From Niche to Norm

**Brand Positioning Adoption Strategies
in the Stigmatised Menstrual Industry
for start-up CupHub**

CupHub
for every period.

Preface

This thesis is the result of a journey that started during my Bachelor End Project, where the first seeds of Casey were planted. Back then, the concept was still rough, but the vision: to create a better experience for menstrual cup users, was already there. During my master's, I had the opportunity to build on that idea, team up with my co-founder Aart, and explore how to bring Casey to life, not just as a product, but as a strategic innovation in a complex, stigmatized market.

This project allowed me to dive deep into consumer behaviour, menstrual health, and the challenges of launching a radical innovation. I'm thankful to have been able to combine my academic work with real entrepreneurial goals.

I'd like to thank my supervisors, Erik-Jan and Jeroen, for their encouragement and flexibility in allowing me to graduate while working on my own company.

I hope this thesis offers useful insights for others working in Fem-Tech, user-first design, or behavioural innovation, and contributes, even in a small way, to more products designed with the user in mind.

Summary

Convenience = Normalisation:
A Go-To-Market Strategy for Radical Menstrual Innovations

This thesis explores how radical innovations can be successfully launched and adopted in the stigmatized menstrual industry. The study focuses on Casey, a product developed by CupHub that allows for discreet, convenient cleaning of menstrual cups in any setting. Casey is not just a product innovation, it represents a behavioural shift in a market where adoption is shaped by cultural norms, stigma, and a lack of consumer education.

The central research question asks: How can radical innovative products be launched ensuring a high level of adoption and diffusion in the stigmatized menstrual industry? To answer this, a multi-phase research process was carried out, beginning with a literature review on adoption theory, stigma, and fem-tech innovation. This was followed by a market and competitor analysis, and extensive qualitative fieldwork including interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups.

Findings revealed that key adoption barriers are emotional and practical: lack of knowledge, fear of visible blood, concerns about hygiene in public spaces, and discomfort with breaking social norms. Social influence, trust, and relatable product education appeared to be the important enablers. Existing menstrual education rarely includes reusable products, and marketing often overemphasizes sustainability, which is no longer a strong differentiator.

A Consumer Innovativeness (CI) framework was developed to segment potential users into personas: Adventurers, Heavy-Flowers, Imitators, and Cautious Mothers. These were mapped to Rogers' adoption curve to identify ideal targeting sequences. A phased Go-To-Market (GTM) strategy was then designed to match each persona's values, readiness, and information needs.

The strategic vision for Casey is anchored in convenience, as this was the most consistent motivator across all personas. The final GTM plan outlines short-term actions targeting current Cup-Users and long-term efforts focused on education and community normalisation through schools, parents, and doctors.

This thesis offers both academic and practical contributions. It introduces a structured GTM framework for launching radical innovations in stigmatized markets and highlights the importance of aligning communication and positioning strategies with different stages of adoption, based on Consumer Innovativeness (CI) levels. As a result, it provides practical recommendations for brands navigating highly personal, habit-driven categories.

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Introduction

This chapter introduces the research context, outlines the main research question, and defines the relevance of the study. It explains the significance of launching radical innovations, like Casey, in the stigmatized menstrual care industry. The introduction sets the stage by presenting the theoretical, practical, and social motivations behind this thesis and outlines the structure of the report.

Figure 1: Casey, the portable menstrual cup cleaner.

1.1 Background and Context

Tampons and pads come with multiple disadvantages: they make a major contribution to environmental waste and cause potential health concerns due to materials used (Proulx, 2024). Additionally, the financial burden of disposable menstrual products is substantial, with one in ten menstruators in the Netherlands unable to afford them (Plan Internationaal, 2019).

The menstrual cup is cheaper, better for the body and more sustainable, but remains a niche product, despite the growing awareness (Sjouwerman, 2017). Although menstrual cups offer several benefits, they come with challenges such as required behavioural changes, consumer learning and handling menstrual blood, factors enhanced by stigma and limited education (Ndichu & Rittenburg, 2021).

Menstrual cups need to be rinsed with water after use, but in public restrooms, sinks are often located outside the toilet stall, making cleaning both difficult and embarrassing. This creates a main barrier to cup adoption, as users may feel uncomfortable washing their cup in a shared space. CupHub's product addresses this challenge with Casey (Figure 1), a small and hygienic cleaning solution, increasing usability and making menstrual cups more accessible to a wider audience. CupHub is a forward-thinking Fem-Tech startup dedicated to pioneering radical innovations in menstrual care. Their mission is to make the menstrual cup a mainstream choice: the 'norm', because of its multiple benefits for both users and the environment.

Casey is scheduled for launch in the following year. During initial market interactions, the founders of CupHub discovered that their product category is not only innovative but also related to stigma and discomfort. It presents a paradox: Casey requires and enables behavioural change among users, offering both an opportunity and a challenge. As Casey is CupHub's first product, addressing this challenge is vital.

However, CupHub currently does not have a go-to-market strategy that overcomes these issues. Requiring severe behavioural change is a key aspect of radical innovations (Schuhmacher et al., 2018). Especially for stigma product categories, the stigma surrounding menstruation may limit open conversations and opportunities for product trial, adding another layer of difficulty to adoption (Rogers, 2003), but methods for designing effective go-to-market (GTM) strategies for such products remain scarce (Schuhmacher et al., 2018).

To bridge this gap, this study looks at the brand positioning and GTM strategy for Casey, ensuring its successful market introduction and long-term adoption in the stigmatised menstrual industry. By developing recommendations for a GTM strategy for Casey, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of launching radical innovations in markets shaped by stigma.

1.2 Research Problem and Gap

The adoption of radical innovations in stigmatised markets, such as menstrual products, presents unique challenges. While existing research on menstrual product adoption primarily focuses on awareness, accessibility, and affordability (Plan Internationaal, 2019; Van Eijk et al., 2019), studies on go-to-market (GTM) strategies for radical innovations remain fragmented (Schuhmacher et al., 2018), with the following gaps:

- Limited research on how menstrual stigma influences adoption of new products.
- The lack of clear positioning strategies for radical menstrual products that encourage mass adoption.
- Unclear frameworks on how education and social norms shape adoption behaviour.

As Casey is one of the first movers in this product category, there is no established GTM framework for launching Casey successfully. To address these challenges, this study looks at how to position Casey effectively, ensuring high adoption rates from the initial target market to subsequent ones.

A more detailed explanation of these research gaps, supported by existing literature, is provided in Chapter 3: Literature Review.

1.3 Research Objective and Questions

This research aims to develop recommendations for a GTM strategy for launching radical menstrual innovations by examining the main factors influencing adoption, market positioning, and diffusion. The study focuses on CupHub, a start-up introducing Casey, a portable menstrual cup cleaner, an innovative solution to increase menstrual cup adoption. To achieve this objective, the following research question is formulated:

> **How can radical innovative products be launched ensuring a high level of adoption and diffusion in the stigmatised menstrual industry?**

To answer this question, five sub questions are formulated, each addressing an important aspect of adoption and diffusion. Detailed explanation can be found in Appendix 1.1

1. Which factors influence the successful adoption and diffusion of radical innovations in the market?
A well-structured go-to-market strategy is important for the adoption and diffusion of radical innovations (Schuhmacher et al., 2018). This question seeks to identify effective launch strategies by examining past launches, expert insights, and consumer expectations.

2. How does education influence the adoption of menstrual products?
Education plays a fundamental role in product adoption, as awareness and understanding of new products impact consumer behaviour (Rogers, 2003). This subquestion examines how different forms and sources of menstrual education influence the willingness to adopt innovative products and identifies knowledge gaps that may hinder adoption.

3. What barriers and motivations influence menstruators' decision to adopt new menstrual products?
Adopting a new menstrual product requires behavioural change, which can be hindered by psychological, practical, financial, or social barriers (Chiesa & Frattini, 2011). At the same time, motivations such as sustainability, comfort, or health benefits can encourage adoption. This question looks at both barriers and motivations to switching.

How do taboos influence adoption of menstrual products?
Stigmatization impacts how people perceive and discuss menstrual products, affecting openness to new options (Ndichu & Rittenburg, 2021). This subquestion investigates how social and cultural taboos shape adoption patterns and whether open conversations or exposure to alternative products can decrease these effects.

How can a positioning strategy be designed to ensure scalability while maintaining a targeted focus?
For radical innovations to succeed, they must balance niche positioning for early adopters with broader market appeal (Rogers, 2003). This question examines how a brand can maintain a clear and appealing message while allowing for expanding its reach beyond initial consumer segments.

1.4 Significance of the Study

1.4.1 Academic Contribution
This study contributes to innovation and marketing literature by connecting Consumer Innovativeness (CI) theory with adoption patterns in stigmatised product categories. It introduces a CI-based persona framework and adapts Rogers' adoption model with a pre-stage of unawareness, offering a novel approach for analyzing radical product adoption in emotionally charged, habit based markets like menstrual care.

1.4.2 Practical Relevance
The research provides actionable insights for Fem-Tech innovators, particularly those introducing radical products. For CupHub, the findings offer a clear go-to-market strategy based on behavioural data, segmentation, and phased messaging. The persona-based adoption stages provide marketers with concrete tools to tailor communication to different CI levels, reducing adoption barriers in a stigma-sensitive context.

1.4.3 Broader Application
Beyond menstrual products, the findings are applicable to other health and wellness innovations facing cultural resistance or user hesitation. The emphasis on education, peer influence, and normalisation offers a replicable model for launching taboo-breaking or behaviour-shifting products, supporting broader public health and inclusivity goals.

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured to systematically address the research question on how radical innovations can be successfully launched in the stigmatised menstrual industry. To do so, the study is divided into two different yet interrelated phases: a descriptive phase and a design phase.

Final chapter: Conclusion Final chapter: Conclusion
The final chapter of this thesis integrates all previous findings to address the central research question: How can radical innovative products be launched ensuring a high level of adoption and diffusion in the stigmatised menstrual industry? Drawing from insights into consumer behaviour, innovation theory, and contextual market analysis, this phase offers strategic recommendations for launching Casey, a radical innovation, by identifying how to overcome stigma-related barriers and stimulate both early adoption and long-term diffusion.
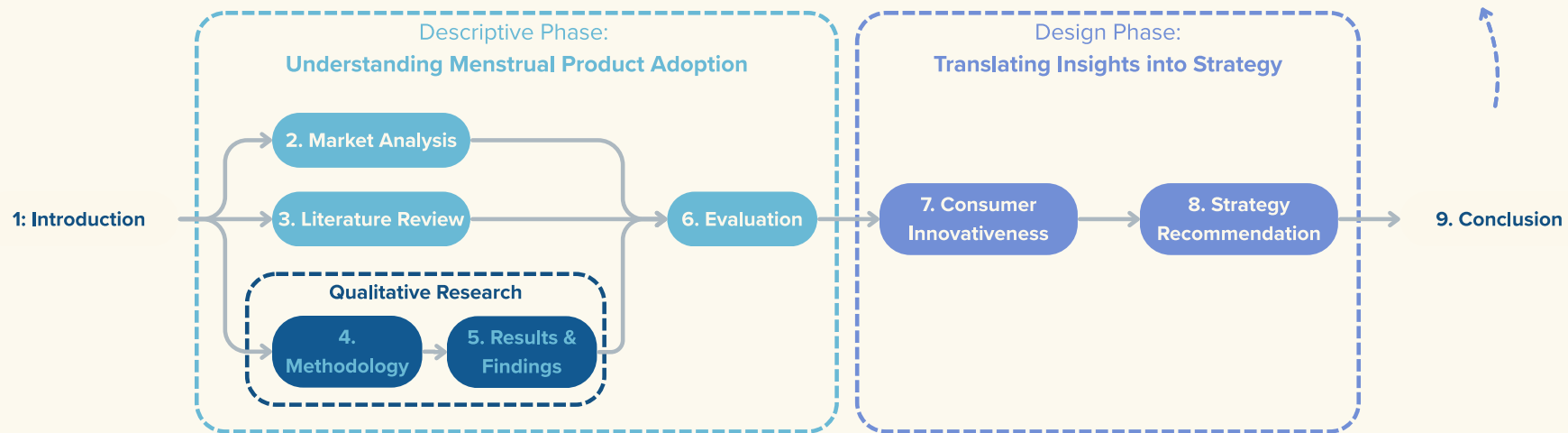
Phase 1: Understanding Menstrual Product Adoption
The Descriptive Phase focuses on analyzing the current context of menstrual product adoption. Given that Casey is a radical innovation aimed at menstrual Cup-Users, particular attention is given to the menstrual cup as the most comparable product. This phase begins with a market analysis, followed by a literature review on consumer behaviour, innovation adoption, and stigma, and concludes with a qualitative research study involving interviews. The findings of this phase are synthesized in Chapter 6, where each research question is discussed individually, and the main takeaways per sub-question are summarized. This phase sets the foundation for strategic insights.

Phase 2: Translating Insights into Strategy
Phase 2 represents the Design phase of the research. It is based on the insights from Phase 1 to develop personas that capture different consumer types based on their behaviour and Consumer Innovativeness (CI) levels. These personas serve as the basis for strategy recommendations, helping shape a go-to-market approach tailored to different consumer needs and adoption barriers relevant to Casey.

1.6 Terminology

To ensure clarity and consistency, this research defines main terms as they are used throughout the study. Some of these terms have multiple interpretations in prior research, and therefore, specific definitions are provided. Terminology specifically used in this research is also specified. Extra terms can be found in Appendix 1.2.

Adopting vs. Diffusion:
Adoption is an individual-level process, where a person decides to start using the innovation. It refers to not only trying but consistently using a product over time (Rogers, 2003). Some users adopt multiple products at the same time, for example when a tampon and pad are used at the same time as double protection. Diffusion refers to the spread of an innovation within a social system (Rogers, 2003).

Taboo vs. Stigma:
Taboo is about silence or avoidance (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2011). Menstruation is often a taboo topic: it is seen as something inappropriate or private to talk about in public. Stigma is about judgement and devaluation (Goffman, 2009). Menstrual Cup-Users may experience stigma if others perceive them as "extreme" or "unhygienic," especially when the product's usage (like cleaning in public restrooms) becomes visible.

Education Level vs. Education Content:
Education Level refers to the highest level of formal education attained (for example: primary, secondary, higher education). Education Content refers to the specific information provided in an educational setting. For menstrual health, this includes biological knowledge, product awareness, and discussions of social norms.

Menstruators:
This term is used in this study as a concise and natural-sounding alternative to "people who menstruate". This term refers to individuals who have a uterus who may not identify as a woman, but do menstruate.

Changing vs. Switching:
This study distinguishes between changing and switching menstrual products, as these behaviours have different implications for product adoption.

Changing refers to replacing the same type of menstrual product with a fresh one.
• Menstrual cups & discs: Rinsing and reinserting the same product.
• Disposable tampons & pads: Discarding and using a new one.
• Reusable pads & underwear: Replacing with a clean one and washing the used one.

Switching refers to using a different type of menstrual product than the one previously used, for example: using the pad every time to a tampon to try once.

Primary vs. Secondary Use:
Primary Use is using a product regularly relied upon during menstruation: for example: a person who uses only tampons. Secondary Use: A product is used only in specific situations where its features are beneficial, for example: Someone who primarily uses pads but occasionally uses a tampon for swimming.

Understanding Menstrual Product Adoption

This phase lays the groundwork for designing a relevant and user-informed Go-to-Market strategy. Through market research, literature review, and qualitative interviews, it explores how menstruators currently navigate their menstrual care routines—what they use, what they know, and what holds them back.

Special attention is given to menstrual cups, as their adoption offers valuable insight into the challenges of introducing a radical product in a stigmatized and habit-driven market. By unpacking emotional, social, and practical barriers, this chapter identifies patterns in behavior and perception that shape menstrual product choices.

The findings from this phase form the basis for developing personas, adoption journeys, and ultimately, the strategic direction for launching Casey.

Descriptive Phase:
Understanding Menstrual Product Adoption

Design Phase:
Translating Insights into Strategy

2. Market Analysis

3. Literature Review

6. Evaluation

Qualitative Research

4. Methodology

5. Results & Findings

1: Introduction

7. Consumer Innovativeness

8. Strategy Recommendation

9. Conclusion
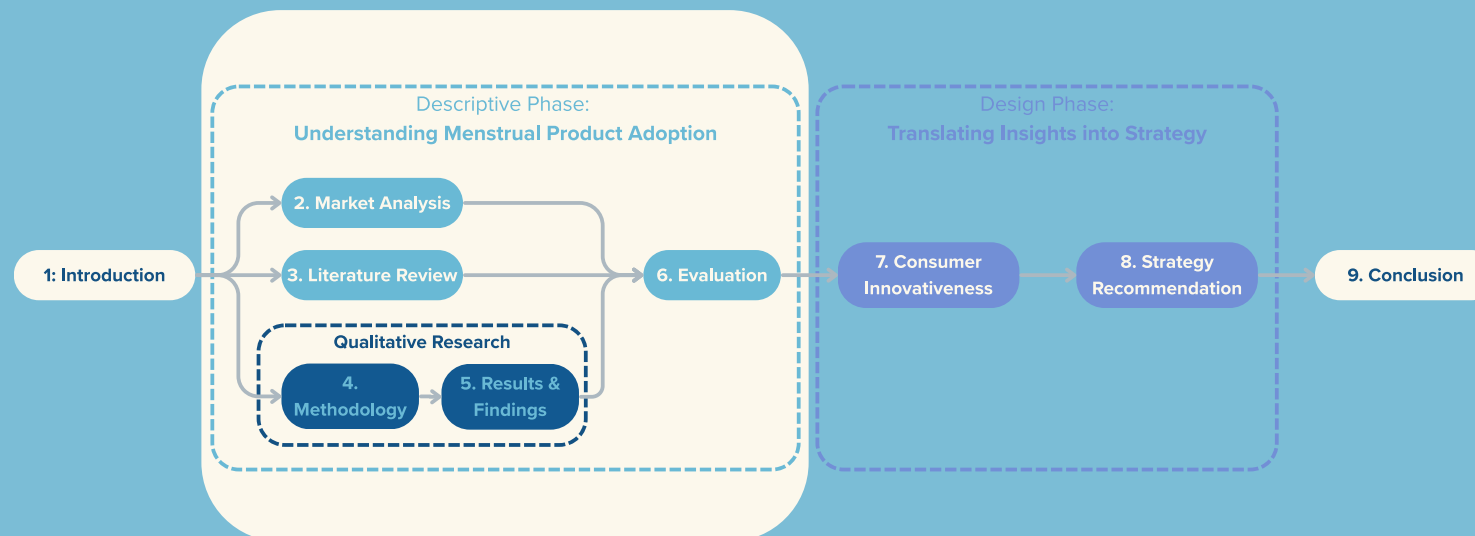
Market Analusis

To understand the market landscape of menstrual innovations, this chapter provides an analysis of the factors influencing the success of menstrual innovations, with a focus on CupHub's positioning within the Fem-Tech industry.

First, the Company CupHub Analysis examines the company's origins, and mission, highlighting its role in addressing main challenges in menstrual health. Next, the Stakeholder Map Analysis identifies the actors influencing menstrual product adoption.

The Trend Analysis looks at socio-cultural, economic, and industry-specific trends shaping the menstrual product market, including sustainability concerns, shifting consumer preferences, and regulatory developments. Finally, the Competitor Analysis assesses both direct and indirect competitors, evaluating their strategies, positioning, and market presence. This includes insights into how existing brands address adoption barriers, providing a foundation for CupHub's competitive differentiation.

By synthesizing these insights, this chapter provides the necessary market understanding to inform CupHub's strategic decision-making and ensure the successful launch and adoption of Casey.

2.1 Company CupHub Analysis

2.1.1 From study course to Start-up

CupHub originated as a bachelor's end project by Sophie Haccou, who was assigned to improve public restrooms. Sophie identified menstruation as one of the biggest issues, personally experiencing difficulties with cleaning her menstrual cup in public toilets despite its sustainability benefits. Her initial research revealed that many menstruators faced similar challenges with menstrual cups. Therefore, she designed a product to facilitate cup cleaning in any restroom.

Three years later, eager to market her product, Sophie enrolled in the Build Your Startup course, where she met her co-founder, Aart Rozendaal. Together, they now run CupHub, a direct-to-consumer (DTC) brand that aims to sell both menstrual cups and Casey, a product designed to facilitate the use of menstrual cups. Menstruators can purchase the cup as a standalone product or as part of a package that includes Casey.

2.1.2 Aiming for Worldwide Expansion

CupHub's aspirations extend beyond the Netherlands. The founders aim to expand into Europe and eventually emerging economies, where reusable menstrual cups can improve menstrual hygiene and accessibility. Their goal is to make menstrual products more accessible, sustainable, and hygienic for everyone.

To achieve this, CupHub is funded by grants and, in the future, subsidies. These financial resources enable the company to invest in product development, marketing, and awareness campaigns while ensuring affordability and accessibility for consumers.

2.1.3 CupHub addresses SDG's

CupHub aims to provide products, break taboos, raise awareness, and improve access to menstrual hygiene. The company seeks to positively impact the lives of menstruators, contributing to a world where no one has to worry about basic menstrual needs.

Casey, along with future products, plays a main role in this mission by helping to tackle period poverty and normalise sustainable menstrual care. CupHub supports several Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) (The 17 Goals, n.d.):

SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being
SDG 5: Gender Equality
SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

By aligning with these objectives, CupHub addresses immediate menstrual hygiene needs while promoting broader social and environmental sustainability. With Casey as its first product, CupHub's success depends on Casey's adoption, as it serves as the foundation for building the company and expanding into future radical Fem-Tech innovations.

Through its Direct to Consumer (D2C) model (Figure 2), CupHub aims to establish direct relationships with customers, ensuring personalized education, strong community engagement, and a seamless purchasing experience.
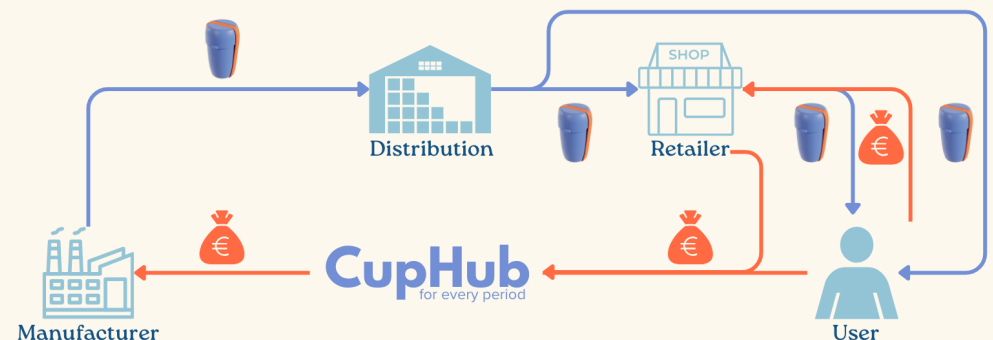
Figure 2: Business Model CupHub

2.2 Stakeholder Map Analysis

To successfully launch Casey, CupHub must address a wide range of stakeholders who influence menstrual product acceptance and diffusion. In stigmatised markets like menstrual health, influencers include educators, guardians, competitors, organisations, and industry experts (figure 3), all of whom shape perceptions and accessibility in their own unique ways. By mapping and categorising these stakeholders, CupHub can create targeted engagement strategies that effectively position Casey for broad adoption and long-term success. A broad overview of stakeholders can be found in Appendix 2.1.

Stakeholders:

- Industry Experts: Organisations such as Rutgers, a sexuality research institute, investigate sexual health and contraception trends. Based on their studies, they develop programs that are used in schools.
- Competitors: Businesses that manufacture and sell menstrual products both drive and respond to consumer demand.
- Other buyer: Sometimes others buy menstrual products on behalf of menstruators, for example: partners of menstruators.
- Organisations: Schools, companies, NGOs (for example: Red Cross), and retail shops distribute menstrual products through receptions, donation programs, or store shelves.

