs

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