- Guardians: Mothers, fathers, and guardians buy menstrual products for menstruators, and their purchasing decisions shape which products are used.
- Educators: Biology teachers and external educators teach about menstruation and menstrual products.
- Menstruators: In the context of this research, several target groups have been identified based on their relationship with menstrual cups. These terms were created to categorise participants accurately and allow for a deeper understanding of user behaviour.
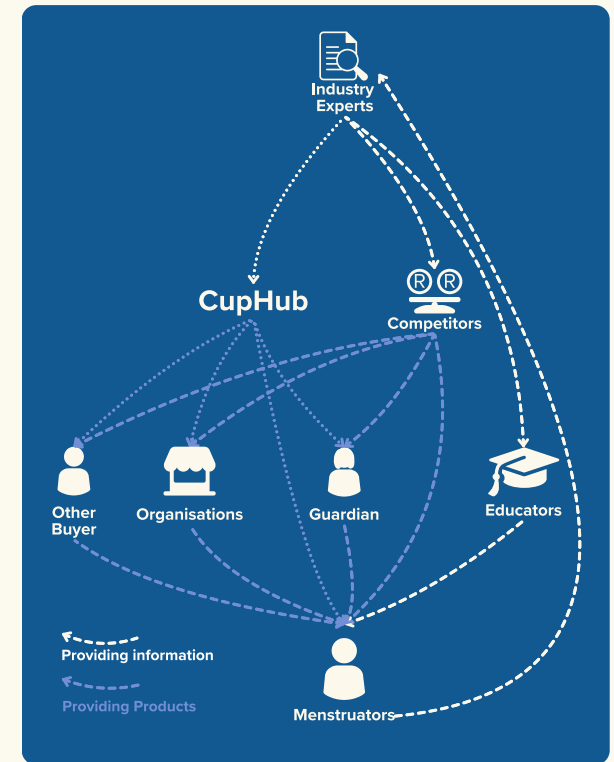
Figure 3: Stakeholder Map

Menstruators

Cup Owners	Non Cup Owners
Individuals who own a menstrual cup, but not necessarily use it.	Individuals who do not own a menstrual cup

* People who were born male, who have no uterus and therefore cannot menstruate.

Cup-Users	Cup-Stoppers	Cup-Doubters	Non Cup-Users	Others

Menstruators who both own and use a cup.	Menstruators who used a cup but stopped using it.	Are aware of the cup	• Do not know the cup
			• Currently not menstruating
			  ○ Menopause
			  ○ Children
			  ○ Medical reasons
			• Religion reasons
				• Men *

2.3 Trend Analysis

This chapter provides insights into trends driving change in the menstrual product market. With the rapid growth of Fem-Tech, partly due to the rising adoption of menstrual cups, innovation is shaped by shifting consumer values, new regulations, and increasing health and sustainability awareness (Figure 4).

The FemTech industry is experiencing significant growth, with the global market projected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of over 13.32% between 2020 and 2026 (Arizton Advisory and Intelligence, 2021). FemTech includes technology-driven healthcare solutions tailored to female health needs, including menstrual health, fertility, and menopause care (Yi et al., 2024).

These areas are under-researched, fuelling growth through increased investments in female health technologies and rising awareness (Arizton Advisory and Intelligence, 2021). Market projections indicate an absolute growth of approximately 112%, translating to an incremental increase of around USD 40 billion between 2020 and 2026 (Arizton Advisory and Intelligence, 2021).

Within FemTech, menstrual health represents the largest market segment and the device segment currently holds the largest market share (Arizton Advisory and Intelligence, 2021). Due to increasing health awareness, 44% of female consumers are exploring alternative and healthier options for menstrual care (Rude, 2024).

Menstruators demand Reliability

The COVID-19 pandemic brought new attention to the accessibility and availability of menstrual products. In some countries, single-use options became harder to find due to disrupted supply chains (Menstrual Cup Market Size & Share Analysis, n.d.). As a result, some menstruators started looking into long-term solutions like menstrual cups.

Cup Market Grows
The menstrual cup market is projected to reach a valuation of USD 1,654.90 million by 2033, growing at a CAGR of 6.4% from 2023 to 2033 (Menstrual Cups Market Growth, 2023). In the Netherlands, the adoption was 8.2% of Dutch menstruators aged 21 to 25 reporting cup usage in 2019 (Plan Internationaal, 2019). Dutch brands like YONI have reported a 125% increase in menstrual cup sales within a single year in 2017 (Sjouwerman, 2017), indicating a rising awareness and interest in sustainable menstrual care.

Regulatory Developments in Menstrual Products

In September 2023, the European Commission introduced new EU Ecolabel criteria for absorbent hygiene products and reusable menstrual cups. These standards ensure that products meet high environmental and quality requirements, supporting sustainability in menstrual care products (European Commission, 2023). This certification could increase consumer trust in reusable menstrual products, potentially influencing adoption rates by reassuring consumers about safety and performance.

Anti-Hormonal Contraceptive increases Periods

According to the 2023 Sexual Health Monitor by Rutgers, RIVM, and CBS, there is a declining trend in hormonal contraceptive use. This shift influences the menstrual product market, as individu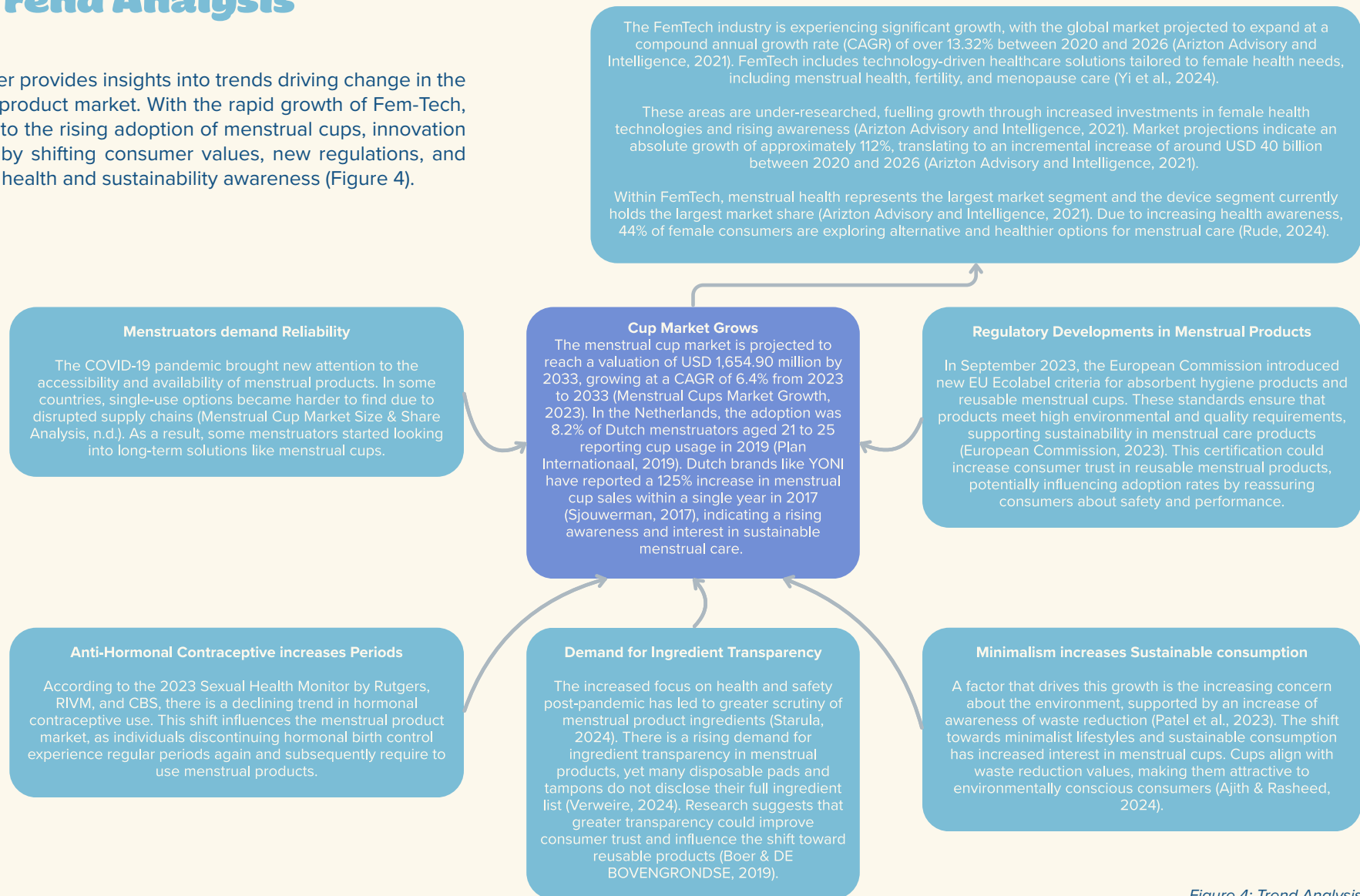als discontinuing hormonal birth control experience regular periods again and subsequently require to use menstrual products.

Demand for Ingredient Transparency

The increased focus on health and safety post-pandemic has led to greater scrutiny of menstrual product ingredients (Starula, 2024). There is a rising demand for ingredient transparency in menstrual products, yet many disposable pads and tampons do not disclose their full ingredient list (Verweire, 2024). Research suggests that greater transparency could improve consumer trust and influence the shift toward reusable products (Boer & DE BOVENGRONDSE, 2019).

Minimalism increases Sustainable consumption

A factor that drives this growth is the increasing concern about the environment, supported by an increase of awareness of waste reduction (Patel et al., 2023). The shift towards minimalist lifestyles and sustainable consumption has increased interest in menstrual cups. Cups align with waste reduction values, making them attractive to environmentally conscious consumers (Ajith & Rasheed, 2024).

Figure 4: Trend Analysis

2.3.2 Evaluation of Trends

The trend analysis reveals growth opportunities for CupHub, but also underscores barriers that continue to complicate the adoption of reusable menstrual products like Casey. While increasing health awareness and the expansion of the Fem-Tech sector support innovation, the pace of adoption is still moderated by issues of stigma, accessibility, and consumer skepticism.

1. Sustainability & Transparency

Sustainability is one of the main drivers behind menstrual cup adoption, largely due to rising environmental consciousness and minimalist lifestyles (Ajith & Rasheed, 2024; Hait & Powers, 2019). However, this value is increasingly diluted by greenwashing concerns, brands overstating eco-credentials without evidence. The recent EU Ecolabel (European Commission, 2023) introduces standardized criteria for sustainable menstrual products, offering CupHub a chance to establish trust by aligning Casey with certified benchmarks. This also taps into the trend of ingredient transparency, which continues to grow in importance among menstruators (Verweire, 2024; Sjouwerman, 2017).

2. Consumer Behaviour Shifts

During the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain disruptions reduced access to disposable menstrual products, stimulating a shift toward reusables such as cups (Menstrual Cup Market Size & Share Analysis, n.d.). In the U.S., this shift was supported by at-home convenience, such as access to private sinks (Menstrual Cups Market Growth, 2023). While direct Dutch data is scarce, similar shifts are likely. Interestingly, as presented in Figure 5, Google Trends shows a dip in cup-related searches during the pandemic suggests that physical availability of cups in stores may have reduced the need for online searches (Google Trends, n.d.; Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2024).

3. Accessibility and Availability

The COVID-19 context revealed how sensitive product adoption is to accessibility. When disposable options were less available, interest in long-term solutions like cups grew. This reinforces that improving physical and informational access, such as through store availability and education, can drive adoption, especially in stigmatised product categories.
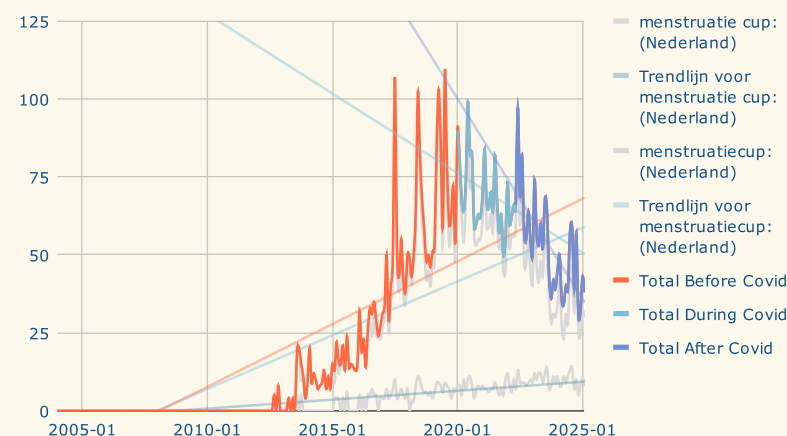
Google Search

Figure 5: Amount of Google searches to 'menstruatie cup' and 'menstruatiecup' in The Netherlands before, during and after Covid-19 (Google Trends, n.d.).

Notes:
- *Searches for 'menstruatie cup' and 'menstruatiecup' on Google are presented. The orange line represents the sum of searches for the combined terms, with the single differentiation being the whitespace between the words: 'menstruatie' and 'cup'.*
- *The data indicates an increasing trend in search activity. This trendline was generated using data from 2005 to 2025; however, no searches occurred before September 1, 2012. If the number of searches exceeds zero, it logically follows that the trendline indicates a rise.*

2.3.3 Takeaways Trend Analysis

Market Growth and Innovation
The Fem-Tech sector, led by menstrual health products like cups, is expanding rapidly. This creates momentum for radical innovations such as Casey (Arizton Advisory and Intelligence, 2021; Menstrual Cups Market Growth, 2023).

Sustainability must be Credible
Although sustainability motivates many consumers, it no longer sets brands apart. Verified eco-labels and ingredient transparency are key to building trust (European Commission, 2023; Verweire, 2024).

Shifting user Behaviour
Post-COVID, consumers seeked long-term solutions like cups due to disrupted access to disposables. This reinforces the importance of availability and convenience in adoption (Menstrual Cup Market Size & Share Analysis, n.d.).

Changing Contraceptive use affects Demand
Post-COVID, consumers seeked long-term solutions like cups due to disrupted access to disposables. This reinforces the importance of availability and convenience in adoption (Menstrual Cup Market Size & Share Analysis, n.d.).

Sustainable Lifestyles Drive Adoption
Eco-conscious and minimalist trends support the appeal of reusable products. Menstrual cups, and Casey, align with these long-term values (Ajith & Rasheed, 2024; Patel et al., 2023).

2.4 Competitors

This chapter reviews the competitive landscape of menstrual products, indicating the main product categories, brands, and their market approaches. While pads and tampons still dominate, newer solutions like cups and period underwear are gaining awareness. By examining these this chapter identifies competitors' positionings to avoid similarities, laying the basis for a unique and effective market strategy.

2.4.1 Menstrual Product Competitors

To gain insight into the menstrual product landscape and its competitors, an overview of the available options has been created. Menstrual products can be categorized into disposable and reusable products.
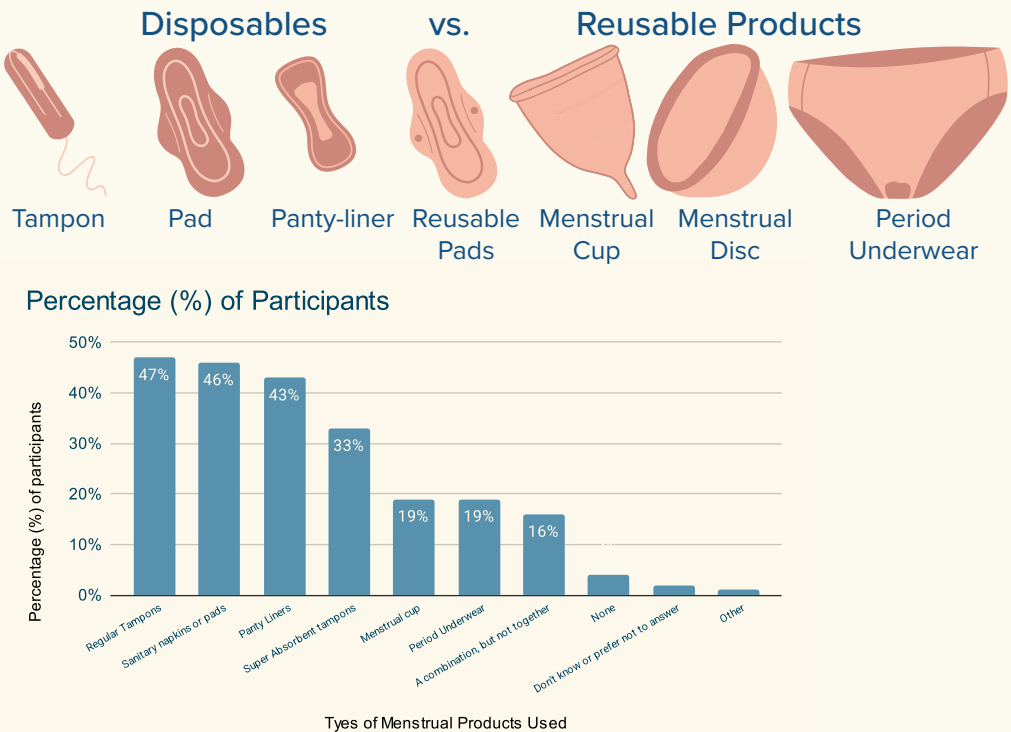

| Disposables | vs. | Reusable Products |

Tampon   Pad   Panty-liner   Reusable Pads   Menstrual Cup   Menstrual Disc   Period Underwear

Figure 6: Types of Menstrual Products Used in the U.S. (Mcollyer, 2023).

Tampons are popular in the Netherlands

Menstrual product adoption varies widely between countries and age groups. This section compares the Netherlands, where data remains limited, to the United States, which offers more detailed, recent information on menstrual product preferences.

According to a 2019 Statista report, 72.5% of Dutch menstruators aged 21–25 use tampons (Figure 7). This statistic underscores the continued dominance of single-use products in the Netherlands. Beyond tampons, 8.2% of Dutch menstruators in the same age group reported using menstrual cups (Plan International, 2019).

A more comprehensive 2023 survey from Mcollyer reveals diverse product usage among U.S. menstruators. While regular tampons (47%) and pads (46%) remain prevalent (Figure 6), notable segments report using super-absorbent tampons (33%) and pairing multiple products (e.g., pads or tampons, 16%). Significantly, 19% use a menstrual cup and an equal proportion wear period underwear. These numbers suggest that eco-friendly and longer-wear solutions have become more mainstream.

The higher U.S. adoption rate of menstrual cups (19%) compared to the 8.2% reported in the Netherlands may reflect differences in marketing, education, or social acceptance. It is also possible that Dutch adoption has grown since 2019, though the lack of more recent data makes direct comparisons challenging. Nonetheless, both markets exhibit a similar trend: single-use products still dominate, but there is an increasing openness to reusable alternatives.
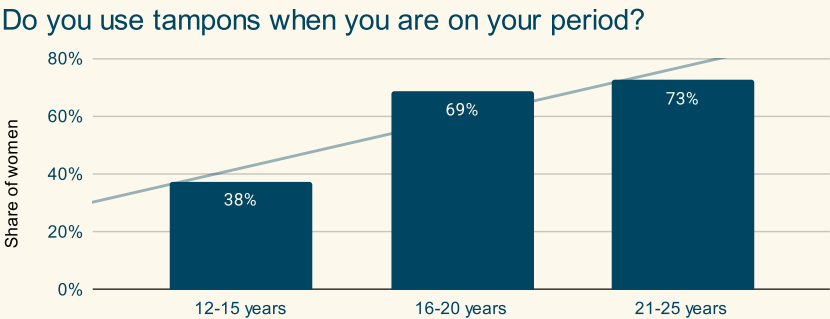

Figure 7: Overview of tampons used in The Netherlands (Statista, 2019).

2.4.2 Brand Competitors

Menstrual cups offer a variety of potential advantages, ranging from sustainability and cost-effectiveness to comfort, which gives brands several options for their market positioning. Understanding where each competitor concentrates its messaging not only reveals potential market gaps but also helps CupHub refine its own positioning in a way that highlights its unique value.

The diagram in figure 8 shows an analysis of where competitors focus with their strategy. The scores were assigned based on the degree of emphasis each one places on particular benefits. Higher totals indicate commonly shared strategies, whereas lower totals suggest more specialized or less typical approaches.

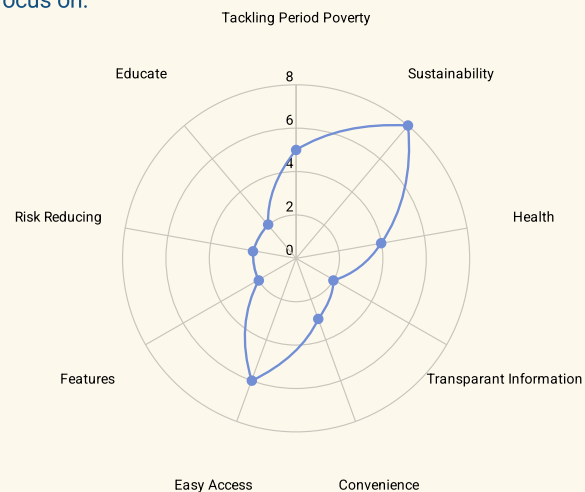More information can be found in the Appendix 2.2.

Figure 8: Analysis of Strategic elements Competitors focus on

Takeaways:

- Sustainability is saturated: With a score of 8, sustainability continues to be the most frequently highlighted positioning. This suggests that most brands present their menstrual products as eco-friendly, though this also reduces its power as a differentiator.
- Cup are easy to access: With a score of 6, menstrual cups can be bought wherever menstruators want to. Cups are sold on popular sites online and well known retail shops offline.
- Tackling Period Poverty Are Gaining Ground: Tackling period poverty (5) ranks highly, indicating that brands are now addressing broader social issues, also including sustainability. These themes may increasingly define competitive advantage in the sector.
- Health and Education Receive Moderate Attention: Both health (4) and education (2) are acknowledged, but not strongly prioritized across the board. Brands that focus more deliberately on education and health messaging may better appeal to Cup-Doubters.
- Underleveraged Differentiators: Transparent Information and Risk-Reducing Messaging
- With scores of just 2 each, transparent information and risk-reducing strategies remain underused. These represent opportunities for brands to build user confidence and trust, particularly among first-time buyers.
- Convenience and Feature-Focused Messaging Are Still Limited
- Both convenience (3) and product features (2) are present but not dominant. Yet for on-the-go users or those with specific needs, these could be switch factors if more strongly communicated.

2.4.3 Casey's Competitors

Over the past years, improvements have been made in menstrual product innovation, ranging from usability enhancements to entirely new product categories. An overview can be found in Appendix 2.3. Table 1 is a comparison of the sterilisers of DivaCup, Bamboozy, Emanui and Eleria. DivaCup and Bamboozy offer sterilisers primarily for at-home use, with Bamboozy's product supporting its broader cup strategy. In contrast, Emanui and Eleria provide combined cleaning and sterilising functions, making them direct competitors to Casey. However, their strategies remain underdeveloped: Eleria has not yet launched, and Emanui's positioning is still evolving.

Table 1: Direct Competitors of Casey

Product	Ideal Setting	Based in	Distributed to
DivaCup Shaker Cup (DivaCup, n.d.)	On-the-go, limited access to sinks (e.g. dorms, public)	Canada (Kitchener, Ontario)	North America, Europe, Australia & other global markets via online retailers
Bamboozy Sterilizer (Bamboozy, n.d.)	Home or travel with microwave access	The Netherlands	EU, international via webshops (e.g. Amazon)
Emanui Steriliser (Emanui, n.d.)	On-the-go cleaning and at-home sterilization	EU (likely Central Europe)	Global (online store shipping to EU, US, and other international regions)
Eleria Cup Cleaning Case (Eleria, n.d.)	Suitable for both home and travel	UK	Various international markets (via eleria.com)

Takeaways Casey's Competitors:

Portability and Leak Prevention:
While each product is portable, only the DivaCup Shaker Cup and Emanui Steriliser explicitly highlight fully watertight or leak-proof designs. Bamboozy's foldable cup is easy to store but requires microwaving and does not emphasize complete spill-proof transport.

Sterilization Method:
All four rely on hot water for sanitizing. DivaCup Shaker Cup focuses on shaking with water and cleanser, whereas Bamboozy, Emanui and Eleria can both be microwaved for deep cleaning.

Intended Use Context:
The DivaCup Shaker Cup and Emanui are explicitly marketed as on-the-go solutions, useful in dorms or public restrooms. Bamboozy's product functions effectively for frequent sterilization at home or wherever a microwave is accessible.

2.4.4 Job-to-Be-Done (JTBD) Analysis

To understand the broader context in which Casey operates, a Job-to-Be-Done (JTBD) (Figure 9) analysis was conducted. Extra information can be found in Appendix 2.4. This approach focuses not on the product, but on the functional and emotional jobs menstruators are trying to fulfill during their cycle, particularly when using or considering a menstrual cup.
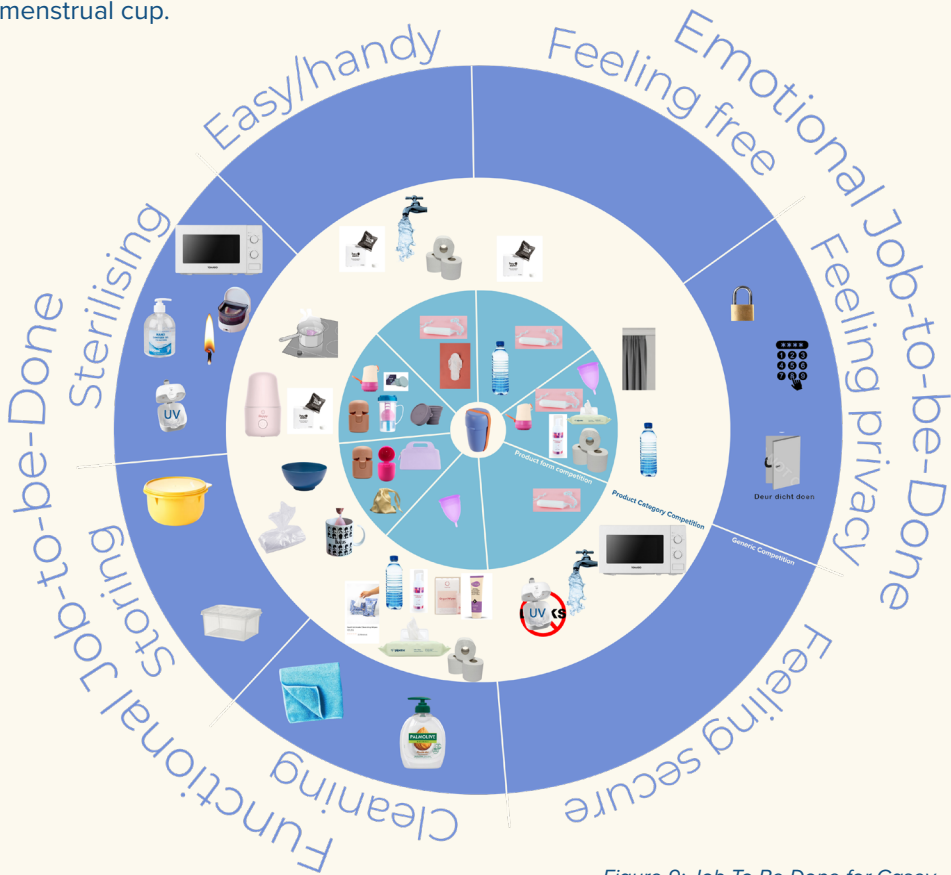

Figure 9: Job To Be Done for Casey

Functional Job	Description	Current Solutions
Cleaning the cup	Remove menstrual blood and maintain hygiene	Water bottles, toilet paper, wet wipes, douches
Storing the cup	Keep the cup safe and discreet between uses	Cotton bags, mugs, bowls, Tupperware
Sterilizing the cup	Ensure the cup is bacteria-free pre/post cycle	Pots, microwaves, sterilizing cups, chemical tabs

These functional jobs are often solved in improvised, inconvenient, or unsanitary ways, highlighting the need for a more streamlined solution.

Emotional Need	Description	Current Experience
Ease & Simplicity	Avoid mess, stress, or multi-step routines	Complicated, especially in public restrooms
Discretion	Avoid social discomfort or exposure	Embarrassment in shared spaces or homes
Security	Feel confident about hygiene and leakage	Uncertainty, especially for first-time users
Freedom	Engage in normal daily activities without worry	Products often feel limiting or unreliable

These emotional jobs are closely tied to whether menstruators feel the product fits their life, not just whether it works.

2.4.5 Competitor Discussion

Competitive Positioning and Consumer Trust
Menstrual cup brands employ various strategies to overcome adoption barriers, such as risk-free trials, educational support, and community-driven initiatives. The established brand AllMatters offers money-back guarantees, allowing consumers to try a cup without financial risk, which helps reduce hesitancy among first-time users. Instead of adopting a money-back guarantee approach, CupHub could differentiate itself through alternative trust-building measures, such as comprehensive educational support, community engagement, and starter kits that include cleaning solutions. These strategies can help consumers feel more confident in switching to a menstrual cup, particularly since the main barriers to adoption include uncertainty, lack of information, and hygiene concerns.

In stigmatised markets like menstruation, emotional needs, such as privacy, confidence, and ease, often outweigh functional concerns. However, current competitors rarely address these dimensions directly. This presents an opportunity for CupHub to position Casey not just as a cleaning solution, but as an emotionally supportive tool that reduces social discomfort and enables discreet, confident use in real-life settings.

While many menstrual cup brands operate internationally, YONI stands out as a direct competitor to CupHub due to its strong presence in the Dutch market. As a well-established brand with years of experience, YONI has already built main retail partnerships and brand recognition, making it a strong player in the industry. However, YONI primarily emphasizes ingredient transparency and consumer health, which may attract a different segment of the menstrual cup market if CupHub's focus is, for example, on usability, discretion, and convenience.

Market Opportunities for CupHub
Given the current competitor landscape, CupHub has the opportunity to position itself as an innovation-driven brand that prioritizes consumer experience and convenience. While existing brands emphasise sustainability and material safety, few have focused on solving the hygiene and usability challenges associated with menstrual cup adoption in public spaces. By emphasizing the practical advantages of Casey, CupHub can differentiate itself from brands that primarily focus on product materials rather than usability improvements.

The JTBD analysis further revealed that emotional needs, such as feeling secure, maintaining privacy, and being able to clean easily in shared environments, are rarely addressed by existing solutions. Casey can stand out by offering a comprehensive solution that meets both functional and emotional jobs, especially for hesitant users navigating stigma or unfamiliarity.

Additionally, as the menstrual product market continues to evolve, educational initiatives will play an important role in expanding consumer adoption. While YONI and AllMatters have focused on transparency and sustainability, CupHub can apply a combination of education, hygiene solutions, and usability enhancements to carve out a different position in the market.

2.5 Main Takeaways

Market Trends
- Sustainability leads but is overused: no longer a strong differentiator.
- Health, period poverty, and access are rising themes, but not yet central in most brand strategies.

Missed Opportunities
- Education, transparency, and risk-reduction are underleveraged despite their importance for first-time users.
- Convenience and product features are not well-communicated, leaving room for clearer messaging.

Emotional Positioning
- Emotional needs like privacy, confidence, and ease are rarely addressed, but they are important in stigmatized categories.
- CupHub can stand out by combining practical usability with emotional reassurance.

Opportunity for Casey
- Position Casey as an essential, confidence-boosting tool, not just an accessory.
- Focus on trust, usability, and discreet cleaning, especially in public spaces.

Literature Review

This literature review is structured around the sub-research questions and consists of three main sections. The first looks at the problems surrounding menstruation. The second examines theories of product adoption, with a particular focus on radical innovations and their diffusion in the market. The final section looks into specific literature on menstrual cup adoption, providing insights into the challenges and opportunities for introducing Casey.

3

3.1 Challenges Menstrual Health & Industry

Menstrual health remains a global challenge, with menstruators facing obstacles related to hygiene, accessibility, education and stigma. These challenges are deeply interconnected, often reinforcing one another. Limited access to products and facilities can increase health risks, while inadequate education and societal taboos discourage open discussions about menstrual care. This section looks at these main barriers in menstrual health and the menstrual product industry. More information can be found in Appendix 3.2.

3.1.1 Menstrual Health Education

Early education about menstruation is inconsistent across schools, with many elementary institutions failing to provide menstrual education or emergency supplies (Boer & DE BOVENGRONDSE, 2019). Research indicates that only three out of ten girls receive menstrual education in primary school and four out of ten in secondary school, despite its importance in fostering informed and confident menstruators (Figure 10; Plan Internationaal, 2019).

The way menstruation is introduced also plays a role in shaping long-term attitudes. When menstrual education occurs in private settings, such as one-on-one discussions with mothers or gender-segregated school lessons: it reinforces the idea that menstruation is a sensitive, private matter (Kissling, 1996). This framing contributes to menstrual stigma, making individuals less likely to look at alternative products, such as menstrual cups, which require a more hands-on approach and a willingness to challenge ingrained taboos (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2011).

3.1.2 Period poverty

One in ten menstruators in the Netherlands face period poverty (Plan Internationaal, 2019). Many who cannot afford menstrual products are forced to use unsanitary alternatives or reduce food expenses to afford them (Klaassen, 2023).

Beyond financial constraints, period poverty also limits product choice. Menstruators who rely on donated or free period products may have no option but to use disposable items, despite a personal preference for reusable solutions like menstrual cups (Boer & DE BOVENGRONDSE, 2019).

3.1.3 Social Norms and Cultural Taboos

Social norms and cultural taboos limit open discussions about menstruation, limiting awareness of alternative menstrual products (UNESCO New Delhi et al., 2023). Parents and teachers play an essential role in educating young menstruators, yet many feel uncomfortable discussing menstruation, increasing silence and misinformation (UNESCO New Delhi et al., 2023).

Menstrual stigma is reinforced by the use of euphemisms: terms like "Aunt Flo" or "that time of the month", which frame menstruation as something that must be concealed (UNESCO New Delhi et al., 2023). The reluctance to discuss menstruation openly reduces product awareness and discourages menstruators from seeking information about alternatives like menstrual cups.

Uitsplitsing naar leeftijdsgroep

	12-15 jaar	16-20 jaar	21-25 jaar
Gesprekken met mijn moeder	93,5	92,1	88,8
Gesprekken met andere vrouwen (bijv. vriendinnen)	35,3	66,0	60,5
Via lessen op de middelbare school	25,5	48,5	43,2
Via internet	17,8	49,9	44,4
Via lessen op de basisschool	36,0	28,2	24,6
Gesprekken met mijn zus(sen)	17,5	22,4	22,6
Via boeken	10,2	14,8	15,6
Gesprekken met mijn vader	10,2	4,5	4,2
Via lessen op het hoger onderwijs (studie, cursus, opleiding)	0,7	5,3	3,5
Gesprekken met andere mannen (bijv. vrienden)	1,5	2,9	1,5
Gesprekken met broer(s)	0,7	1,1	0,7
Anders, namelijk:	1,1	1,3	1,7
Weet ik niet	1,1	0,8	2,0
N	275	379	403

Figure 10: In what ways have you acquired your knowledge on the subject of menstruation?
(Plan Internationaal (2019))

While menstrual exclusion is rare in Dutch culture, stigma still manifests in more subtle ways. For example, 19% of young girls in the Netherlands report that menstruation is never discussed at home (Boer & DE BOVENGRONDSE, 2019). This lack of conversation creates uncertainty and discomfort around menstruation, reinforcing secrecy and a reluctance to adopt less conventional products (Ndichu & Rittenburg, 2021).

3.2 Adoption Theories

To understand how radical innovations, such as Casey, can achieve widespread adoption, established adoption theories are examined. One of the most influential frameworks in innovation diffusion is Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003). Extra information is placed in Appendix 3.1. This theory explains how new products, behaviours, or ideas spread within a population and identifies main factors influencing their adoption.

By applying Rogers' adoption theory, this research provides insights into how Casey can overcome adoption barriers and successfully diffuse within the stigmatised menstrual industry.

3.2.1 Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Rogers (2003) describes the adoption process as occurring in five sequential stages:

1. Aware: The potential adopter becomes aware of the innovation but lacks detailed information.
2. Interest: The individual forms an attitude towards the innovation, influenced by perceived advantages, social influence, or personal relevance.
3. Evaluation: The individual chooses to adopt or reject the innovation, often influenced by trialability and peer recommendations.
4. Trial: The adopter starts using the innovation, requiring behavioural change.
5. Adoption: The adopter seeks reinforcement of their decision and may either continue or discontinue use.

3.2.2 Market and Majority Market Adoption

The market consists of potential consumers. Within this, the majority market refers to consumers who adopt an innovation only after it has gained widespread acceptance (Figure 11; Rogers, 2003). Unlike early adopters, these consumers require proof of effectiveness and social validation before switching to new products (Schuhmacher et al., 2018). This differentiation is particularly relevant for menstrual product adoption, as societal taboos and misinformation can delay acceptance among mainstream consumers.

Stages of Adoption

Aware	Interest	Evaluation	Trial	Adoption

Figure 11: The five adoption stages according to Rogers (2003).

3.2.3 Marketing in Stigmatised Industries

When launching products in stigmatised markets, such as menstrual products, it is important to consider how advertising and branding shape consumer perception. According to Merskin (1999), advertisements are not merely promotional tools but cultural artifacts that influence societal norms. Historically, marketing strategies for menstrual products have emphasized secrecy, discretion, and "freshness", reinforcing the communication taboo surrounding menstruation (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2011). Menstrual product advertising has traditionally relied on euphemisms and symbolic imagery rather than direct messaging, making it harder for consumers to engage openly with new products (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2011). Given these challenges, innovative menstrual products such as Casey require alternative marketing approaches that counteract stigma while effectively positioning the product for adoption.

3.2.4 Positioning Through the STP Model

To ensure both effective market entry and long-term adoption, a strategic positioning framework is needed. One widely used model is the Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP) model, introduced by Kotler (Kotler & Keller, 2006). The STP model provides a structured approach for understanding diverse consumer needs, selecting the most appropriate target groups, and positioning the product to maximise adoption potential.

The STP model consists of three main components:
- Segmentation: Dividing the market into groups based on shared characteristics such as demographics, psychographics, and behavioural traits.
- Targeting: Selecting one or more of these segments as the primary audience for marketing efforts.
- Positioning: Creating a different and compelling brand message that aligns with the values and preferences of the chosen target segment.

3.2.5 Adoption in Stigmatised Industries

The adoption of radical innovations in stigmatised markets is shaped by psychological, social, and economic factors. Stigma influences consumer perception, making people hesitant to adopt products that require behavioural change (Ndichu & Rittenburg, 2021). This is particularly relevant for menstrual products, where social norms, risk perception, and education levels impact adoption rates.

3.2.6 Go-to-Market Strategies for Radical Innovations

Unlike incremental innovations, which build upon existing behaviours, radical innovations require consumer learning, making them more prone to resistance (Chiesa & Frattini, 2011). Radical innovations introduce new functionalities that may be unfamiliar to the target market, leading to uncertainty and slow adoption (Rogers, 2003).

An important factor influencing the adoption of radical innovations is Consumer Innovativeness (CI): the extent to which consumers are willing to adopt and experiment with new products (Schuhmacher et al., 2017). In addition to consumer resistance, these innovations face external pressures; rapid market changes could render them outdated before achieving widespread adoption (Lafferty et al., 2005).

3.2.7 Targeting based on Consumer Innovativeness:

One of the challenges in launching a radical innovation is determining the appropriate market segment to target. Schuhmacher et al. (2017) distinguish between the early market, composed of highly innovative consumers (high CI) who actively seek out innovations, and the majority market, which consists of consumers with lower innovativeness (low CI) who adopt products only after seeing proof of their benefits.
The study highlights that an effective GTM strategy must be tailored to these different adopter groups, as they respond to different marketing signals.

Majority Market

Focus on: security & familirity
- Low launch price
- Benefit-based message
- Intensive distribution

Early Market

Focus on: Innovative & Exclusivity:
- High launch price
- Feature-based messages
- Exclusive distribution

3.2.8 Challenges Launching Radical Innovations

Radical innovations are riskier than incremental ones, requiring firms to balance speed-to-market with consumer education. Schuhmacher et al. (2017) emphasise that radical innovations face a short window of opportunity due to rapid technological advancements and shifting consumer demands. If an innovation fails to achieve market penetration quickly, it risks becoming outdated before widespread adoption occurs.

According to Schuhmacher et al. (2017), understanding Consumer Innovativeness (CI) plays an important role in developing an effective segmentation and positioning strategy. High CI consumers act as early adopters, introducing radical innovations to the market, while low CI consumers require reassurance, social proof, and reduced complexity before making a switch (Schuhmacher et al., 2017).

By integrating these theories, this research develops a strategic approach for positioning Casey in a stigmatised market, ensuring that adoption challenges are addressed while maximizing scalability.

3.3 Menstrual Cup Adoption

3.3.1 Motivations influencing Adoption Cups

The adoption of menstrual cups among consumers is influenced by a combination of health, economic, and lifestyle factors. Menstrual cups are increasingly preferred due to their lower health risks compared to disposable menstrual products, such as tampons and pads (Ajith & Rasheed, 2024). According to Ajith & Rasheed (2024), menstrual cups minimise exposure to harmful chemicals found in some disposable products, thereby reducing the likelihood of infections and other menstrual health-related issues.

In addition to health benefits, menstrual cups also offer major financial advantages. Unlike disposable menstrual products that require continuous repurchasing, menstrual cups are reusable and can last between 10 and 15 years, making them a cost-effective alternative (Saha, 2023). The long-term savings provided by menstrual cups can be particularly beneficial for individuals experiencing period poverty, where financial constraints limit access to menstrual hygiene products (Plan Internationaal, 2019).

Beyond health and financial considerations, environmental consciousness plays a growing role in menstrual cup adoption. As consumers increasingly take on minimalist lifestyles and sustainable practices, menstrual cups are seen as an eco-friendly alternative to disposable products (Ajith & Rasheed, 2024). Unlike disposable tampons and pads, which generate a lot of waste, menstrual cups drastically reduce the environmental footprint of menstrual care (Hait & Powers, 2019). This alignment with sustainability movements and reduce-waste living makes menstrual cups an attractive option for environmentally conscious consumers.

3.3.2 Social Stigma Cup usage

Despite their numerous advantages, menstrual cups face social and cultural barriers to adoption. A primary challenge is the social stigma surrounding menstruation. In many cultures, menstruation remains a taboo topic, which discourages open discussions and prevents individuals from considering alternative menstrual products, including cups. This social reluctance prevents potential users from exploring menstrual cups, despite their clear benefits. Research has shown that products with multiple societal, financial, and public health advantages, such as menstrual cups, often face stigmatization, which hinders their acceptance and adoption (Ndichu & Rittenburg, 2021).

However, peer influence plays an important role in overcoming adoption barriers. Oster & Thornton (2023) found that if a close friend uses a menstrual cup, the probability of adoption increases by 18.6 percentage points. This suggests that direct exposure and word-of-mouth recommendations can positively impact consumer perceptions, helping to reduce stigma and normalise menstrual cup use.

3.3.3 Barriers influencing Adoption Cups

Apart from social stigma, another main challenge is the perceived complexity of using menstrual cups. Many potential users are intimidated by the insertion and removal process and fear potential leakage issues (Ajith & Rasheed, 2024). These concerns are increased by a lack of education and clear product instructions, making it difficult for new users to feel confident and comfortable with the switch to menstrual cups (Boer & DE BOVENGRONDSE, 2019).

Without comprehensive menstrual health education, potential users may misunderstand how menstrual cups function, leading to hesitation and resistance to adoption. Research suggests that increasing education and awareness efforts, both in schools and through public health campaigns, could improve the acceptance and usage rates of menstrual cups (Boer & DE BOVENGRONDSE, 2019).

3.4 Research Gap & Positioning

The successful launch of radical innovations is challenging, as they require consumer learning and behavioural change, making them more likely to fail than incremental innovations (Chiesa & Frattini, 2011). Additionally, rapid market shifts can render these products outdated before achieving widespread adoption (Lafferty et al., 2005). To navigate these risks, an effective go-to-market (GTM) strategy is essential. However, existing research on GTM strategies for radical innovations is fragmented (Schuhmacher et al., 2018), and there is no established framework for launching Casey, as it introduces a completely new product category.

A main barrier to adoption is limited observability due to menstrual stigma. Social proof is a main motivation of innovation diffusion, but because menstruation is often considered a private matter, users rarely discuss or show their menstrual product habits (Rogers, 2003). This lack of visibility makes it difficult for potential adopters to see the product in use, slowing the diffusion process.

Additionally, cultural norms and consumer habits shape the acceptance of menstrual products. In many markets, disposable menstrual products remain the standard, making the switch to reusable solutions like Casey more difficult. Prior research on menstrual product adoption highlights that overcoming rooted preferences and misconceptions is needed for increasing adoption (van Eijk et al., 2019).

Another challenge is the lack of trialability. Unlike other personal care items, menstrual products require consumer learning before reaching comfort and effectiveness. Hygiene concerns and the inability to easily test such products make consumers hesitant to switch (Oster & Thornton, 2012).

This research addresses these gaps by developing recommendations for a GTM strategy for Casey, identifying barriers related to stigma, cultural fit, and trialability to ensure higher adoption and market penetration for radical menstrual innovations.

Methodology
Qualitative Research

This chapter outlines the qualitative methods used to provide insights into the adoption and diffusion of radical menstrual innovations, with a focus on Casey's future market positioning. A qualitative approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of menstruators' motivations, perceived barriers, and decision-making behaviours in a stigmatised product category.

A descriptive study was carried out to provide insights into how menstrual product adoption currently unfolds, specifically focusing on menstrual cups. These products, like Casey, are considered radical innovations (Schuhmacher et al., 2018), yet cups are already available on the market. This makes them suitable for identifying switching patterns and understanding Consumer Innovativeness (CI) levels in practice (Schuhmacher et al., 2018).

4

4.1 Research Design & Approach

To answer the main research question: "How can radical innovative products be launched ensuring a high level of adoption and diffusion in the stigmatised menstrual industry?", a combination of literature review, interviews, focus groups, and observations was used.

The sub-research questions focused on (2) menstrual education, (3) switching behaviour, (4) stigma, and (5) strategic positioning (see Chapter 1).

4.2 Data Collection Methods

This research involved a broad range of participant types, as seen in figure 12, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of menstrual product adoption, particularly in the context of stigmatised, radical innovations. Participants were selected based on their roles in education, influence, and direct use of menstrual products. The chosen methods aimed not only to describe current adoption behaviours but also to generate actionable insights for Casey's go-to-market strategy. An overview of the qualitative methods and participant groups is presented in table 2 on the next page.

Interview Sequence Rationale

The interview process began with Cup-Stoppers to assess whether they would be a suitable initial target group for Casey. This assumption was based on the idea that Cup-Owners, having already purchased a menstrual cup, would have a lower barrier to adopting a cleaning solution like Casey. Cup-Owners include both Cup-Users and Cup-Stoppers, the latter being individuals who previously used the cup but stopped.

The aim of these interviews was to understand why Cup-Stoppers stopped cup use, specifically, whether cleaning difficulties played a role. However, after conducting five interviews, it became clear that cleaning was not the primary reason for stopping. As a result, Cup-Stoppers were deemed not a direct target for Casey, and further interviews with this group were stopped.

Following this insight, the research focus shifted to Cup-Doubters, individuals who have never tried the cup. This group was expected to offer valuable input for understanding the barriers to initial cup adoption and how Casey might influence their future willingness to try a cup.
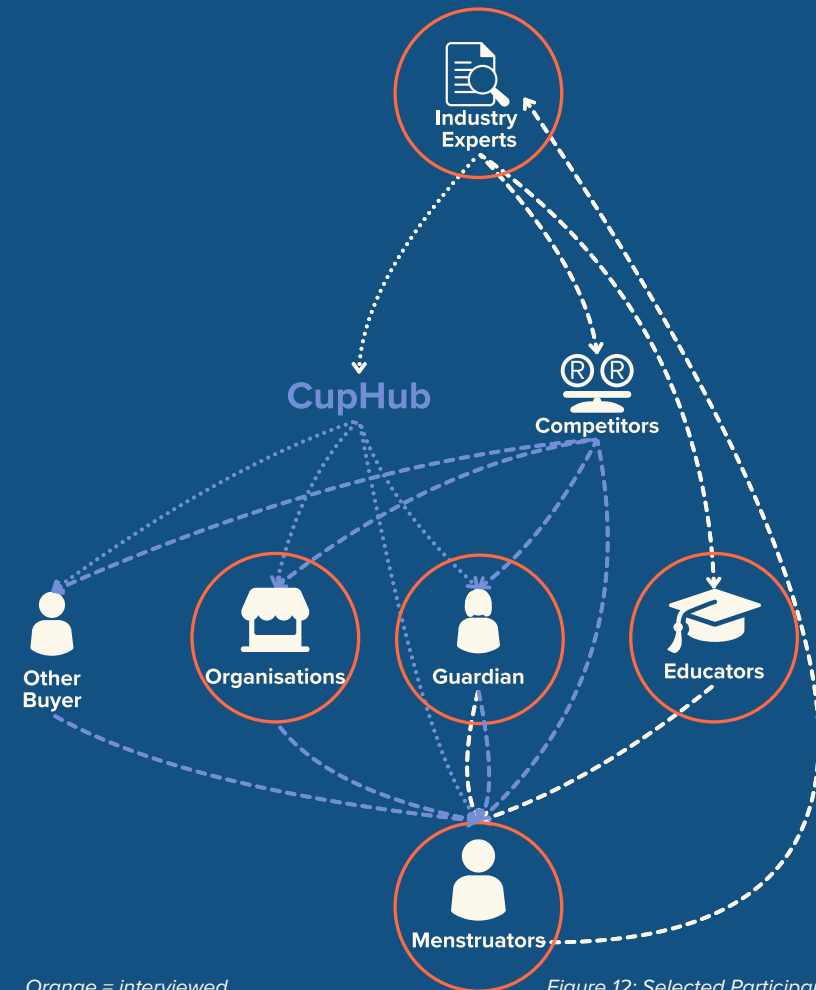
Orange = interviewed

Figure 12: Selected Participants

Table 2: Overview Participant Selection and Research Methods

Participant Type	Description	Method of Research	Why they were researched	What Was Researched	Number (n)
Industry Experts	Marketing and behaviour professionals from Rutgers & Equinix.	Focus Groups	To gain expert perspectives on launching stigmatised innovations and changing consumer behaviour.	Behavioural strategy, stigma reduction, GTM strategy development.	5 (2+3)
Organisations	Facility Managers responsible for menstrual product stock at workplace receptions.	Semi-structured Interviews	To understand institutional buying behaviour and views on providing menstrual products in public spaces.	Current product offering, openness to innovation, purchase decision factors.	2
Guardians	Mothers of young daughters (~10 years old), highly educated, urban.	Semi-structured Interviews	To provide insights into how menstruation education is passed down and how their knowledge affects children's product adoption.	What they teach about menstruation, what they buy for their kids, product knowledge.	3
Educators	Menstrual teachers: one internal biology teacher and one external guest teacher.	Semi-structured Interviews	To understand school-based menstrual education and differences in approach.	Content and openness of education, impact on knowledge and product awareness.	2
Menstruators: Potential Consumers	Cup-Doubters and Cup-Stoppers aged 20–29, urban-based, highly educated (Students).	Semi-structured Interviews	To investigate switching behaviour, adoption barriers, and readiness to innovation.	Product experiences, barriers and motivations, trust sources.	17 (11 Doubters +6 Stoppers)
Menstruators: Potential Consumers	Cup-Doubters, aged 20–29, urban-based, highly educated (Students).	Focus Groups	Examine group norms and to investigate switching behaviour, adoption barriers, and readiness to innovation.	Product experiences, barriers and motivations, trust sources.	7 (3+4)
(Future) Menstruators: Children	School pupils observed during menstrual lessons.	Observation	To assess natural reactions and awareness around menstruation in a comfortable environment.	Non-verbal and verbal responses to menstrual education and product introduction.	Observed

4.3 Data Analysis Approach

All qualitative data was coded thematically using codes developed based on the sub research questions and consumer adoption theory (Schuhmacher et al., 2018). Coding reliability was enhanced through secondary review by someone else. Themes included product education, adoption barriers, and motivations. Full coding details are available in Appendix 4.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

All interviews were recorded, transcribed and participants provided verbal consent. Given the sensitivity of menstruation-related topics, anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. Observations were selected as a non-invasive method, particularly when studying young students in school settings.

Findings

Qualitative Research

This chapter presents the findings from the research. The goal of the interviews was to understand how individuals have switched between menstrual products in the past, identifying main motivations, barriers, and decision-making factors. By analyzing these insights, the study aims to determine the factors influencing product adoption and consumer switches. The results are structured based on the research methods.

The chapter is divided into four sections: findings from expert interviews, findings from expert focus groups, findings from potential consumer interviews, and findings from potential consumer focus groups.

5.1 Findings from Experts

5.1.1 Expert Interviews: Menstrual Teachers

This section summarizes insights from two menstrual educators, one internal biology teacher and one external guest educator, regarding how menstruation and menstrual products are introduced in school settings.

1. Menstrual cups trigger Curiosity and Discomfort

Educators reported that menstrual cups often stimulated strong reactions from students, typically a mix of surprise and curiosity. Many students had never seen one before, though a few recognized it from social media. Teachers observed that students were often shocked by its size and internal use, with one noting: "They're really like, 'That has to go in? How does that work?'" Despite initial discomfort, students asked practical questions about the vacuum seal and function of the cup, indicating genuine interest.

2. Classroom Engagement is Shaped by Culture and Comfort

Teachers noted cultural and religious backgrounds influenced student engagement. In some cases, menstruation was not openly discussed at home, leading to discomfort or avoidance: "Some students find it overwhelming... I've had students close their eyes, but that's rare." Conversely, students from more open environments responded playfully or with curiosity, especially boys, who sometimes engaged in humorous or hands-on ways.

3. Education Content varies between Schools

Biology classes generally follow a standardized structure, beginning with puberty and anatomy before discussing menstruation. Yet, the extent of product information varies. One teacher introduced a range of reusable products, while another focused solely on disposables. Teachers agreed that practical aspects like cost and hygiene are often under-addressed.

4. The Role of the Teacher Influences Openness

Student openness was closely tied to the attitude of the teacher. When menstruation was treated as a normal topic, students felt more at ease: "Students often write in their notebooks that I made them feel at ease and that they could ask anything."
External educators were seen as helpful due to their specific expertise, but some schools exclude teachers during these sessions to ensure "safe spaces." One teacher questioned whether this exclusion might unintentionally frame menstruation as taboo: "I think that's a shame... we're very open about it."

5. Shared Responsibility between Schools and Parents

Teachers emphasized that schools, especially primary schools, play a vital role in normalizing menstruation. They stressed the need for collaboration between educators and parents: "Schools have a responsibility to educate, so they should work together with parents."

5.1.2 Interviews with Facility Management

This section presents findings from interviews with facility managers at two Dutch institutions that provide free menstrual products at their receptions. These interviews offer insight into the current provision practices and the potential role of organizations in improving menstrual product accessibility.

1. Free products are limited to Disposable options

Both institutions currently offer free pads and tampons at their reception desks. These are the most common and accessible options, but reusable alternatives, such as menstrual cups or period underwear, are not yet included in the offering.

2. Products are likely used as a Backup

It is most likely that these products are used as back up as students or employees forget them at home. However, reception staff do not know why students and employees request menstrual products, as they do not ask them out of respect for their privacy. As a result, facility managers receive limited feedback about usage patterns or underlying motivations for product use.

5.1.3 Expert Focus Groups

The expert focus groups, composed of professionals in behaviour, marketing, and stigma reduction, provided actionable recommendations for launching Casey in a stigmatised product category, these are gathered in table 3. Four major themes emerged: stigma navigation, brand communication, community building, and strategic positioning.

1. Navigating Taboos: Normalise, do not confront
Experts agreed that menstrual taboos are deeply rooted in social norms and continue to influence behaviour. One campaign that was discussed during the session, was based on the question: "Where do you hide your menstrual products?", a question that resonated widely and reflected the unconscious behaviours tied to shame.

Rather than directly confronting taboos, experts advised subtle normalisation:
"You're not here to solve taboos immediately. Build a brand that makes it normal, like going grocery shopping." Normalisation through design, language, and visual representation (for example: showing men handling menstrual products comfortably) was encouraged as a quiet yet powerful tool.

2. Community-Led Growth through Peer Influence
Experts emphasized that menstruation is both personal and socially influenced. The power of peer endorsement, especially among young menstruators, was highlighted as a major influence on adoption.

Recommendations included:
- Building a community-driven brand early through relatable content and education.
- Using real users (not influencers) as ambassadors, supported by 'snackable' short-form videos.
- Launching Casey within existing menstrual health communities.
- Additionally, Casey should be seen as a support product for cups, not a standalone ideological statement.

3. Marketing Routes and Campaign Framing
Experts identified three effective angles for product messaging:
1. Sustainability: Emphasise reduced waste and water consumption.
2. Convenience: Highlight hygiene benefits and ease in public toilets.
3. Cost: Promote long-term financial savings of combining a cup with Casey.

4. Strategic Positioning and Partnerships
Experts noted that although many Cup-Users already "solve" the cleaning issue with DIY methods (bottles, tissues), Casey offers a more hygienic, portable, and convenient solution. The product should be positioned as a game-changer for both existing and future Cup-Users.

Key recommendations included:
Co-selling Casey with existing cups or in drugstores and festivals.
Exploring B2B opportunities through surveys with companies offering free products.
Offering flexible payment models (for example: instalments) to reduce purchasing barriers.
Securing patent protection to safeguard long-term competitive advantage.

Table 3: Experts Recommendations

Topic	Recommendation
Stigma Reduction	Normalise rather than challenge; use peer cues, subtle visuals, and education.
Community Building	Engage users pre-launch via content, events, and peer ambassadors.
Marketing Angle	Focus on hygiene, convenience, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability.
Product Positioning	Position Casey as an enhancer of cup hygiene and usability.
Sales Strategy	Test B2B options, partnerships with drugstores, and flexible payment models.

5.2 Findings from Potential Consumers

This section provides insights from observations, interviews, and focus groups with potential consumers. The aim was to understand current knowledge and behaviours around menstrual products, particularly menstrual cups, and to identify key adoption barriers and opportunities. Participants included pupils (via classroom observations), Students (Cup-Doubters, Cup-Stoppers), and mothers.

5.2.1 Classroom Observations

1. Menstrual Education Content and Engagement
The observed biology lesson covered reproductive health topics, including the menstrual cycle, fertilization, and hormonal regulation. The teacher used inclusive language and a neutral tone. While initial student reactions included smiles and minor discomfort, curiosity grew as the lesson progressed. Students asked questions about hormones and pregnancy, indicating active engagement.

2. Menstrual Misconceptions
Students exhibited several misconceptions regarding menstrual products. Notably:
One student assumed "maandverband" (pad) lasted an entire month.
Another believed urination wasn't possible while wearing a tampon.
Both students and the teacher were unsure how to remove a "stuck" tampon, suggesting tweezers or a doctor visit, until the moderator explained the role of pelvic muscles, which surprised them all.
These gaps highlight the need for practical, anatomy-based menstrual education.

3. Cups cause Surprise and Discomfort
The introduction of the menstrual cup elicited strong discomfort and surprise, particularly from boys. While a few girls had heard of the cup, most students were unfamiliar with its use. Engagement was low, and the product's function sparked confusion. For example, when comparing the menstrual cup to a plastic diaphragm, students initially misunderstood it as a contraceptive. Clarification was needed to differentiate the two and correct this misconception.

5.2.2 Findings Potential Consumers Interviews

Findings from Interviews with Cup-Stoppers:
1. Knowledge of Cups is Incomplete but present
Most Cup-Stoppers had basic knowledge about menstrual cups. Some were aware of sizing (for example: for those who had given birth), and many mentioned boiling the cup. However, confidence in usage varied, and several participants found insertion and removal confusing or uncomfortable. One said, "It's easy once you get the hang of it, but complicated at first."

2. Mothers are the Primary source of Menstrual Product Education
Nearly all participants were introduced to menstrual products by their mothers, who focused on practical preparations, buying pads and explaining their use, but rarely had ongoing conversations about menstruation. Education from mothers was often brief and matter-of-fact.

3. Healthcare Providers play a Limited role
Participants noted minimal engagement with medical professionals about menstruation. Some stopped using the cup after medical advice, such as warnings about an intrauterine device (IUD) interference. Others relied more on online searches and peer discussions than on doctors.

4. Physical Discomfort and Hygiene are main Barriers
Common barriers included pain during removal, especially linked to the vacuum seal, and concerns about hygiene in public restrooms. Fear of mess, visibility of blood, and panic from being unable to remove the cup also contributed to stopping. "I spent half an hour trying to grab it, was about to call a doctor," one shared.

5. Social Taboos and Inconvenience Limit Reuse
Many users stopped using the cup despite recognizing its benefits. Reasons included messiness, awkwardness, and a lack of time or motivation to learn. One noted, "It just stayed in my cabinet. I never figured it out." Compared to tampons, the cup was seen as inconvenient for travel and public settings.

6. Motivations: Sustainability, Health, and Heavy Flow
Those who initially tried the cup were attracted by its environmental benefits, cost savings, and convenience for heavy flows. Users liked the long wear time (up to 12 hours) and reduced leakage risk. Healthier materials and freedom during swimming or sex were also motivating factors.

7. Cultural Norms influence product Acceptance
Some reported limited product availability abroad, where tampons or cups are discouraged for cultural or religious reasons. This influenced both access and perceived acceptability.

8. Lack of Peer role models reinforces Hesitation
Participants expressed reluctance to ask friends for help, especially if no one in their circle used a cup. "If my friend liked it, I would have bought one too," one shared, highlighting the importance of social validation in adoption.

9. Gaps in product Understanding
Despite prior use, Cup-Stoppers still had questions, about leakage, vacuum safety, comfort across flows, and whether cups could prevent pregnancy. These gaps suggest that experience alone doesn't guarantee confidence or sustained use.

Findings from Interviews with Cup-Doubters

1. Understanding of Cups is Limited

Most Cup-Doubters had little practical knowledge about menstrual cups. Many were unaware of basic features like the 12-hour wear time or correct insertion. One participant admitted, "I thought it had to be changed every four hours." Cleaning procedures were also unclear, with confusion about boiling and hygiene practices.

2. Mothers are the First Source, but little product exposure

The first menstrual product used was often introduced by mothers, who usually recommended disposable products. This shaped product norms early: "My mom used tampons, so I used them too." Most did not mention menstrual cups, reinforcing a limited product view. Sisters and peers played a secondary role in sharing alternative options.

3. Doctors rarely discuss Menstruation beyond Contraception

Medical professionals had minimal involvement in product education. Participants said doctors mainly focused on contraception, rarely addressing menstrual health. One participant recalled, "She just pushed the pill because of my cramps, not actual menstrual care." These experiences contributed to feelings of being uninformed or dismissed.

4. Discomfort of Public cleaning

A major concern was the visibility of menstrual blood, especially in shared households or public toilets. One said, "I live with my parents, I'm not going to boil my cup in the kitchen." Fear of being seen washing a bloodied cup in public also caused discomfort. These social and environmental limitations prevented many from considering the cup as a viable option.

5. Touching blood as Barrier

Compared to tampons, cups were seen as messier and less hygienic. Participants believed with tampons there is limited contact with blood, while the cup required direct touching blood. "I think of tampons as cleaner because you don't touch anything," one noted. These beliefs were rarely challenged due to a lack of education.

6. Habits discourage switching

Many participants felt satisfied with their current routine, particularly tampons. Habit, convenience, and comfort with the known process prevented interest in switching. Even when aware of disadvantages, like dryness or discomfort, participants preferred familiarity over change.

7. Environmental and Health Benefits as Motivators

Despite hesitation, some participants acknowledged the sustainability and health advantages of cups. Benefits such as chemical-free materials and reduced waste appealed to those concerned with environmental impact. "I'm very aware of the sustainability thing," said one user, though it was often not enough to stimulate immediate action.

8. Peer Influence drives Awareness

Seeing friends use cups or hearing them talk about it increased interest. One said, "I saw a cup boiling at a friend's house, it wasn't secretive, but we didn't really talk about it either." However, without active conversations or support, curiosity often did not translate into use.

9. Unanswered Questions reinforce Hesitation

Participants expressed uncertainty about flow levels, sizing, leakage risks, and whether cups could be used during sex. Many did not know how to assess which cup suited their needs or how long it could be worn safely, reinforcing a reluctance to experiment.

10. Stigma continues in Social Circles

Talking about menstruation was limited to one or two close friends. Stigma and fear of embarrassment remained.

1. Mothers are most Familiar with Disposable products
While mothers were generally aware of menstrual cups, they mostly associated menstruation with pads and tampons. Their product knowledge is shaped by what was commonly available during their own youth, with reusables being less discussed or accessible at that time.

2. Knowledge of Menstrual Cups varies
Mothers showed inconsistent understanding of how to use and maintain a menstrual cup. Some were unfamiliar with sterilisation options, one said, "I didn't even know you could microwave it." Others admitted to incorrect removal methods, such as pulling the cup out directly: "I've even torn one apart." Uncertainty also surrounded sizing, durability, and leakage. One mother said, "I'm afraid that a lot of blood will come out when I remove it."

3. Menstrual Education is Practical and Product-Focused
The education mothers provided focused on body changes, hygiene, and practical preparedness. "Just the classic explanation," one said, "what happens, how to manage it, and making sure you're prepared." Most started with disposable products like pads or tampons. One mother described practicing tampon insertion with her daughter before a school trip. Reusable options like cups or period underwear were considered "a next step" and often introduced later, if at all.

4. Some Normalise menstruation through Exposure
Several mothers aimed to create an open atmosphere at home. One said, "They're around when I change tampons. I could send them away, but why? They might as well see what it looks like." Others kept the conversation going over time, rather than treating menstruation as a one-time topic.

5. Peers often Influence Product Adoption more than Mother
While mothers offered options and encouragement, many believed that peer influence ultimately drives switching behaviour. One said, "If she's the only one still using pads and her friends start using a cup or underwear, she'll want to try it too." Another noted, "The more I push, the more she resists. But if all her friends use it, she'll follow."

6. Fathers can also help Normalise
Some mothers included fathers in the conversation to help reduce stigma. One mother said, "It shouldn't just be a women's thing, it's just part of life." Another shared, "My partner told her, 'If you ever need help, ask me.' Now she tells both of us if she has cramps."

5.2.3 Findings Potential Consumers Focus Groups

1. Most participants Know the Products, but Not the details
While focus group participants showed broad awareness of menstrual products such as pads, tampons, and cups, their knowledge of menstrual discs and reusable pads was limited. Some knew them by name, but not by function. Misconceptions were common, even assuming, for instance, that tampons could be worn overnight without concern.

2. Mothers are the Primary Source of First Product education
Nearly all participants first learned about menstruation and menstrual products from their mothers, establishing early product norms that often continue into adulthood.

3. Education is Late and only on Disposable products
Participants reported that menstruation education began toward the end of primary school, often after their first period. These lessons were rarely repeated, and many forgot what they learned. Alternatives like menstrual cups or reusable pads were usually not included, education focused almost exclusively on pads and tampons.

4. Tampons as First product due to Social and Practical influences
Participants who used tampons as their first product cited several factors: influence from peers, lack of access to pads, pressure to conform to the "cooler" option, and practical necessity, especially for swimming. One participant recalled needing to use a tampon immediately due to a competitive swim class, with little time to learn.

5. Sustainability Motivates
The menstrual cup's sustainability benefits were acknowledged, but one participant noted its value only applies if the cup is actually used: "If you think about sustainability, it's quite an unnecessary product if you don't use it."

6. Cup Comfort appeals to those with Longer Cycles
Cup comfort was a motivation for those who found tampons irritating during lighter flow days. Several mentioned switching to the cup late in their cycle to avoid the discomfort of dry tampon insertion.

7. Discomfort, Hygiene, and Practicality are Main Barriers
Participants expressed concerns about inserting and removing the cup, its comfort, and its cleanliness, especially when traveling or using public restrooms. One said, "I don't want to cook it in a pan I use for food, it just feels unsanitary." Handling visible blood was also a source of discomfort.

8. Stigma and Social Norms still Limit cup use
Participants described menstrual cups as taboo or "not something that's talked about." They were hesitant to use them publicly, fearing judgement, and cited a lack of visibility in their social circles. One added, "I don't know anyone who uses it."

9. Misconceptions around Cost, Use, and Lifespan
Participants estimated cup prices between €5–€22 and assumed higher prices indicated better quality. Lifespan estimates ranged from six months to three years, with one attributing wear to "the pH-value of your 'box'." Others questioned how long a cup can be worn or how to deal with it if full.

10. Upfront Cost is a Barrier
Even if the long-term cost was lower, many participants hesitated to invest in a product they weren't sure they would like. One shared, "If I don't like it, I'll have spent money on something that isn't useful."

11. Lack of Knowledge around Usage and Maintenance
Participants lacked clear guidance on how to use or clean the cup. Some didn't know how long to boil it or how often, or were unsure whether it should be used overnight or while sleeping. There were also misconceptions about it interfering with bodily functions.

12. Handling Blood Is a Psychological Barrier
The thought of getting blood on their hands, especially in shared bathrooms without sinks, made many uncomfortable. Tampons felt more hygienic and less invasive, particularly for heavy flows.

13. Doctors rarely discuss cups but could Help Normalise them
Participants said their doctors rarely discussed menstrual products. They suggested that general practitioners should mention cups when discussing menstrual options, which could help normalise the product.

14. Podcasts and Public Conversations could help in Normalisation
Participants proposed using podcasts or short, relatable videos to make cups more accessible and less awkward. Hearing real experiences could help break the silence and reduce hesitation.

15. Unanswered Questions create Uncertainty
Participants asked whether the cup could prevent leaks, how to position it correctly, how to remove it, and whether it could affect sleep. These uncertainties increased reluctance to try the product.

5.3 Conclusion of Findings

The findings presented in this chapter highlight the complex, often emotional dynamics shaping menstrual product adoption. Across all participant groups: students, Cup-Doubters, Stoppers, and mothers, recurring themes came to light: limited knowledge, deep-rooted habits, social taboos, and a lack of trusted information. While motivations like sustainability and comfort were acknowledged, barriers such as hygiene concerns, fear of blood, and the absence of peer role models often outweighed them.

These insights offer more than just descriptions of user behaviour, they form the foundation for strategic decision-making. The next chapter builds on these findings by integrating them with market and trend analyses to evaluate their strategic implications for Casey's market introduction.

Evaluation

This chapter brings together the findings of this thesis to address the overall research question: **"How can radical innovative products be launched ensuring a high level of adoption and diffusion in the stigmatised menstrual industry?"** In doing so, it examines the five Research Sub Questions (RSQ's) outlined in previous sections:

1. Which factors influence the successful adoption and diffusion of radical innovations in the market?

2. How does education influence the adoption of menstrual products?

3. What barriers and motivations influence menstruators' decision to adopt new menstrual products?

4. How do taboos influence adoption of menstrual products?

5. How can a positioning strategy be designed to ensure scalability while maintaining a targeted focus?

Each section below presents the discussion and the takeaways for one sub-question. Following these discussions, the main takeaways synthesise the themes that unite the sub-questions, showing their contribution to the main research question. Finally, the chapter outlines practical implications, emphasizing how these insights can guide stakeholders: particularly startup CupHub, in effectively positioning and expanding radical innovations within the menstrual industry.

6.1 Discussion & Takeaways

Discussion RSQ 1: Adoption Radical Innovations

Which factors influence the successful adoption and diffusion of radical innovations in the market?
1. What are the main considerations for launching radical innovations in a stigmatised market?
2. What strategies facilitate the adoption of radical innovations among early and mainstream consumers?
3. How can radical innovations achieve widespread market diffusion?

The adoption and diffusion of radical innovations in the market are shaped by a combination of factors. Compared to incremental innovations, radical innovations require behavioural change and consumer learning, making them more prone to resistance and slower adoption rates (Chiesa & Frattini, 2011; Rogers, 2003). This discussion highlights the main similarities and differences between the insights from the literature and the qualitative research findings, particularly regarding the adoption of radical innovations in stigmatised industries, the role of Consumer Innovativeness (CI), and the challenges associated with launching such innovations.

Adoption in Stigmatised Industries
One of the main challenges in the adoption of radical innovations in stigmatised markets is the role of social norms and stigma. Existing literature suggests that stigma influences consumer perception, making people hesitant to adopt products that require behavioural change (Ndichu & Rittenburg, 2021). This applies particularly to menstrual product innovations, where taboos around menstruation lead to limited open discussions, a lack of social proof, and difficulty in normalizing product adoption.

The qualitative findings align with this literature, as participants expressed discomfort in discussing menstrual products openly and hesitated to adopt new solutions due to a lack of observability. One main insight from the focus groups was that peer influence plays an important role in normalizing menstrual cups and other radical innovations. This reinforces Rogers' (2003) argument that social proof and visibility increase the diffusion of innovation. However, the findings suggest that the stigma surrounding menstruation makes visibility difficult, as menstruators actively conceal their product choices, limiting the impact of word-of-mouth adoption.

While literature focuses on psychological and societal resistance, expert insights from the focus groups emphasise a practical approach to overcoming these barriers. Experts suggest that normalisation should be a main element of the marketing strategy, meaning radical innovations should be presented as standard hygiene products rather than framed as disruptive or taboo-breaking innovations. This perspective differs slightly from the literature, which focuses more on education and social change as adoption facilitators.

Go-to-Market Strategies for Radical Innovations
Radical innovations require carefully designed go-to-market (GTM) strategies that balance speed-to-market and consumer education (Schuhmacher et al., 2017). Literature emphasizes that radical innovations face higher resistance than incremental ones due to their need for behavioural shifts (Chiesa & Frattini, 2011). Furthermore, the rate of adoption is influenced by external pressures, such as market competition and shifting consumer demands (Lafferty et al., 2005).

The qualitative research findings support this, as participants noted that their initial reluctance toward menstrual cups was due to uncertainty about fit, usability, and leakage risks, rather than outright rejection of the concept. This highlights the importance of consumer education and peer influence in reducing perceived risks.

The literature and expert interviews both emphasise the importance of Consumer Innovativeness (CI) in determining adoption rates. Schuhmacher et al. (2017) describe high CI consumers as early adopters, who are open to trying new products and willing to take risks, whereas low CI consumers require more reassurance through social proof, clear product benefits, and a sense of security.

Experts suggested that an effective GTM strategy should first target high CI consumers who will act as early adopters, allowing for organic market expansion through peer influence and word-of-mouth. This aligns with the literature but expands on it by emphasizing community-building and influencer marketing as important tactics for creating a continuous adoption cycle.

Challenges in Scaling Radical Innovations

The literature highlights an important challenge for radical innovations: the short window of opportunity before a product becomes outdated (Schuhmacher et al., 2017). If an innovation fails to gain traction quickly, shifting market dynamics and technological advancements could render it outdated before achieving mainstream adoption.

The findings partially support this argument, but with some nuance. Participants acknowledged the importance of early adoption, yet they did not express urgency in switching menstrual products. Unlike industries driven by fast-moving technological advancements, menstrual product adoption is influenced more by habitual behaviours and trust-building rather than rapid technological cycles. This suggests that while speed-to-market is important, the focus should be on long-term trust and normalisation strategies rather than aggressive market penetration.

The experts offered additional insights, recommending that radical innovations be introduced in phases to prevent overwhelming consumers. The first phase should target innovators and early adopters, leveraging exclusive positioning and feature-based messaging, while the second phase should transition to benefit-based messaging for the majority market.

This aligns with literature on innovation diffusion, which suggests that messaging must evolve depending on the adopter category (Schuhmacher et al., 2017; Rogers, 2003). However, experts emphasise the importance of sustained engagement, arguing that ongoing educational efforts and community-building are more important for menstrual product adoption than purely commercial marketing efforts.

Takeaways RSQ 1: Adoption Radical Innovations

Which factors influence the successful adoption and diffusion of radical innovations in the market?

- Stigma strongly Limits adoption: In stigmatised markets, societal norms and taboos limit open dialogue and social proof, making consumers cautious about trying radically different products.

- Consumer Innovativeness (CI) drives Early adoption: Highly innovative consumers are first adopters. They are more open to new concepts, while low CI consumers need clear benefits and risk reduction before committing.

- Community and Social Proof are important: Beyond typical marketing, successful adoption depends on peer recommendations and visibility. In taboo markets, building community-driven advocacy can normalise the product over time.

- Phased Go-To-Market Approach: Introducing radical innovations in stages: first targeting early adopters with feature-focused messaging, then transitioning to risk-reduction strategies for mainstream consumers, helps sustain momentum and avoid overwhelming users.

- Long-Term Trust over rapid penetration: While speed-to-market matters for radical innovations, maintaining consumer trust and familiarity is essential in slower-moving, habit-based product categories, such as menstrual products. Ongoing education and support are more effective than purely commercial pushes.

Discussion RSQ 2: Education Influence

How does education influence the adoption of menstrual products?

Current Knowledge & Education

Education is important in menstrual product adoption, with knowledge primarily from mothers. The findings suggest that most menstruators first learn about menstrual products from their mothers, yet this education is often limited to disposable products like pads and tampons. Reusable alternatives, such as menstrual cups, are rarely introduced, contributing to a lack of awareness, understanding and acceptance of the cup as the norm. Social influences, particularly peer discussions, further shape product awareness and choice over time.

School-based education provides structured knowledge about menstruation; however, the depth of menstrual product discussions varies. While some educators introduce a range of options, including reusable products, others focus mainly on traditional disposable methods. Furthermore, practical considerations, such as cost, hygiene, and maintenance, are often omitted, limiting menstruators' ability to make informed decisions.

Doctors, meanwhile, play a minimal role in product education. Consultations primarily revolve around symptom management and hormonal contraception rather than guidance on menstrual product choices. Some participants expressed a desire for medical professionals to offer more comprehensive information on menstrual products, including reusable options like menstrual cups. Expanding menstrual education in both school and medical settings could thus foster more informed and diverse product adoption.

Takeaways RSQ 2: Education Influence

- Mothers play an important role in early menstrual product education: most menstruators first learn about menstrual products from their mothers, with a strong focus on disposable products like pads and tampons. While some mothers mention alternatives like menstrual cups, these are often presented as later-stage options rather than immediate choices.

- Limited awareness of reusable products: both in schools and among mothers, there is a lack of comprehensive education about reusable menstrual products, such as menstrual cups, reusable pads, and menstrual discs. This gap limits menstruators' knowledge and understanding of sustainable alternatives.

- Schools provide basic menstrual education, but with gaps: menstruation education in schools typically covers puberty and anatomy, but the depth of product-related discussions varies. Some teachers introduce reusable products, while others focus on disposable options. Practical considerations like cost, cleaning, and the environmental impact of products are often overlooked.

- Doctors rarely discuss menstrual product choices: despite their role in health education, doctors are not a primary source of guidance on menstrual product choices. Conversations with healthcare providers tend to focus on symptoms and hormonal contraception rather than on the full range of available products.

- Social influences shape product choices: peer pressure and social norms are main factors in menstrual product adoption. Many menstruators rely on the experiences and recommendations of their peers.

- Misconceptions about commonly used products: Even though products like tampons and pads are widely used, many menstruators still hold misconceptions about their proper use.

Discussion RSQ 3: Barriers & Motivations

What barriers and motivations influence menstruators' decision to adopt new menstrual products?

(Detailed results are provided in Appendix 5.1)

Switching Behaviour between Menstrual Products

Switching behaviour among menstruators is often driven by situational needs and product features. One of the primary motivators for switching is feature-based necessity, where a product's limitations in specific contexts lead to the adoption of an alternative, as shown in figure 13.

A clear example of this occurs when menstruators switch from pads to tampons. Many participants initially used pads as their primary menstrual product but encountered situations where pads were not sufficient: most notably when engaging in activities such as swimming. In these cases, the lack of a necessary feature, such as waterproof protection, stimulated them to seek an alternative, leading to the adoption of tampons. Interestingly, a feature-based switch often led to full adoption over time. At first, tampons were used only when required, serving as a situational substitute rather than a replacement for pads. However, over time, as menstruators became familiar with the tampon, their confidence with the product increased. Eventually, many participants switched to tampons as their primary menstrual product. This process indicates that repeated exposure and increasing comfort development are essential in changing behaviour.
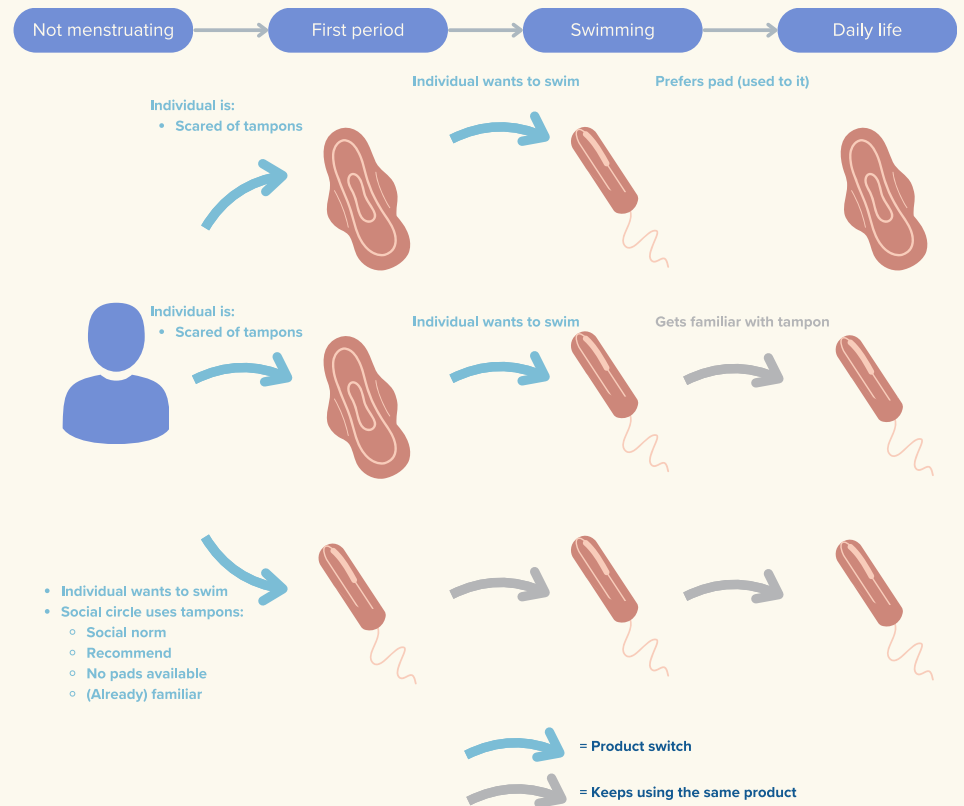

Figure 13: Menstrual product switch motivations/situations

Barriers influencing Adoption Cups

The barriers to adopting a menstrual cup, as identified by Cup-Doubters, Stoppers, and focus group participants, reveal common themes centered around hygiene, comfort, convenience, and societal perceptions.

Hygiene Barrier

A main barrier across all groups was the concern about hygiene, particularly the need to clean the cup in public restrooms. Many participants expressed discomfort at the thought of handling menstrual blood and cleaning the cup in public sinks, with some fearing exposure or fearing for blood on their hands. This concern was particularly pronounced among the Doubters and focus group participants, who cited the lack of privacy and the perceived unsanitary nature of cleaning the cup in public spaces. Stoppers also raised similar concerns but were additionally worried about the practicalities of managing the cup during the day, such as removing and reinserting it in unfamiliar settings.

Comfort and Usability as Main barriers

Many participants in all groups expressed fear that the cup might not fit properly, causing discomfort or leakage, especially during activities such as exercise. The Doubters, in particular, hesitated to switch from tampons due to their existing comfort with the product and the perceived difficulty of adjusting to the cup. Similarly, some stoppers reported experiencing physical discomfort during insertion and removal, which contributed to their decision to stop.

Convenience influencing Adoption

The Doubters and stoppers emphasized the ease and familiarity of tampons, noting that the extra effort required to manage a menstrual cup throughout the day, including cleaning and adjusting, felt like an inconvenience. Focus group participants echoed this sentiment but also expressed concerns about the learning curve associated with using the cup and the initial investment required.

Social Norms influencing Adoption

Lastly, societal taboos and a lack of familiarity with menstrual cups emerged as additional barriers. Participants in the focus group, in particular, highlighted the lack of social discussion surrounding the product, which contributed to uncertainty and hesitation. The fear of judgement and embarrassment about using the cup in public spaces was also a main barrier.

Motivations influencing Adoption Cups

The motivations for adopting a menstrual cup vary across different consumer groups, including Cup-Doubters, Cup-Stoppers, and focus group participants. However, several main themes consistently emerged across all groups: environmental sustainability, financial savings, and convenience.

Environmental Sustainability:

A primary motivation for adopting menstrual cups is their environmental impact. Menstrual cups offer a reusable alternative to disposable products, reducing plastic waste and long-term consumption of single-use items (Hait & Powers, 2019). Both Doubters and stoppers emphasized sustainability as an important factor in their decision-making process, while the focus group participants acknowledged this benefit but indicated a need for additional education before committing to a switch. Previous research suggests that sustainability-oriented consumers are more likely to look at reusable menstrual products when provided with clear information about their benefits (Ajith & Rasheed, 2024).

Financial Savings and Affordability:

Financial concerns are another strong incentive for adoption. Unlike disposable menstrual products, which require continuous purchasing, menstrual cups provide a long-term economic advantage (Saha, 2023). Research has shown that menstrual cups can last up to 10 years, offering major cost savings over time (Plan International, 2019). This financial factor was particularly emphasized by individuals facing financial constraints, such as students.

Although menstrual cups offer long-term financial savings, their initial cost can be a barrier for many consumers (Menstrual Cup Market Size & Share Analysis, n.d.). Period poverty continues to affect a great portion of menstruators in the Netherlands, limiting the ability to choose sustainable products despite their economic advantages (Plan Internationaal, 2019).

Additionally, the study findings suggest that the transition to an intrauterine device (IUD) after the age of 21 (when contraceptive pills are no longer covered by Dutch health insurance), aligns with an increased interest in cost-effective menstrual solutions like cups (Zorgwijzer, 2024).

Convenience and Comfort:
Participants also highlighted comfort and convenience as main motivations for using menstrual cups. Many menstruators find tampons uncomfortable due to dryness and irritation, while cups provide a more natural and less intrusive alternative (Ajith & Rasheed, 2024). Several participants noted the extended wear time of cups, allowing them to go longer without needing to change products, which is particularly beneficial for those with heavy menstrual flows. Studies indicate that users of menstrual cups report greater comfort and satisfaction compared to tampon users, particularly in managing longer-duration protection (Van Eijk et al., 2019). The ability to engage in activities such as swimming and, in the case of some cup designs, sexual intercourse without inconvenience further contributed to their appeal.

The Influence of Hormonal Changes on Product Adoption:
A notable factor influencing menstrual cup adoption was the relationship between contraception use and menstruation patterns. Some participants initially did not menstruate while using an IUD but experienced increased menstrual flow over time as the device's effects diminished. This change stimulated them to reassess their menstrual care products, with some turning to menstrual cups as a more sustainable and cost-effective option. Additionally, a broader trend toward reducing hormonal intake contributed to product exploration, as individuals sought alternatives to conventional period management methods.

Differences in Readiness to Adopt:
Despite recognizing the benefits of menstrual cups, the willingness to switch varied among the groups. Cup-Doubters expressed concerns about fit, leakage, and the initial cost, making them hesitant to adopt the product. In contrast, Cup-Stoppers, having previously used the product, were more motivated by sustainability and convenience and were less hesitant about trying the cup again. Focus group participants acknowledged both advantages and concerns but expressed a desire for additional education and risk-free trials to mitigate their hesitations.

The PPM-framework for Menstrual Products:
Push factors for menstrual products include:
- Discomfort and leakage issues with pads and tampons.
- Environmental concerns about disposable menstrual products.
- Health risks, such as toxic shock syndrome (TSS) from tampons.
- Inconvenience of needing to frequently replace single-used products.

For menstrual cups and cleaning solutions like Casey, pull factors include:
- Cost-effectiveness (long-term savings over single-use products).
- Sustainability benefits (reducing waste and environmental impact).
- Convenience (fewer product changes, ease of use with a cleaner like Casey).
- Health benefits (no chemical exposure, lower risk of TSS).

Main mooring factors in menstrual product adoption include:
- Social stigma and taboos (discussing menstrual cups).
- Lack of product knowledge (uncertainty about use and cleaning).
- Accessibility and affordability (availability in stores, perceived high initial cost).
- Peer influence (willingness to switch if friends or influencers promote the product).

Detailed information can be found in Appendix 5.3.1.

Takeaways RSQ 3: Barriers & Motivations

- Feature-Based Needs Drive Switching: Menstruators typically switch menstrual products due to situational limitations. For instance, switching from pads to tampons often occurs because pads are unsuitable for activities like swimming. Initially situational, these switches frequently become permanent as comfort and familiarity grow.

- A shift away from hormonal contraception appears to be an emerging motivation for considering menstrual cups, which is not extensively covered in existing literature.

- Hygiene and Comfort as Key Barriers: Hygiene concerns, especially cleaning cups in public restrooms, represent a main barrier. Additionally, fears about comfort, fit, and leakage hinder potential users and discourage continued use.

- Convenience Strongly Influences Choices: Familiarity and ease of use with traditional products, especially tampons, make menstrual cups seem inconvenient. The perceived learning curve and extra management required by cups increase this perception.

- Societal Taboos Limit Adoption: Social stigmas and a lack of open discussion about menstrual cups limit adoption. Embarrassment and fear of judgement when using cups publicly increase hesitancy.

- Sustainability and Cost are Motivating Factors: Positive motivations for adopting menstrual cups include sustainability, reduced environmental impact, financial savings, and longer intervals between product changes compared to single-use alternatives.

- Knowledge and Social Proof Essential: Adoption is heavily influenced by peer experiences and product knowledge. Improving familiarity through education, testimonials, and visible usage within peer groups could notably enhance adoption rates.

Discussion RSQ 4: Taboos Influence

How do taboos influence adoption of menstrual products?

Cultural Norms:
Cultural taboos play a main role in shaping menstruators' choices of menstrual products, often limiting the adoption of alternative products such as the menstrual cup. Despite increasing awareness of menstrual cups, cultural attitudes surrounding menstruation continue to enforce silence and shame. Menstruation is often perceived as a private and somewhat shameful topic, making it difficult for menstruators to openly discuss or seek guidance about menstrual products. This discomfort is reflected in the hesitation to use menstrual cups, especially in shared or public spaces, where participants fear being observed or judged.

The influence of cultural taboos is also evident in the initial reluctance to use a product like the menstrual cup, despite its potential benefits. Many participants expressed an unwillingness to look at the product beyond their first attempts due to the stigma surrounding menstruation. Even in cases where they had seen others use menstrual cups, the lingering sense of discomfort and shame often prevented them from fully committing to the product. This underscores how cultural taboos shape perceptions and directly affect product adoption by causing feelings of embarrassment and lacking knowledge.

Furthermore, while the role of mothers and schools in providing initial menstruation education is important, the cultural context in which this education takes place can affect its effectiveness. In many cultures, menstruation is still considered a private matter, which also applies to Dutch culture, limits the scope of education and normalises the associated stigma. To counteract this, more inclusive and open discussions about menstruation within the family and educational systems are needed to challenge these deep-rooted cultural taboos.

Social Norms:
Despite increased awareness of menstrual health, stigma remains a main adoption barrier (Ndichu & Rittenburg, 2021). Trying menstrual cups is less common since menstruation is not openly discussed (UNESCO New Delhi et al., 2023). Research highlights that peer influence plays an important role in menstrual cup adoption, with adoption likelihood increasing by 18.6 percentage points when a friend uses a cup (Oster & Thornton, 2023). However, since menstruation remains a taboo topic, conversations about reusable products are limited, reducing the visibility of menstrual cups compared to widely accepted disposable products.

Social taboos, driven by peer influence, also play an important role in the adoption of menstrual products. Hiding menstrual products is a common practice, reinforcing the notion that menstruation is something private, or even shameful. The findings suggest that social proof, the tendency to adopt behaviours that are endorsed by peers, primarily shapes menstruators' choices. Participants reported that they were more likely to adopt the menstrual cup once they saw others using it and openly discussing it. This reflects the power of social networks and peer recommendations in normalizing new products. When individuals witness their friends and peers using menstrual cups without secrecy or embarrassment, they are more likely to view the product as acceptable and worth trying.

However, despite the increasing visibility of menstrual cups, social taboos continue. Many participants admitted feeling uncomfortable discussing menstruation or asking for help, especially in environments where menstrual products were viewed as private or taboo. This reflects broader societal attitudes where menstruation is not fully normalised, and individuals are discouraged from openly discussing their experiences. The reluctance to talk openly about menstruation can create barriers to adoption, as people are less likely to seek information or ask questions about new products if they feel uncomfortable.

Additionally, social influence was found to be multifaceted: while peer recommendations can promote adoption, they can also discourage individuals from trying new products if they feel that their social group does not use them. The lack of shared experience with menstrual cups in some social circles prevented participants from adopting the cup. This suggests that a shift in collective attitudes toward menstruation is necessary to normalise the use of menstrual cups and other alternative products.

Imitation:
Moreover, the interviews indicated that menstruators consider using the cup if their close friends also use it. This phenomenon is documented in the literature when a 'peer' uses a cup (Oster & Thornton, 2023). Nonetheless, the interviews revealed that only close friends had influence on their cup usage.

The influence of imitation and the impact of socially desirable behaviour suggest that the cup should be aimed at a close social circle. Engaging mothers in this initiative is valuable, as menstruators generally acquire knowledge from their mothers. Menstruators generally acquire knowledge about their initial product from their mothers, yet they seldom discuss alternative products following their first menstruation. The conversation surrounding menstruation mainly focuses on pain and the accessibility of menstrual products within the household.

Other buyers as Ambassadors:
Certain young men indicate a wish for purchasing a package (cup and Casey) for their girlfriends (Personal communication). They aim to serve as ambassadors to promote menstrual products. Involving young men may contribute to diminishing the stigma associated with menstruation. However, as noted in the Focus Group with Rutgers, this should not be the primary focus at this time. This could be a focus for later, as it does not guarantee fast adoption of the cup, suggesting that it may merely be purchased rather than used.

Takeaways RSQ 4: Taboos Influence

The findings of this study largely align with existing literature on the impact of cultural and social taboos on menstrual product adoption. However, several nuances emerged through qualitative research that refine current understandings of the adoption process.

- Cultural and social taboos continue to shape menstrual product choices, particularly by limiting discussion and education about alternative options.

- Social proof and imitation highly influence adoption, but are most effective within trusted peer networks rather than broader social circles. Negative experiences spread quickly and strongly discourage adoption, highlighting the importance of addressing user concerns transparently and proactively.

- Mothers represent a strategic audience who could introduce innovative products to younger generations if they perceive clear benefits.

- Educational barriers remain a main obstacle to adoption, with many menstruators lacking fundamental knowledge about menstrual cups, reinforcing the need for improved product education.

- Decision-making is not limited to menstruators, as parents, partners, and healthcare professionals also play a role in product selection.

Discussion RSQ 5: Target & Positioning

How can a positioning strategy be designed to ensure scalability while maintaining a targeted focus?

Developing a scalable positioning strategy requires balancing specificity in targeting early adopters while ensuring long-term market expansion without brand dilution. The STP (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning) model (Kotler & Keller, 2006) provides a framework for understanding diverse consumer needs, selecting early adopters, and adapting positioning as adoption progresses.

Segmentation and Targeting

A main challenge in positioning Casey is defining a target audience that is specific enough for effective adoption while allowing for future scalability. Schuhmacher et al. (2017) highlight that radical innovations initially appeal to high Consumer Innovativeness (CI) consumers, who are risk-tolerant and actively seek innovation, whereas low CI consumers require reassurance, social proof, and simplification before they adopt.

Challenges in Targeting

The findings indicate that different consumer groups express varying motivations and barriers to adoption. One notable insight is that 1 in 10 menstruators experiences period poverty (Plan Internationaal, 2019), which means they struggle to afford menstrual products. While targeting this group may seem beneficial from a social impact perspective, it presents scalability challenges for CupHub. Positioning Casey as a solution primarily for those in period poverty would limit the potential market size a lot, making mass adoption difficult.

This study consists of individuals with higher education, all of whom do not experience period poverty. The findings provide insights into menstrual product adoption; however, they lack applicable experience to establish Casey as a solution specifically for menstruators experiencing financial difficulties.

Expert Insights on Scalable Positioning in Stigmatised Industries

Marketing and behavioural experts emphasise that a strong brand identity must be established before taking on broader societal challenges. Instead of directly addressing menstrual stigma in initial positioning, experts suggest presenting Casey as a normal, everyday hygiene product rather than an innovation that disrupts norms. This aligns with existing literature on menstrual product marketing, which suggests that traditional advertising has long relied on euphemistic messaging and discretion (Merskin, 1999; Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2011).

Furthermore, the focus group with Doubters suggests that targeting early adopters with education-based messaging may be more effective than attempting to switch hesitant menstruators too early. Participants indicated that their hesitation towards the menstrual cup was due to insufficient knowledge, uncertainty about fit, and fear about leakage, rather than financial limitations.

Positioning a Radical Innovation

Research suggests that positioning should evolve as a product transitions from early adopters to the mainstream market. Schuhmacher et al. (2017) emphasise the need to differentiate messaging between high CI and low CI consumers:
- Early adopters respond to feature-based messaging, focusing on hygiene, convenience, and sustainability.
- Majority consumers require risk-reducing messaging, emphasizing ease of use, affordability, and social proof.

This aligns with expert recommendations that community-building and word-of-mouth influence are essential for normalizing Casey in the market. Social proof plays an important role in the adoption of menstrual cups, as participants in the research indicated that they would consider a menstrual cup if their friends or family were also using one (Oster & Thornton, 2023).

Pricing and Accessibility in Scalability

While sustainability and convenience could be selling points for Casey, pricing also plays a role in accessibility. Participants estimated the cost of a cup to be between €5 and €22, associating higher prices with better quality. This suggests that while some consumers are willing to invest in premium menstrual products, others may require payment models (for example: installment plans) or trial options before committing.

CupHub's strategy could balance commercial viability with accessibility. Given the long lifespan of menstrual cups, a recurring revenue model would be necessary to sustain profitability while ensuring affordable access to consumers who may be hesitant to invest upfront.

Takeaways RSQ 5: Target & Positioning

- Initial Targeting for Scale: Focusing on early adopters with high consumer innovativeness (CI) drives initial momentum without limiting long-term potential. Period poverty, while important socially, causes scalability challenges given its smaller market size.

- Adaptive Messaging across Adoption Stages: Early adopters respond to feature-focused positioning (hygiene, convenience), whereas mainstream consumers need reassurance through risk-reduction (affordability, social proof).

- Normalizing rather than Confronting Stigma: Positioning Casey as an everyday hygiene product, rather than directly challenging menstrual stigma, helps broaden acceptance. Community-building and peer endorsement further minimise stigma and encourage trial.

- Balancing Premium perception With Accessibility: Pricing influences perceived quality; however, flexible payment models or trial options can remove financial barriers and support wider adoption.

- Long-Term Brand Identity: Maintaining a clear main message and brand identity, centered on practicality and ease of use, ensures scalability across diverse consumer segments.

6.2 Implications for Product Adoption & Marketing Strategies

Below are the implications of this study, categorized by stakeholders.

6.2.1 Implications for CupHub

Phase the Go-To-Market (GTM) Strategy

1. Segment by Consumer Innovativeness (CI): Target early adopters first with feature-based messaging (convenience, hygiene), then adapt to risk-averse consumers by emphasizing affordability and social proof. And emphasizing word-of-mouth.
2. For low CI consumers in the majority market, the focus shifts toward security and ease of use to reduce perceived risk and encourage mass adoption. This strategy needs to focus on: Risk-reducing, Ease of use, Affordability, Social proof.
3. Balance Speed and Trust: While rapid adoption is desirable, invest in building long-term user trust and offering reliable aftercare to foster sustainable market growth.

Target:

- Target those experiencing heavier flows: Marketing should highlight the cup as ideal for changing menstruation patterns.
- Target those switching between contraceptives: those menstruators are changing their habits regarding which menstrual product they use.
- For natural cyclers: Target menstruators who are using Non-Hormonal contraceptives: People who menstruate + do not use an IUD.

Build Community and enable Peer Endorsements
- Leverage Word-of-mouth in Taboo contexts: support mothers to talk to their children and target close friends to stimulate word of mouth.
- Influencer marketing & Ambassador programs: Identify relatable figures: respected educators and influencers (ambassadors) to increase social proof.

Add Pricing possibilities
- Flexible payment or Trial options: Lower the initial cost barrier through subscription plans, trial kits, subsidy partnerships, or installment payments.
- Bundle deals: combine the cup with Casey for convenience and recurring revenue.

Tackle Cultural Taboos
- Indirect Normalisation: Present the cup as an everyday hygiene tool rather than a radical innovation. Focus on practicality and positive lifestyle integration.
- Inclusive marketing: Consider featuring diverse voices (including supportive partners or male ambassadors) at later stages, ensuring you do not dilute early, female-focused messaging.

Educate-Focused Marketing
- Campaigns focused on educating mothers.
- Supply ongoing education efforts, rather than only commercial marketing efforts.
- Reduce Risk Perception: Offer step-by-step guides (videos, checklists), address leakage or fit concerns with transparent, science-based info, and consider money-back guarantees. Encourage visible product usage and authentic testimonials to normalise menstrual cups.
- Push-Pull Messaging: Show how traditional products fall short (push) while highlighting the various benefits of cups (pull). Use emotional appeals around cost to encourage switching.
- Incorporate Training for Doctors: Provide seminars or materials to general general practitioners so they can inform patients of both reusable and disposable products.

Develop Strategic Brand
- Long-Term Identity: Maintain a consistent brand message: centered on practicality and ease of use, across all communication channels. Focus on building long-term trust.
- Localization & Cultural Sensitivity: Adapt educational materials and campaigns to different cultural contexts, respecting local norms while gently challenging stigma.
- Expert Centre of Menstrual Products: Aim to become the expert in menstrual products by continuing researching menstruators needs.

6.2.2 Implications for Doctors

Expand Menstrual Product Guidance

- Balance Disposable & Reusable Options: Offer patients comprehensive information on pads, tampons, and cups: highlighting safety, cost, and sustainability. And inform patients about the possible effects of combining menstrual products with contraceptives.

Address Psychological Barriers

- Normalise Conversation: Discuss the benefits of new reusable menstrual products with patients who come for menstruation or contraceptive methods. Discuss openly about menstrual care to reduce embarrassment, focusing on comfort, hygiene, and proper use.
- Collaborative Initiatives: Partner with schools and nonprofits to deliver educational workshops or create informative brochures.

6.2.3 Implications for Menstrual Teachers

Incorporate into Curriculum

Comprehensive Menstrual Education:
- Include all product types: cups, reusable pads, discs, underwear.
- Include practical information about costs, environmental impact, and hygiene tips for reusable products and disposable products.
- Educate children about what menstrual blood is: normal and clean.

Interactive Learning:
- Use demonstrations, Q&A sessions, and real testimonials to reduce misconceptions and encourage peer discussion.

Peer-Led Education

- Empower Student Ambassadors: Train and encourage interested students to share their experiences, fostering a supportive environment that normalises discussions around menstrual health.
- Avoid Taboo Reinforcement: Ensure language and materials do not increase shame or stigma; promote open, respectful dialogue.

6.2.4 Implications for Industry Experts

Public Health Campaigns

- Destigmatization Efforts: Create campaigns that address menstruation openly, highlighting reusable options as safe and cost-effective.
- Local Community Outreach: Provide informational materials through doctors, experts such as Rutgers, and social media in culturally appropriate formats.

Support Policy Measures

- School Requirements: Advocate for curricula that includes diverse menstrual product education.
- Financial Incentives: Offer subsidies for reusable menstrual products to improve affordability for low-income groups.

Collaborate Cross-Sector

- Partner with Startups: Collaborate with companies like YONI or Beppy to expand reach and pool resources for large-scale awareness initiatives.
- Target Stigma Reduction: Encourage open discussions in public forums, bridging policymakers, schools, and industry experts to break down cultural taboos and shame often associated with menstruation, ultimately making it easier for people to seek and adopt innovative menstrual products.

6.3 Limitations of the Qualitative Research

While the qualitative research design provided rich, in-depth insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample size for each consumer group was relatively small. However, by incorporating a diverse range of consumer groups, this study was able to capture a wide variety of perspectives, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the menstrual cup landscape.

Second, the subjective nature of qualitative interviews introduces potential biases in data interpretation. Best practices suggest that coding interviews with multiple researchers enhances reliability. However, as this thesis was conducted by a single researcher, only one interview was coded with external assistance to ensure some level of validation.

Third, limitations in participant self-awareness may have influenced responses. Individuals are often unconscious of their explicit needs, making it difficult for them to fully articulate their motivations and barriers. This could have affected the clarity of some findings related to adoption behaviour.

Fourth, situational factors during interviews may have impacted participant responses. One participant (Doubter 1) provided consistently short and limited responses (for example: repeatedly answering only "no"). The presence of her child during discussions on contraceptive methods may have contributed to this reluctance. As a result, follow-up questions were not pursued at the time. In future research, it would be advisable to probe further in such cases to gain a clearer understanding of underlying reasons for product hesitancy.

Fifth, transcription challenges impacted efficiency and data accuracy. Initially, interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Teams, but the quality was insufficient, requiring manual corrections and additional transcription efforts. Later, GoodTape was used, which improved voice recognition and transcription accuracy.

Finally, technical issues affected one interview recording. The recording of Doubter 3 failed, leading to some missing information at the beginning of the interview. Additionally, a language setting error resulted in the initial transcription being misaligned, as the interview was conducted in Dutch but processed in English, leading to the loss of certain details.

Despite these limitations, the study successfully gathered a wide range of perspectives, providing valuable insights into the factors influencing menstrual cup adoption.

6.4 Suggestions for Future Qualitative Research

This study provides valuable insights into the adoption of radical menstrual innovations. However, further research is necessary to refine strategies for product launches like Casey and to address adoption barriers effectively. Future studies could look at the following areas:

Extra Interviews with Mothers
Mothers play an important role in shaping their children's menstrual product choices. This study primarily focused on theoretically educated Dutch mothers, but a more comprehensive analysis is required. Future research should include a larger sample size, incorporating practically educated mothers and those from diverse cultural backgrounds to understand how menstrual taboos and product preferences are transmitted. Additionally, observational or diary studies could provide richer insights into how mothers educate their children in real time, beyond self-reported data from interviews.

Perceptions of Menstruators with Diverse Educational Backgrounds
This study focused primarily on theoretically educated menstruators. Expanding research to include menstruators with practical educational backgrounds could offer a more complete understanding of how education influences menstrual product adoption. Further research could use qualitative interviews to look at attitudes and decision-making processes, while survey-based studies could test different product positioning strategies and messaging effectiveness.

Cultural Perceptions of Menstrual Innovation
This research primarily focused on a demographically homogenous sample, urban, highly educated menstruators in the Netherlands. While cultural differences were occasionally mentioned by participants, further research is needed to deeply provide insights into how menstruators from diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds perceive and adopt menstrual innovations. Beliefs around menstruation, hygiene, modesty, and bodily autonomy vary greatly across cultures and may influence adoption patterns.
A comparative study could investigate how cultural norms shape openness to reusable menstrual products and uncover community-specific barriers or taboos. This would support the development of inclusive educational materials, culturally sensitive marketing strategies, and more equitable access to menstrual innovation across different communities.

Outro Descriptive Phase:

Understanding Menstrual Product Adoption

Chapters 1 through 6 have provided insights into the dynamics of adopting radical innovations in the stigmatized menstrual product market. By combining market trends, academic theory, and qualitative insights, this phase has highlighted the main barriers, motivations, and contextual influences that shape menstrual cup adoption.

These insights now form the foundation for the design phase that follows. The next chapter translates this understanding into actionable strategy by segmenting consumers, identifying their innovation readiness, and building personas to guide the go-to-market approach for Casey.

Design-Phase:
Translating Insights into Strategy

Introduction & Structure

The descriptive phase revealed that launching a radical innovation like Casey in a stigmatised category requires more than product performance. Main barriers such as knowledge gaps, social stigma, and hygiene concerns must be addressed through strategic positioning and phased communication efforts.

This design phase builds on those findings to translate insight into action. The goal is to operationalise the themes of social proof, education gaps, and adopter segmentation by developing actionable tools: personas and go-to-market (GTM) strategy recommendations. The goal of these outputs is to provide guidance on how CupHub can introduce Casey.

To do so, the design phase begins by assessing the Consumer Innovativeness (CI) levels of the previously identified groups, such as Cup-Doubters and Cup-Stoppers, using criteria adapted from Schuhmacher et al. (2018). These CI profiles are then evaluated and designed based on Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory to determine whether the original labels correspond to adoption categories such as early or late majority. The analysis shows that this alignment does not hold: potential consumers differ not only in when they adopt, but in how and why.

As a result, new personas are developed based on CI characteristics rather than product usage adoption stages based on Rogers' process. This reveals various psychological, emotional, and informational needs at each phase, providing a roadmap for intervention. Finally, these insights are synthesized into a GTM strategy that matches communication and activation efforts to user readiness, supporting adoption and long-term diffusion of Casey in a stigmatised and habit based market.
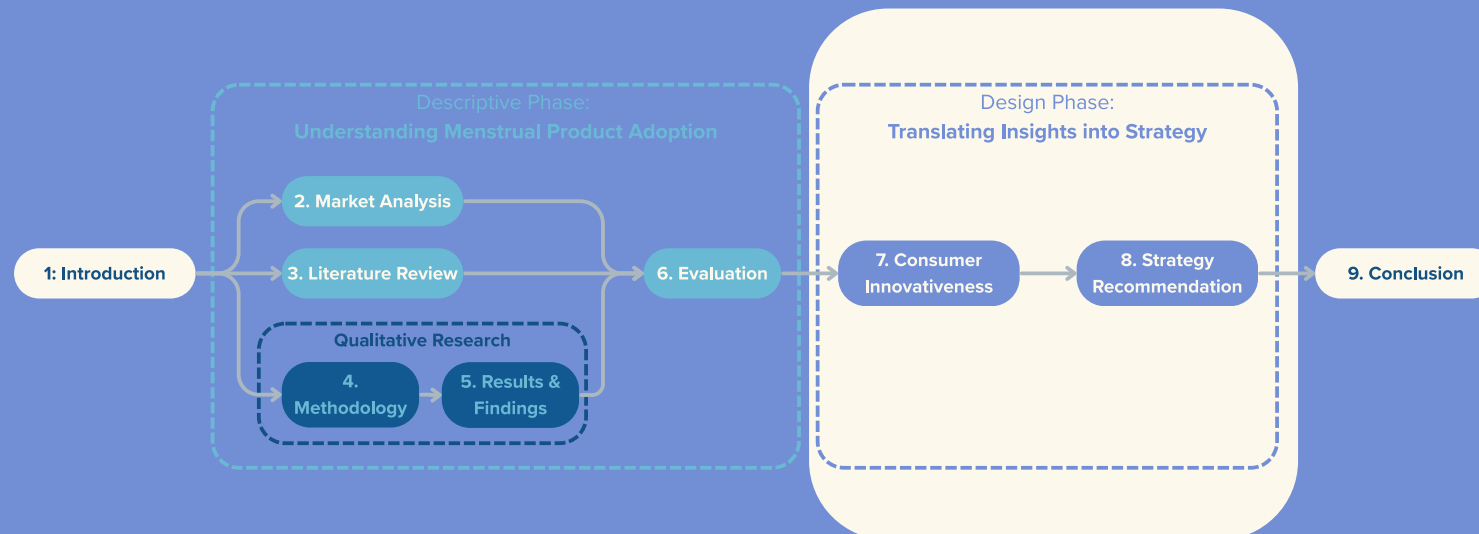
Consumer Innovativeness

This chapter integrates main findings from the qualitative research (phase 1) with established innovation adoption theories to assess how ready potential consumers are to adopt a radical innovation like Casey. By combining Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Model with the STP (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning) framework, this analysis structures insights into Consumer Innovativeness (CI) to inform strategic design decisions.

This synthesis lays the foundation for user personas and adoption journey mapping, which will guide how Casey is introduced to different consumer segments with varying motivations, barriers, and expectations.

7

7.1 Assessing Potential Consumers Information

While Schuhmacher et al. do not offer a fixed framework or formal scale for assessing Consumer Innovativeness (CI), their terms, as 'low' and 'high' suggest that CI is best viewed as a spectrum rather than a binary trait. Building on this interpretation, a custom 7-point scale was developed to assess CI levels among different consumer groups:

• Cup-Doubters
• Cup-Stoppers
• Mothers (as users)
• Mothers (as educators)

Drawing on the conceptual dimensions identified in Schuhmacher's work, seven factors were selected:

1. Level of involvement and knowledge about the product
2. Tolerance for uncertainty and risk-taking
3. Active search for information about new innovations
4. Perception of benefits
5. Influence on others and peer adoption
6. Willingness to invest
7. Open to challenging societal norms

While not universally standardized, this framework provides a structured way to translate qualitative user insights into strategic implications.

This analysis shown in figure 14, shows that launching a radical innovation like Casey requires a deep understanding. The seven dimensions analyzed offer strategic insights into how different segments perceive menstrual cups and what is needed to move them toward adoption. Reasoning of the scores can be found in Appendix 7.1.

Consumer Innovativeness points

- Doubters
- Stoppers
- Mothers (as users)
- Mothers (as educators)
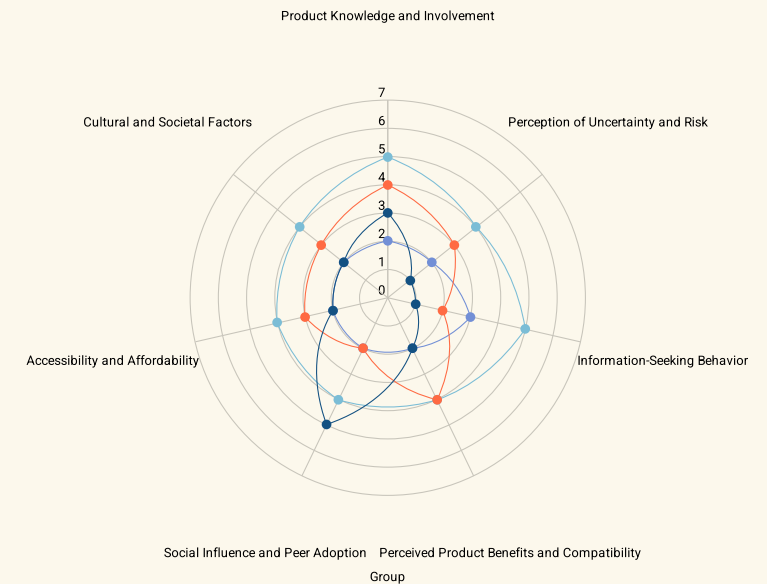
Figure 14: Consumer Innovativeness per factor per group

Takeaways: Consumer Readiness to Cup Adoption

1. Product knowledge is Low among Doubters and Mothers
Across all user groups, limited product knowledge, especially regarding cleaning, sizing, and usability, hinders confidence. Doubters and mothers (for their daughters) demonstrate the lowest familiarity, making them the groups in most need of tailored, step-by-step education. Without foundational knowledge, curiosity rarely leads to trial.

2. Perceived Risk and Uncertainty are main Barriers
Perceived risk is a major adoption barrier, especially among mothers evaluating cups for their children and Doubters. Fears about hygiene, leakage, pain, and social embarrassment are common. These insights underscore the importance of risk-reducing messaging, including demonstrations, expert endorsements, and positive user stories.

3. Stoppers are the most active Information-Seekers
Among all groups, Cup-Stoppers show the highest degree of self-driven information-seeking, primarily during troubleshooting. In contrast, Doubters and mothers rely heavily on social circles, rarely seeking information on their own. This means that marketing must not only educate, but also appear in the right social context, such as through peers, parenting groups, or influencers.

4. Barriers Overrule perceived benefits
Although environmental and cost-saving benefits are appreciated, they are not enough to drive adoption on their own. Usability in public settings, hygiene concerns, and the taboo around visible blood or insertion remain major barriers. These concerns are especially acute among Doubters and mothers for children.

5. Social Influence is important, but currently reinforces the Norm
Social proof is the most powerful motivator, yet currently favours tampons and pads. Most participants followed product habits set by their mothers, and now pass those norms on. Peer visibility, real-life testimonials, and normalised use in close social groups will be more effective than mass campaigns in challenging these habit-based behaviours.

6. Affordability is a Barrier for doubters
The upfront cost of a menstrual cup deters trial among price-sensitive groups, especially Doubters. Many mentioned wanting to try the cup but needing reassurance like free trials, guarantees, or installment options before committing. Product bundling with Casey may be a strategic opportunity here.

7. Cultural and Emotional Comfort remain Barriers
Many mothers (particularly for daughters) expressed concern about emotional readiness, physical comfort, and the cultural acceptability of cups. In these contexts, product familiarity and education need to be paired with emotional reassurance, especially regarding perceived age appropriateness and long-term safety.

7.2 From Consumer Innovativeness to Persona Development

CI-Scores and Interpretation

Figure 15 presents the total CI scores for four groups based on seven dimensions of Consumer Innovativeness (max score: 49). Several notable observations are:

- Although Stoppers received the highest CI score (30), this does not necessarily indicate greater innovativeness. This is because the cup is already years available on the market, which results in people buying cups although they waited until their friends had one. Which would indicate that they have a lower CI than people who were the first in their friendgroup to adopt the cup.
- Meanwhile, Doubters scored lowest (15), reflecting limited product engagement, higher risk aversion, and lower openness to innovation.
- Mothers (as users) scored moderately (21), while Mothers (as educators) scored 16, indicating influence potential despite limited innovation engagement.
-

Detailed information on scoring and criteria can be found in the Appendix 7.2.

Based on Rogers' (2003) five stages of adoption, the different types of menstrual Cup-Users were positioned along the adoption curve as if the different types of menstrual cup users were initially expected to follow a linear adoption path: from general menstruator to Doubter, then Stopper, and ultimately user (Figure 16).
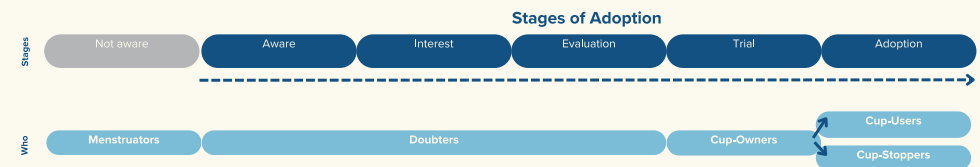
Figure 16: Mapping Menstruators to Rogers' five Stages of Adoption.

These points must be taken into account:

- *A 'zero' stage 'Unawareness', was added, as many menstruators are currently not familiar with cups due to stigma, newness and lack of education.*
- *Cup-Stoppers can be seen as having exited the adoption curve post-trial, possibly regressing to evaluation or opting out altogether.*
- *Non-Cup-Users include menstruators who are either unaware of menstrual cups or have consciously decided not to use it.*

Total CI score per Group

Figure 15: Total Consumer Innovativeness Scores per Group

Takeaway:
Initially, Cup-Doubters, Stoppers and Users were seen as sequential adopter groups. However, this study shows that they must be addressed differently, as their low CI scores and various motivations require tailored approaches: Doubters will not become Users with the same messaging used for Users.

7.3 Persona's

To translate the CI analysis into actionable insights, three personas were developed: the Imitator, the Heavy-Flower, and the Cautious Mother. These personas do not merely reflect sequential stages in the adoption process, as the labels Cup Doubter, Stopper, and User might suggest, but instead represent fundamentally distinct mindsets and innovation profiles. They are grounded in the Consumer Innovativeness (CI) framework by Schuhmacher et al. (2018) and supported by qualitative data gathered in this study.

These personas reflect varying levels of:
• Curiosity and risk tolerance
• Switching behaviour and social context
• Practical barriers and emotional hesitations

In addition, a fourth persona 'the Adventurer', is introduced. While not directly investigated during this study's interviews, this profile is constructed using the same CI factors. The assumption is that Adventurers, formerly framed as Cup-Users, score higher on innovation-related traits such as active information-seeking and risk tolerance; they already have successfully adopted the cup which is a radical innovation. Their behaviour contrasts with that of the Heavy-Flower, who discontinued use after negative experiences and did not actively seek information.

Adventurer

25 years old - Rotterdam - Master Student

CI-score: 31+

Cautious Mother

44 years old - Rotterdam -Works as CEO

CI-score: 16

Feelings
• Protective and pragmatic.
• Open to new ideas for her child but cautious.
• Needs reassurance before recommending or switching products.

Tasks
Manage menstruation for herself with familiar products; support and educate her daughter through puberty and menstrual choices. Talks to her daughter about menstruation before the first period. Buys menstrual products for at home.

Pain Points
• Lack of clear, trustworthy information about alternatives like cups for young users. Questions ease of use and emotional readiness for child.
• Fear of making the wrong recommendation.
• Hygiene and safety concerns.
• Defaulting to disposables due to familiarity.
• Seeks information very passive; lacks initiative to seek alternatives.

Influences
• Other mothers (her friends), daughters and is influenced by social media.

Overall Goal
To provide her daughter with safe, healthy, and easy menstrual care options.

Needs & Recommendations:
• Build trust through endorsements.
• Provide simplified products designed for first-time users.
• Offer education via schools or family-focused campaigns.

Imitator

CI-score: 15

25 years old - Rotterdam - Master Student

Feelings
- Curious but hesitant.
- Overwhelmed by unfamiliarity.
- Slight peer pressure but still unsure.

Tasks
Navigate menstruation with familiar products; occasionally see advertisements of reusable alternatives online.

Pain Points
- Finds the product complex and impractical for daily life.
- Limited knowledge; unfamiliar with practical usage, sizing, and availability.
- Fears related to hygiene, leakage, or doing it wrong.
- High perceived risk (for example: leakage or hygiene concerns).
- Doesn't know whom to ask for help or tips: Lack visible close role models.
- One negative anecdote discourages to try the cup.

Influences
- Are first more influenced for product use and knowledge by their mother.
- Experiences are only shared with friends.
- Awareness increases by social media influencers.
- Needs social validation to gain trust in a product.

Overall Goal
To find a menstrual solution that feels safe, easy, and socially accepted, without stepping too far outside of her comfort zone.

Needs & Recommendations:
- Clear, accessible how-to content (visual aids, demonstrations).
- Visibility through peer testimonials or school programs.
- Entry-level offers or try-outs to reduce financial risk.

Heavy-Flower

CI-score: 30

25 years old - Rotterdam - Master Student

Feelings
- Frustrated by past cup experience.
- Wants to like the cup but is disappointed.
- Still values sustainable choices.

Tasks
Seeks to manage menstruation in a way that aligns with personal values like sustainability but wants comfort and ease.

Pain Points
- One bad experience: difficulty with insertion/removal.
- Lack of supportive tools (for example: cleaning in public).
- Low visibility of peer support or relatable stories.
- Seeks information more proactive; explores reviews and tutorials.
- Bleed heavily and long. Wears double protection.

Influences
- Are more influenced by friends/peers, than by moms.
- Social platforms like Instagram and TikTok (for awareness and knowledge).

Overall Goal
To feel empowered with a sustainable solution that fits her lifestyle without hassle or discomfort, possibly retry if obstacles are addressed.

Needs & Recommendations:
- Reinforce comfort and safety through redesigned products..
- Create communities for shared experiences and troubleshooting.
- Targeted messaging to address previously raised concerns.
- Provide options for combined use with period underwear or pads.
- Emphasise extended wear and capacity benefits.
- Feature endorsements and testimonials from others with heavy flows.

7.4 Mapping Stages of Adoption

Combining Rogers' (2003) theory of the five adoption with the persona's are mapped to illustrate how different personas navigate the decision-making process surrounding menstrual cup adoption. By analyzing these adoption pathways, this section identifies important transition points, as shown in Figure 17, what potential consumers need to transition from the previous stage to the next.

These insights allow CupHub to tailor its communication strategies and product positioning in a way that directly addresses user concerns and expectations. Ultimately, a thorough understanding of the stages helps remove switching barriers, foster trust, and support a smoother path toward adoption. This forms the foundation for a more effective and consumer-aligned go-to-market strategy for Casey.

Each persona progresses differently: the dark blue arrows indicate how the current switches between stages happen. The purple arrows are what the persona's need to switch from between the stages.

- Adventurers are most likely to continue and become ambassadors
- Imitators get stuck between interest and evaluation unless peers normalise the product.
- Heavy-Flowers abandon after trial unless problems are solved.

Detailed Explanation of transitions between stages can be found in the Appendix 9.

Framework: The Adoption stages of Menstrual Cups

Stages of Cup Adoption

Figure 17: The five adoption stages according to Rogers (2003) tailored to Menstrual Cups per Persona

Adventurer

Stages: Not aware | Aware | Interest | Evaluation | Trial | Adoption

Influenced by:
- Get information (Passive)
  - Social Media
  - Moms
  - Education
- Seeking Information (Active)
- Know benefits:
  - Convenience,
  - Health,
  - Sustainability
- Feature-based Messaging
- Seeking support (Active)
  - Online
- Convenience
- Getting information (Passive) + Positive experiences & Tips & Trics:
  - Online
  - Peer Support
- Ambassador

Heavy-Flower

Stages: Not aware | Aware | Interest | Evaluation | Trial | Adoption

Influenced by:
- Get information (Passive)
  - Social Media
  - Friends
  - Moms
  - Education
- Knowledge:
  - Convenience,
  - Health,
  - Sustainability
- Feature-based Messaging
- Imitation (Close friends), share positive experiences
- Stop using the cup
- Convenience
- Getting information (Passive) + Positive experiences & Tips & Trics:
  - Peer Support
- Ambassador

Imitator

Stages: Not aware | Aware | Interest | Evaluation | Trial | Adoption

Influenced by:
- Get information (Passive)
  - Social Media
  - Friends
  - Moms
  - Education
- Benefit-based Messaging
  - Convenience,
  - Health,
  - Sustainability
- No interest anymore
- Subjective Norms: Friends set norm
- Imitation (Close friends), share positive experiences
- Convenience

Legend:

- Dark blue arrows: **The current pathways**, which CupHub can elaborate for Casey
- Purple Arrows: **The proposed new strategic actions** by CupHub
- Orange text: Reflects CupHub's **long-term educational goal**

7.5 Discussion

Adoption Journey applicable to Radical Innovations
The illustrated adoption journey is based on a synthesis of insights gained from a literature review on menstrual cups and qualitative interviews with relevant user groups. While the framework is based on the menstrual cup context, its purpose goes beyond that product. Casey has not yet been launched, so direct user feedback on the adoption process is unavailable. As a result, this model acts as a representative, providing an informed forecast of potential adoption behaviour for Casey based on comparable product behaviour.

Both the menstrual cup and Casey are considered radical innovations, products that require behavioural change and consumer learning (Schuhmacher et al., 2018). As a result, they face similar barriers and facilitators to consumer adoption. Comparing their adoption journeys is therefore logical in approach and strategically meaningful.

Importantly, this framework includes not only product-specific insights but also behavioural patterns associated with stigmatised product categories, particularly those relating to menstruation. These categories deal with similar adoption barriers, such as social silence, discomfort with public visibility, and a lack of comprehensive education. While some of the benefits are currently tailored to menstrual cups, the overall structure of the adoption pathway, from unawareness to full adoption, is broadly applicable to Casey and other stigmatised innovations.

Design implications:
• Emphasise hygiene and convenience over ideology
• Support users with peer-led support and realistic expectations
• Normalise through visibility, not confrontation
• Use phased messaging: from curiosity to trial to ambassador

This model also offers value for other taboo innovations (for example: sexual health, toileting products), especially those facing challenges of stigma, habit disruption, and knowledge gaps. To maintain generalisability, the 'benefits' need to be specified for that specific product, leaving the structure of the adoption journey intact while incorporating new motivators specific to other radical innovations on entry into the market and user engagement.

7.6 Main Takeaways

• A custom CI model revealed various readiness levels and behaviours across user groups.

• Adoption is nonlinear: Doubters will not "evolve" into Users unless they are differently targeted and influenced.

• Personas (Imitator, Heavy-Flower, Avonturier) provide strategic entry points into each segment's adoption journey.

• Social validation is important for potential consumers with low CI-level: real stories, shared experiences, and visibility are stronger than traditional ads.

• The adoption journey framework supports strategy development for Casey and other radical, stigmatised innovations.

Strategy Recommendation

While the previous chapters focused on understanding menstrual product adoption: particularly the use and perception of menstrual cups, this chapter moves from analysis to creation. It applies those findings to develop a strategic approach for a product that has not yet been launched: Casey, a cleaning solution designed to support menstrual cup users.

Using insights from the market analysis, consumer interviews, trend research, and theoretical frameworks, this chapter outlines short- and long-term strategy recommendations to guide Casey's market entry. These recommendations respond directly to the knowledge gaps, adoption barriers, and emotional drivers uncovered in earlier chapters and aim to position Casey as a practical, trustworthy, and stigma-aware innovation.

The chapter begins by defining the core requirements for Casey's Go-to-Market (GTM) strategy and builds toward a phased, persona-based rollout plan. It concludes with targeted recommendations to support both early-stage adoption and long-term diffusion in a stigmatized and habit-driven market.

8.1 Requirements for the GTM Strategy for Casey

This chapter defines the core requirements that Casey's Go-to-Market (GTM) strategy must meet to ensure a successful and sustainable launch. These criteria are based on the findings from the market analysis, consumer insights, and literature review. They serve as a strategic bridge between insight and execution.

A full list of requirements can be found in Appendix 8.1.

To align with CupHub's mission and market positioning, the strategy must fulfil three sets of conditions:

Strategic & Market Fit:
The strategy should target early adopters, differentiate Casey from competitors, and support broader menstrual cup adoption through education and regulatory compliance.

Operational Feasibility:
Execution must match CupHub's current capabilities, outline realistic steps for implementation, and support a scalable, financially sustainable model.

Brand & Positioning:
The approach should strengthen trust, transparency, and relevance, using community-based messaging and pricing that aligns with Casey's value proposition.

Main strategic principles include:
- Targeting innovators and early adopters before the mainstream
- Positioning Casey around convenience over sustainability
- Using differentiated messaging based on persona-specific needs and readiness

These insights create the foundation for a phased GTM approach that is aligned with user behaviours, market conditions, and the barriers identified throughout the study.

Note:
- *Mothers are not included in the short-term go-to-market (GTM) strategy due to their slower adoption pace and protective orientation. Instead, they are considered a longer-term target group, particularly valuable for their role in shaping menstrual norms and influencing the adoption behaviours of younger menstruators.*

- *Mothers were included in this study primarily to understand how they educate their children about menstruation. However, during the interviews, they also shared personal reflections on their own menstrual product usage. This resulted in a natural distinction between two roles: mothers as users and mothers as educators. Based on this distinction, each group was assessed separately using the Consumer Innovativeness (CI) framework. Although the sample consisted of only three mothers, their insights contributed valuable understanding of how menstrual product norms are both practiced and passed down across generations.*

8.2 GTM Strategy Foundation

This section outlines the strategic reasoning behind Casey's go-to-market (GTM) approach, drawing on adoption theory, consumer segmentation, and insights from the qualitative research. CupHub aims to lead with a user-first, stigmatised innovation by first engaging high-CI consumers (Adventurers) and in stages scaling toward more hesitant groups (Heavy-Flowers and Imitators).

8.3 Go-to-Market Execution Framework

Translating strategy into action, this section introduces the operational GTM plan for Casey. It applies the segmentation insights and adoption dynamics discussed in the previous section to craft an actionable launch framework.

The plan follows Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations model, targeting high-CI adopters first and expanding through carefully tailored messaging. Each phase aligns with user personas, Adventurers, Heavy-Flowers, and Imitators, who differ in needs, motivations, and switching thresholds.

The framework in figure 18 visualizes this phased journey, summarizing important messages, campaign channels, and recommended interventions for each segment. Together, this framework ensures that Casey enters the market with relevance and sensitivity.

8.3.1 Short-term: Convenience = Normalisation (1-5 years)

A vision for CupHub was developed to provide a clear direction for the brand's future, helping to align strategic decisions with long-term goals.

Vision

CupHub strives to set the standard for sustainable, user-first menstrual care: grounded in understanding, driven by innovation, and elevated by trust.

Explanation Vision:
Grounded in Understanding: This part of CupHub's vision is based on the deep user research done during this study, especially the personas built around Consumer Innovativeness (CI) and switching behaviour. The interviews showed that choosing menstrual products is not just practical, it's emotional and personal. That is why CupHub does not just aim to target users, but truly understand them.

2. Driven by Innovation:
Casey offers something new: a simple, hygienic way to clean menstrual cups, especially when you are on the go. It is not just a product, it's a shift in routines and comfort. Features like portability, microwave sterilisation, and ease of use reflect CupHub's focus on meaningful, user-first innovation.

3. Elevated by Trust:
Across all research phases, trust came up as a major factor, especially for Doubters. Many want more guidance, stories from real users, or validation from experts. CupHub can stand out by putting trust at the heart of its brand: through honest communication, community voices, and clear instructions.

4. Set the Standard:
CupHub does not just want to launch Casey, it wants to change how people think about reusable menstrual care. That includes investing in education, expert partnerships, and long-term stigma reduction. The goal is to become the leading voice in sustainable, inclusive, and stigma-free menstrual care.

8.3.2 Step-by-Step Plan

The following section outlines the phased Go-to-Market (GTM) roadmap for Casey, structured by year and aligned with consumer adoption theory. The roadmap is based on insights from qualitative research, trend analysis, and the adoption readiness of different personas developed in this study.

Each yearly plan focuses on a specific consumer segment: starting with current menstrual Cup-Users who are most open to innovation, and gradually expanding toward more hesitant users who require additional reassurance and social validation. The roadmap details the necessary strategic actions, what kind of messages, and support mechanisms required to lower switching barriers and promote adoption within each group.

Rather than a rigid timeline, this plan guides CupHub's strategic decision-making while remaining responsive to new learnings, market feedback, and evolving user needs.
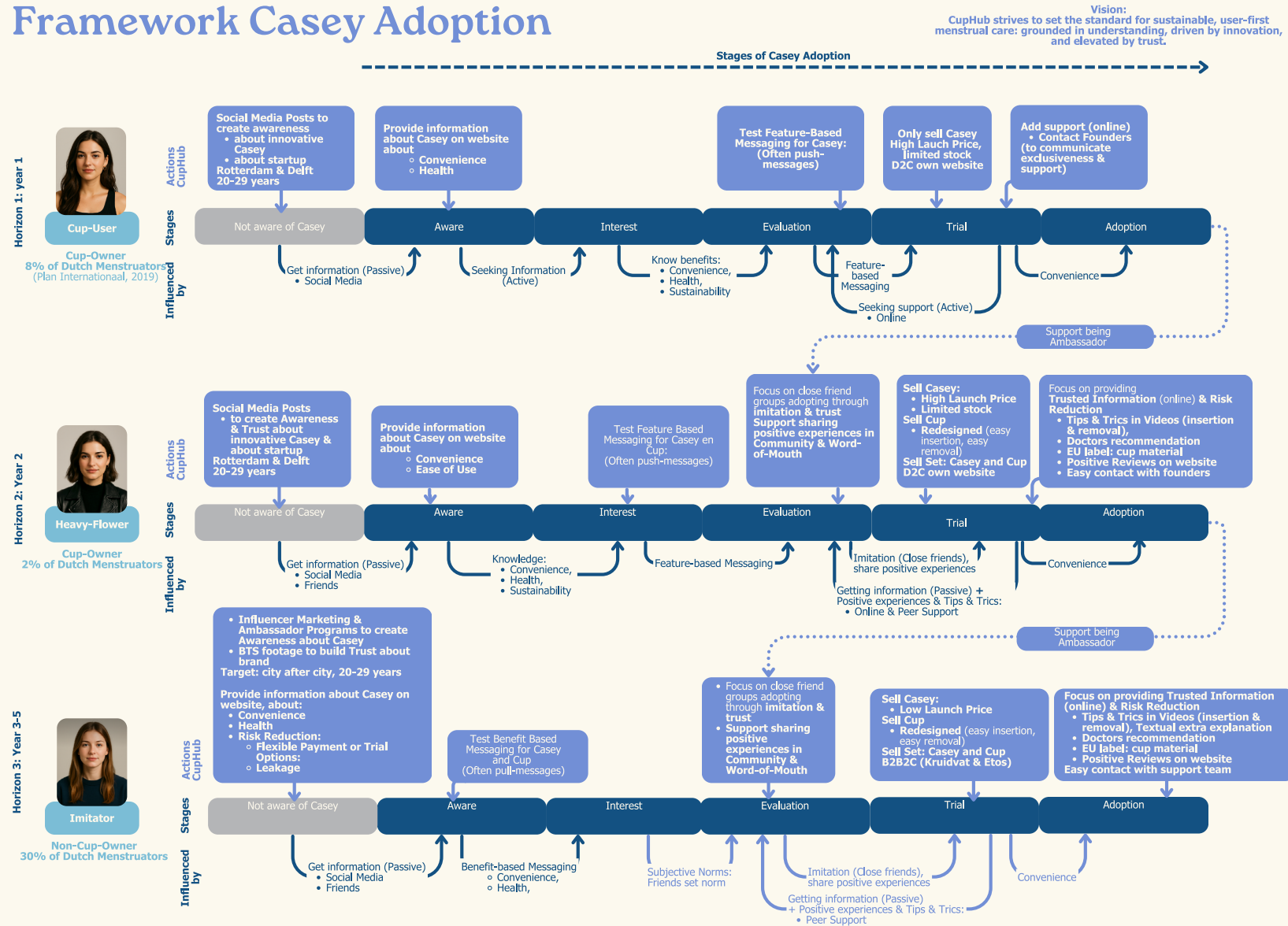
Framework Casey Adoption

Vision:
CupHub strives to set the standard for sustainable, user-first menstrual care: grounded in understanding, driven by innovation, and elevated by trust.

Stages of Casey Adoption →

Horizon 1: year 1 — Cup-User
Cup-Owner
8% of Dutch Menstruators
(Plan Internationaal, 2019)

Actions CupHub:

- Social Media Posts to create awareness
  - about innovative Casey
  - about startup
  Rotterdam & Delft
  20-29 years
- Provide information about Casey on website about
  - Convenience
  - Health
- Test Feature-Based Messaging for Casey: (Often push-messages)
- Only sell Casey High Lauch Price, limited stock D2C own website
- Add support (online)
  - Contact Founders (to communicate exclusiveness & support)

Stages: Not aware of Casey → Aware → Interest → Evaluation → Trial → Adoption

Influenced by:
- Get information (Passive)
  - Social Media
- Seeking Information (Active)
- Know benefits:
  - Convenience,
  - Health,
  - Sustainability
- Feature-based Messaging
- Seeking support (Active)
  - Online
- Convenience
- Support being Ambassador

Horizon 2: Year 2 — Heavy-Flower
Cup-Owner
2% of Dutch Menstruators

Actions CupHub:

- Social Media Posts
  - to create Awareness & Trust about innovative Casey & about startup
  Rotterdam & Delft
  20-29 years
- Provide information about Casey on website about
  - Convenience
  - Ease of Use
- Test Feature Based Messaging for Casey en Cup: (Often push-messages)
- Focus on close friend groups adopting through imitation & trust. Support sharing positive experiences in Community & Word-of-Mouth
- Sell Casey:
  - High Launch Price
  - Limited stock
  Sell Cup
  - Redesigned (easy insertion, easy removal)
  Sell Set: Casey and Cup D2C own website
- Focus on providing Trusted Information (online) & Risk Reduction
  - Tips & Trics in Videos (insertion & removal),
  - Doctors recommendation
  - EU label: cup material
  - Positive Reviews on website
  - Easy contact with founders

Stages: Not aware of Casey → Aware → Interest → Evaluation → Trial → Adoption

Influenced by:
- Get information (Passive)
  - Social Media
  - Friends
- Knowledge:
  - Convenience,
  - Health,
  - Sustainability
- Feature-based Messaging
- Imitation (Close friends), share positive experiences
- Getting information (Passive) + Positive experiences & Tips & Trics:
  - Online & Peer Support
- Convenience
- Support being Ambassador

Horizon 3: Year 3-5 — Imitator
Non-Cup-Owner
30% of Dutch Menstruators

Actions CupHub:

- Influencer Marketing & Ambassador Programs to create Awareness about Casey
- BTS footage to build Trust about brand
Target: city after city, 20-29 years
- Provide information about Casey on website, about:
  - Convenience
  - Health
  - Risk Reduction:
    - Flexible Payment or Trial Options:
    - Leakage
- Test Benefit Based Messaging for Casey and Cup (Often pull-messages)
- Focus on close friend groups adopting through imitation & trust
  - Support sharing positive experiences in Community & Word-of-Mouth
- Sell Casey:
  - Low Launch Price
  Sell Cup
  - Redesigned (easy insertion, easy removal)
  Sell Set: Casey and Cup B2B2C (Kruidvat & Etos)
- Focus on providing Trusted Information (online) & Risk Reduction
  - Tips & Trics in Videos (insertion & removal), Textual extra explanation
  - Doctors recommendation
  - EU label: cup material
  - Positive Reviews on website
  Easy contact with support team

Stages: Not aware of Casey → Aware → Interest → Evaluation → Trial → Adoption

Influenced by:
- Get information (Passive)
  - Social Media
  - Friends
- Benefit-based Messaging
  - Convenience,
  - Health,
- Subjective Norms: Friends set norm
- Imitation (Close friends), share positive experiences
- Getting information (Passive) + Positive experiences & Tips & Trics:
  - Peer Support
- Convenience

Figure 18: The five adoption stages according to Rogers (2003) tailored to Casey

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Targeting Current Cup-Users (Year 1)

Goal: Reach current menstrual cup users who already experience the need for convenient cleaning. This makes them the most likely early adopters of Casey, as their barrier to purchase is lower and their motivation higher.

Step 0: Organise a Pilot Study
Objective: Validate Casey's usability in real-life settings with high-CI consumers ("Adventurers").

Actions:
1. Select 10–20 menstrual cup users who actively seek innovation.
2. Provide them with early access to Casey and observe use both at home and in public.
3. Collect feedback via daily logs, interviews, and surveys on ease of use, hygiene, and emotional experience.
4. Offer onboarding and support to simulate post-launch customer care.

Outcomes:
• A refined version of Casey based on real user feedback.
• Initial messaging and feature improvements validated.
• Formation of early brand ambassadors who can support post-launch visibility.

Follow-Up: Host a co-creation debrief with pilot users and integrate findings into Casey's first version and go-to-market messaging.

Step 1: Investigate value alignment among Cup-Users
Objective: Ensure strategic messaging resonates with real user priorities.
Actions:
• Survey or interview a broader group of cup users.
• Identify dominant values (e.g., privacy, hygiene, convenience).
• Cross-analyse by personality traits or CI levels.
Outcome: A value hierarchy that aligns product messaging with emotional and functional drivers of adoption.

Step 2: Raise Awareness via Social Media
Action: Launch organic and sponsored posts on Instagram and TikTok.
Audience: Menstruators aged 20–29 in Rotterdam and Delft.
Focus: Introduction to CupHub, the Casey story, and relatable content for cup users.
Next Step: Explore influencer collaborations or user-generated content to build trust and visibility.

Step 3: Build a Clear and Trustworthy Website
Action: Launch a landing page that introduces Casey clearly and accessibly.
Content Includes:
• Feature explanations and practical use cases.
• Hygiene and safety reassurances.
• FAQs reflecting real concerns from research interviews.
Next Step: Continuously update the FAQ section based on incoming questions from social channels and email.

Step 4: Run A/B Tests on Feature-Based Messaging
Action: Test ad variants focusing on different angles (e.g., portability, hygiene, comfort).
Goal: Determine which benefits drive the most engagement and conversions.
Next Step: Analyse performance and use findings to optimise web copy and future campaigns.

Step 5: Launch Exclusively via D2C Website
Action: Release Casey in a limited first batch at a premium price.
Positioning: "Be the first to shape the future of period care."
Outcome: adopter status and exclusivity create buzz and test initial pricing elasticity.
Next Step: Collect post-purchase feedback to fine-tune messaging and support for broader rollout.

Step 6: Offer Personalised Support & Founder Contact
Action: Make founder support accessible via website chat, email, or short intro videos.
 Goal: Build trust and reinforce the brand as approachable, transparent, and user-first.
Next Step: Explore longer-term support strategies like a closed tester community or WhatsApp group.

Targeting the Heavy-Flowers (Year 2)

Goal: Move beyond early adopters and expand adoption among the majority market, particularly Heavy-Flowers, who are familiar with menstrual cups but have experienced friction in use. The strategy focuses on trust, imitation, emotional reassurance, and word-of-mouth dynamics.

Step 1: Build Awareness & Trust on Social Media
Action: Continue organic and sponsored posts on Instagram and TikTok.
Audience: Menstruators aged 20–29 in Rotterdam and Delft.
Focus:
- Showcase Casey's real-life benefits with user-generated stories.
- Highlight startup authenticity, social mission, and user-first innovation.

Added Recommendation: Start introducing content aimed at contraceptive switchers and natural cyclers, identified as future target personas needing further exploration.

Step 2: Provide Clear Information on Website
Action: Expand and update FAQ sections with questions derived from Year 1 feedback.
Content Focus:
- Explain Casey's use, hygiene, and convenience in detail.
- Clarify material safety, regulations, and Casey's added value in travel or shared spaces.

Added Recommendation: Include expert-verified medical information (for example: EU labels, doctor support) to build trust among cautious users.

Step 3: Run A/B Tests on Feature-Based Messaging for Majority Users
Action: Tailor ads to Heavy-Flowers using push messages that focus on ease of use, comfort, and problem-solving (e.g., "no more messy removal," "clean anywhere").
Goal: Identify which benefits drive most conversions in this segment.
Added Recommendation:Continue evaluating the alignment between value-based and feature-based messag ing, especially for hesitant users.

Step 4: Activate Imitation Through Peer Networks
Action:
- Spark local buzz among close friend groups and communities.
- Support story-sharing through mini-campaigns like "My First Casey Experience."
- Encourage friends tagging friends in giveaways or challenges.

Added Recommendation: Set up a brainstorm session to develop scalable word-of-mouth mechanisms rooted in peer trust, not influencer marketing.

Step 5: Launch Casey Sets: Cup + Cleaning Solution
Action:
- Introduce a new redesigned cup (easy insertion/removal).
- Bundle with Casey as a starter kit to lower switching barriers.
- Use limited stock and high pricing to maintain exclusivity and perceived value.

Rationale:
- Sets solve user pain points at the same time and increase average order value.
- High price maintains premium perception among early majority, while keeping volume manageable.

Step 6: Offer Trusted Information & Risk-Reduction Content
Action:
- Share videos showing insertion, removal, and public use hacks.
- Post clear instructions, expert advice, and emotional support content.
- Make founders visible for added personal trust.

Added Recommendation:
- Introduce verified user reviews and doctor recommendations on product pages.
- Use this phase to explore how attitudes, not just knowledge, influence adoption, build into future messaging.

Targeting Imitators (Year 3-5)

Goal: Reach the mainstream market by normalising Casey. Focus on social validation, risk-reducing strategies, and retail visibility. Adoption at this stage is driven by trust, familiarity, and convenience, not novelty.

Step 1: Expand Awareness via Influencers & Ambassadors
Action:
- Partner with micro-influencers and real users to share behind-the-scenes footage of Casey's development, daily use, and real-life testimonials.
- Target new cities one by one (local focus), with campaigns aimed at menstruators aged 20–29.
- Launch ambassador programs that reward peer recommendations.

Content Strategy:
- Focus on reliability, hygiene, and "everyone's doing it" tone.
- Use stories that show everyday, relatable people using Casey with ease and comfort.

Recommendation Embedded: This leverages the power of peer-driven endorsement and normalised visibility, essential for Imitators.

Step 2: Provide Layered, Risk-Reducing Information
Action:
- Expand the website to include:
  - Practical use cases
  - Comparison charts
  - Doctor quotes
  - EU safety labels
  - Flexible payment or trial options
- Add reassurance around:
  - Leakage
  - Hygiene
  - Public use

Next Step: Add a short quiz to guide product choice ("Is Casey for me?").
Recommendation Embedded: This supports risk reduction and makes unfamiliar behaviour feel more manageable.

Step 3: Run tests on Benefit-Based Messaging
Action:
- Shift from feature-based ("you can boil it") to benefit-based ("feel confident wherever you are").
- Use pull-based strategies like storytelling or empathy-led ads.
- Focus on themes such as security, emotional comfort, privacy, and ease.

Recommendation Embedded: Continue testing messaging combinations to determine what resonates most across trust and convenience axes.

Step 4: Activate Imitation through Local circles
Action:
- Launch city-specific campaigns focused on friend-to-friend adoption.
- Create hype through gamified experiences (e.g., referral chains, "cup starter packs for your friend group").
- Encourage testimonial-style social media content (e.g., TikTok duets, Casey-in-my-bag challenges).

Recommendation Embedded: Supports long-term word-of-mouth and aligns with insights that show Imitators adopt through imitation, not individual experimentation.

Step 5: Expand Sales via Retail (B2B2C)
Action:
- Partner with Kruidvat, Etos, or other trusted stores for visibility and accessibility.
- Lower the entry barrier with a low launch price and in-store starter kits (Casey + redesigned cup).
- Consider limited-edition packaging to signal novelty while reinforcing trust.

Recommendation Embedded: Supports intensive distribution, reinforces familiarity, and lowers friction in first-time adoption.

Step 6: Deepen Trust with Professional & Community Validation
Action:
- Publish doctor endorsements, EU certifications, and real-user quotes on the website and in stores.
- Offer "Tips & Tricks" series (short videos or guides) with clear visuals for: Insertion & removal, Cleaning in shared environments, Product maintenance
- Add access to friendly support, e.g., "Ask a Casey Coach" via WhatsApp or email.

Recommendation Embedded: Aligns with trust-building and addresses key psychological barriers identified in this study.

8.3.3 Long term: Comprehensive Menstrual Education (Over 4+ years)

To promote long-term adoption of reusable menstrual products, CupHub should work with trusted community actors: schools, mothers, and doctors, who have a high influence on awareness within their networks (students, children, and patients, respectively). These groups were consistently identified as trustworthy according to the interviews with potential consumers. Table 4 shows the influences per 'trusted' stakeholder.

To go from Niche to Norm with Casey and thus targeting the majority market, the four adoption-enhancing principles for low-CI audiences (Schuhmacher et al., 2018) are applied to each stakeholder in table 5.

	Target	Influence on Awareness	Influence on Adoption
Schools	Easy	High	low
Moms	Hard	high	high
Doctors	Easy	high	test

Table 4: Influences on potential consumers per Stakeholder

Table 5: Proposed examples for operationalising the adoption-enhancing principles

Principle	Schools	Mothers	Doctors
Emphasizing security and familiarity	Integrate reusable products into regular health or biology lessons to normalize them.	Provide materials that show how their peers also use these products safely (e.g., testimonials from other moms).	Display cups and Casey in waiting rooms with visual explanations showing their medical safety.
Offering a low launch price	Provide free trial kits in educational programs (e.g., via school campaigns or student health fairs).	Offer discounted starter kits for families with teenagers.	Hand out sample coupons or offer trial kits during contraceptive or menstrual health consultations.
Using benefit-based messaging	Link the cup and Casey to sustainability education: "Save the planet, one period at a time."	Highlight cost-savings over years, hygiene control, and fewer store visits.	Emphasize health benefits such as non-toxic materials and compatibility with most contraceptive methods.
Ensuring intensive distribution	Distribute via school teachers or educational partnerships (for example: sexual health organizations).	Make available in drugstores and supermarkets where mothers already shop.	Offer availability through pharmacies and clinics, or give direct access via health professionals.

8.4 Strategy Recommendations

This section outlines short- and long-term recommendations based on the research findings, personas, and adoption journey. The goal is to translate insights into practical next steps for launching Casey effectively. Short-term actions focus on refining messaging, segmentation, and peer influence strategies. Long-term recommendations support sustainable growth, normalisation, and potential collaborations to scale Casey within the stigmatised menstrual care market.

8.4.1 Short term Recommendations

Investigate value alignment among Cup Users
It is recommended that future research provides insights into the specific values and motivations of current menstrual Cup-Users. Although this group is likely to align with high Consumer Innovativeness (CI) profiles, testing to specify their convenience value drivers and needs, is essential to ensure strategic messaging remains relevant and resonant.

Test Strategic messaging across Adoption horizons
While this study presents example messages tailored to different consumer adoption horizons (for example: early adopters vs. the majority market), these should be empirically tested to determine which messaging strategies most effectively influence behavioural change. A/B testing or controlled trials may reveal which combinations of benefit-based or feature-based messages drive engagement and conversion most effectively.

Leveraging Word-of-Mouth
Imitators and Heavy-Flowers fall within the majority market, characterized by lower Consumer Innovativeness (CI). For these segments, traditional marketing is insufficient. Instead, community-building and peer-driven endorsement strategies are recommended. To normalise menstrual cups among hesitant consumers, CupHub should focus on word-of-mouth strategies within trusted peer groups. In taboo or sensitive contexts like menstruation, consumers are more likely to adopt new behaviours when recommendations come from close, relatable friends rather than influencers or brands. This approach requires a dedicated brainstorm session, aimed at developing creative, scalable methods to stimulate peer-to-peer sharing and normalise conversation around cups and cleaning solutions like Casey.

Incorporate Attitude into Adoption Models
Although attitude is commonly recognized as a main factor in behavioural adoption frameworks (for example: the Theory of Planned Behaviour), such models were not applied in this study. It is therefore recommended that future research integrates attitude-based theories to better understand how personal beliefs influence menstrual product adoption. While indicative attitudes were gathered and categorized per target group, time constraints prevented their inclusion in the analysis. These findings are available in Appendix 7.2 for reference but were not further used in this thesis.

Add personas based on Contraceptive use
To enhance strategic targeting and better reflect evolving consumer realities, it is recommended to expand the existing set of personas by including two new subgroups based on contraceptive use. Both the qualitative interviews and the trend analysis revealed a growing shift away from hormonal contraceptives, a trend closely linked to rising health consciousness and interest in natural menstrual management (Rude, 2024). Due to limitations in the interview data, it was not possible to determine whether these groups align more with high or low innovative people. Further research is needed to assess their innovativeness levels. However, the data collected from the interviews has been translated into adoption stages, which can be found in the Appendix 9, though the insights are not fully comprehensive or definitive.

- Contraceptive Switchers: Menstruators who are currently transitioning between contraceptive methods. This group is already undergoing behavioural changes and is more receptive to reevaluating their menstrual product choices, making them a strategic target during this window of change.
- Natural Cyclers: Menstruators who use non-hormonal contraceptives and do not have an IUD. These individuals tend to have stable, natural cycles and prioritise comfort, body-awareness, and health in their menstrual care decisions.

Examine the Link between intent and Adoption Behaviour
All Cup-Stoppers in this study expressed a renewed intention to retry the menstrual cup following interviews in which they could ask questions and receive guidance from an experienced user. This suggests that peer-based conversations may positively influence intent. It is recommended that future research includes follow-up assessments to determine whether expressed intent translates into actual adoption behaviour, thereby deepening understanding of intention–action gaps in menstrual product switches.

8.4.2 Long term Recommendations

Further research Educational strategy:
As part of CupHub's long-term vision and recommended by marketing experts, this framework supports a staged expansion: first establish credibility through product success, then scale into education. Before launching large-scale education programs, CupHub should evaluate which group, or combination of groups, is most effective in driving both awareness and adoption, with particular attention to the untapped potential of doctors.

Collaborate beyond B2C:
While this study focused on developing a B2C strategy, CupHub's long-term growth could benefit from cross-sector partnerships that expand impact beyond individual consumers. Collaborating with like-minded companies such as YONI or Beppy would allow for joint awareness campaigns, resource sharing, and greater credibility within the menstrual product landscape. These collaborations are especially valuable when targeting the majority market, which includes consumers with lower Consumer Innovativeness (CI) levels, often more hesitant to try radical innovations like Casey.

Final Conclusion

This research contributes to the existing literature by addressing the lack of a structured go-to-market strategy for radical innovations in stigmatised markets. This study provides recommendations to help CupHub, and other innovators in Fem-Tech, deal with the challenges of launching radical and stigmatised innovations.

9.1 Conclusion Research Question

This research provided insights into the question:
How can radical innovative products be launched ensuring a high level of adoption and diffusion in the stigmatised menstrual industry?

The findings reveal that successful market entry and scaling of radical menstrual innovations, such as Casey, require more than product functionality alone. Adoption is closely tied to education, social influence, and strategic communication in an industry shaped by stigma and misinformation.

Comprehensive Education:
First, comprehensive education emerged as a foundational enabler. Across schools, families, and healthcare settings, reusable menstrual products remain underrepresented. This gap reinforces misinformation, limits experimentation and hinders from becoming the norm. Addressing it with practical, inclusive, and early education is important to spark awareness and support social validation.

Barriers and Motivations:
Second, barriers and motivations are tightly linked to cultural taboos. While sustainability, comfort, and cost-saving are powerful motivators, they are frequently outweighed by hygiene concerns, embarrassment, and fear of the unknown. Normalisation, especially through non-confrontational framing, is necessary to reduce perceived social risk and encourage first-time use.

Social proof and Peer influence:
Third, social proof and peer influence were shown to be stronger than traditional marketing. Menstruators primarily rely on trusted sources, mothers, friends, and online communities, to form their product opinions. In a stigmatised category, personal stories and visible usage play an important role in breaking silence and encouraging adoption.

Strategic segmentation:
Fourth, strategic segmentation is essential. Early adopters with high Consumer Innovativeness (CI) can serve as role models, but they require different messaging than mainstream users. Positioning the product as a hygiene-increasing upgrade, rather than a radical shift, helps lower psychological barriers. A phased marketing strategy, starting with feature-based communication and evolving toward reassurance and ease, supports long-term growth.

Trust-building over Time:
Finally, trust-building over time is important in habit-based categories like menstrual care. Adoption does not happen overnight; it is reinforced through repetition, peer validation, and ongoing support. Radical products in stigmatised markets succeed not by disruption alone, but by embedding themselves into everyday routines in approachable, credible, and culturally sensitive ways.

9.2 Personal Reflections

Looking back on the graduation process, it has been a long and sometimes overwhelming journey, one full of learning, doubts, growth, and unexpected turns. What started as an ambitious plan to combine research and entrepreneurship slowly turned into a deep dive into human behaviour, menstrual health, and the adoption of radical innovations in stigmatized markets.

Working on Casey felt like coming full circle, how cheesy it may seem, it is true. I originally came up with the idea during my Bachelor End Project (BEP), though the design was different back then, the core concept was already there. During my Master's course Build Your Startup, I had the chance to return to the idea and team up with my co-founder Aart, who shares the same enthusiasm and drive. I think it is cool that I was not only allowed, but encouraged, to close my Master's on this project.

At the start, I was full of ideas, maybe even too many. I read into trends, studied past graduation reports, and started sketching out ideas for interviews and surveys. But early on, I received a valuable piece of advice: not everything that's interesting for CupHub, is relevant for graduation. That stuck with me.

During the summer months, I struggled to find my rhythm. Between travel, side projects like PHIA, and handling other business matters, my thesis often took a back seat. After a while, the pressure began to build, and I realized I needed structure and slowly found my way back into the process.

The first half of this process taught me what not to do. I didn't start writing early enough, which left me pressed for time. I hadn't transcribed or coded my interviews in a systematic way, so I ended up doing that part twice, once to fix it, once to make sense of it. I only discovered useful tools like GoodTape and Atlas.ti later, but when I did, they saved me hours.

The same goes for scope. I wanted to know everything about the menstrual market, but eventually I learned to focus, not just on menstrual cups or stigma, but on the adoption strategy behind it all. That was the shift that made things click.

Researcher vs. Entrepreneur
Writing this thesis as a business owner is different than writing it as a researcher. As a founder, I was looking for solutions, I already had hypotheses, ideas, and a direction. But research required me to step back and look at what people really said and did, not just what confirmed my assumptions.
For example, when I learned that people switch to tampons when they start swimming, that wasn't new to me, I'd heard it before. But as a researcher, I suddenly saw the adoption value in that moment. It wasn't just a habit. It was a turning point, a potential window to introduce something new, like a cup or Casey. That's what research gave me: the ability to zoom in on behaviour and connect it to larger patterns.

I'm not a writer by heart, I'm a designer and a doer. But writing forced me to slow down and really reflect. This report went through many versions.

What I'm most proud of is that this thesis doesn't just tick academic boxes, it also lays the foundation for real strategic action at CupHub. It's personal, grounded, and driven by the kind of impact I hope to create with our product and company.

What I'd do differently:
- The classic: start writing earlier, even if it's messy.
- Set my scope more clearly and stick to it.
- Focus on translating insights into adoption strategy earlier in the process.
- Accept that not everything has to be perfect, just grounded and thoughtful.

9.3 Closing Remarks

This thesis set out to provide insights into how radical innovations can be successfully launched in stigmatized markets, using the menstrual industry and specifically the introduction of Casey. The journey from understanding user behaviour to translating insights into an actionable go-to-market strategy has revealed the complexity of launching products that challenge norms and routines.

The research confirms that product innovation alone is not enough in a category defined by taboo, trust, and deeply rooted habits. Adoption depends on how well a solution fits into the psychological, social, and emotional contexts of its users. Through qualitative research and theoretical frameworks, this study has shown the importance of segmenting consumers by Consumer Innovativeness (CI) and designing differentiated adoption strategies across the innovation curve.

While this thesis provides a solid foundation for CupHub's future direction, it also opens the door for further research. The proposed strategy is based on the current state of the market and insights from a specific user base. As Casey develops, real-world testing and continuous adaptation will be essential to validate assumptions, improve product-market fit, and evolve the brand's approach to communication, education, and trust-building.

Above all, this thesis highlights that radical change in stigmatized categories is possible: not by being loud or disruptive, but by being understanding, intentional, and user-first. With the right strategy, innovations like Casey have the potential not only to grow as a product, but to shift societal conversations around menstruation.

10. References

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11. Appendices

Project team, procedural checks and Personal Project Brief

In this document the agreements made between student and supervisory team about the student's IDE Master Graduation Project are set out. This document may also include involvement of an external client, however does not cover any legal matters student and client (might) agree upon. Next to that, this document facilitates the required procedural checks:

- Student defines the team, what the student is going to do/deliver and how that will come about
- Chair of the supervisory team signs, to formally approve the project's setup / Project brief
- SSC E&SA (Shared Service Centre, Education & Student Affairs) report on the student's registration and study progress
- IDE's Board of Examiners confirms the proposed supervisory team on their eligibility, and whether the student is allowed to start the Graduation Project

STUDENT DATA & MASTER PROGRAMME
Complete all fields and indicate which master(s) you are in

Family name	Haccou	7166	IDE master(s)	IPD ☐	DfI ☐	SPD ✔
Initials	I.S.		2nd non-IDE master			
Given name	Sophie		Individual programme (date of approval)			
Student number	4678168		Medisign ☐			
			HPM ☐			

SUPERVISORY TEAM
Fill in he required information of supervisory team members. If applicable, company mentor is added as 2nd mentor

Chair	Prof.dr. H.J. Hultink	dept./section	MCR
mentor	J. (Jeroen) Coelen MSc	dept./section	MOD
2nd mentor			
client:			
city:	Rotterdam	country:	The Netherlands
optional comments			

! Ensure a heterogeneous team. In case you wish to include team members from the same section, explain why.

! Chair should request the IDE Board of Examiners for approval when a non-IDE mentor is proposed. Include CV and motivation letter.

! 2nd mentor only applies when a client is involved.

APPROVAL OF CHAIR on PROJECT PROPOSAL / PROJECT BRIEF -> to be filled in by the Chair of the supervisory team

Sign for approval (Chair)

Name **Hultink**   Date **April 25, 2024**   Signature **EJH**

CHECK ON STUDY PROGRESS
To be filled in by SSC E&SA (Shared Service Centre, Education & Student Affairs), after approval of the project brief by the chair.
The study progress will be checked for a 2nd time just before the green light meeting.

Master electives no. of EC accumulated in total _____ EC		
Of which, taking conditional requirements into account, can be part of the exam programme _____ EC		

	YES	all 1st year master courses passed	
★	NO	missing 1st year courses	

Comments:
First year course ID4070 (IDE Academy) not completed yet

Sign for approval (SSC E&SA)

Rik Ledoux
Digitally signed by Rik Ledoux Date: 2024.05.13 11:19:47 +02'00'

Name **Rik Ledoux**   Date **13-05-2024**   Signature

APPROVAL OF BOARD OF EXAMINERS IDE on SUPERVISORY TEAM -> to be checked and filled in by IDE's Board of Examiners

Does the composition of the Supervisory Team comply with regulations?

YES	★	Supervisory Team approved
NO		Supervisory Team not approved

Comments:

Based on study progress, students is ...

★	ALLOWED to start the graduation project	
	NOT allowed to start the graduation project	

Comments:
- the above mentioned missing course should be finished before the green light meeting

Sign for approval (BoEx)

Monique von Morgen
Digitally signed by Monique von Morgen Date: 2024.05.14 11:05:36 +02'00'

Name **Monique von Morgen**   Date **14/5/2024**   Signature

A. Approved Project Brief

Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Name student Iris Sophie Haccou   **Student number** 4678168

PROJECT TITLE, INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM DEFINITION and ASSIGNMENT
Complete all fields, keep information clear, specific and concise

Project title Brand Positioning Adoption Strategies in the Taboo Industry for start-up CupHub

Please state the title of your graduation project (above). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.

Introduction

Describe the context of your project here; What is the domain in which your project takes place? Who are the main stakeholders and what interests are at stake? Describe the opportunities (and limitations) in this domain to better serve the stakeholder interests. (max 250 words)

This graduation project is about the brand positioning for the start-up CupHub. CupHub wants to end menstrual poverty in a sustainable way by ensuring the adoption of the menstrual cup on a larger scale. Therefore, CupHub developed an on-the-go menstrual cup cleaner: Casey. With Casey a menstruator can clean the menstrual cup anywhere, anytime: even without private sinks.

Menstruation is still a taboo subject in 2024, which comes with several limitations, such as cultural and political perceptions and regulations. CupHub has already indicated several target groups.

The menstrual cup is preferred by a variety of people: people who value sustainability, costs, health, ease of use or are people who value the activistic message that comes along with the menstrual cup. Now their goal is to launch the start-up CupHub with a brand positioning that will establish a good foundation and is suitable for expanding target groups.

However, CupHub introduces a new product category into a taboo-breaking industry. Therefore, CupHub is bound to the consumer attitude and adaptability of subsequent target groups with the same brand positioning.

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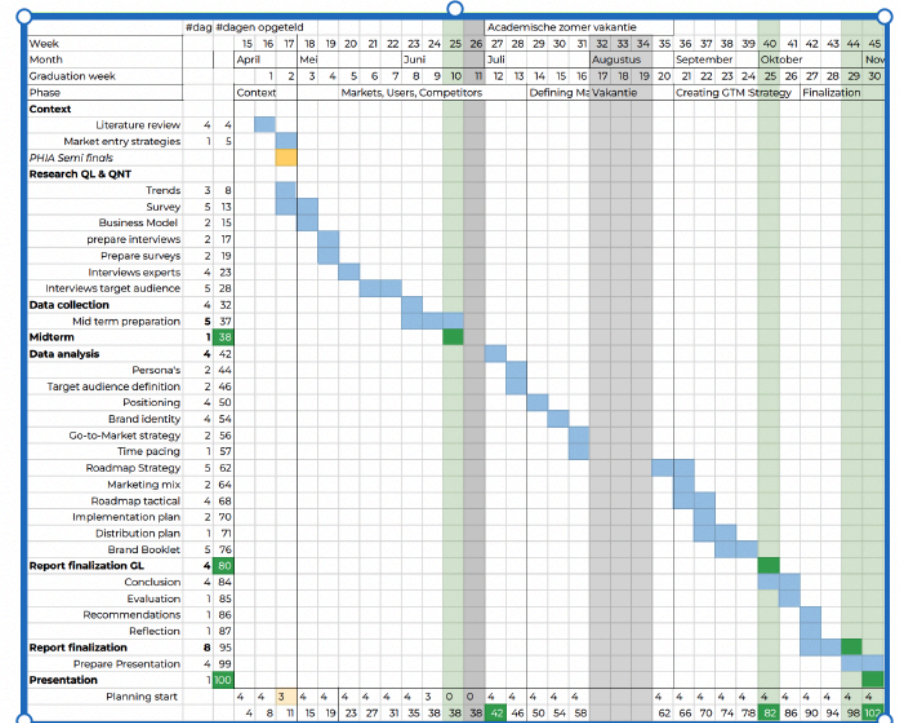
introduction (continued): space for images

image / figure 2

Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Problem Definition

What problem do you want to solve in the context described in the introduction, and within the available time frame of 100 working days? (= Master Graduation Project of 30 EC). What opportunities do you see to create added value for the described stakeholders? Substantiate your choice.
(max 200 words)

The scope of the research includes a examination of a broad spectrum of menstrual-related topics, including cultural taboos, societal beliefs, market dynamics, and consumer behaviour.

The core problem is the challenge in entering the market with a new product category, menstrual cup cleaners, within the taboo industry of menstruation. The key challenges are: cultural taboos, market entry and positioning, target market adaptation, education and awareness.

Overall, the project aims to tackle these challenges by developing a comprehensive brand positioning strategy for CupHub, incorporating insights from research, and stakeholder engagement to successfully introduce and establish menstrual cups cleaners in the market while reshaping societal perceptions surrounding menstruation.

Assignment

This is the most important part of the project brief because it will give a clear direction of what you are heading for.
Formulate an assignment to yourself regarding what you expect to deliver as result at the end of your project. (1 sentence)
As you graduate as an industrial design engineer, your assignment will start with a verb (Design/Investigate/Validate/Create), and you may use the green text format:

Brand Positioning Adoption Strategies in the Taboo Industry

Then explain your project approach to carrying out your graduation project and what research and design methods you plan to use to generate your design solution (max 150 words)

This research entails research to better understand the complexities of menstruation taboo, as well as the challenges and opportunities that come with introducing a new product category into the taboo industry.

Furthermore, the project focuses on effective market positioning to ensure successful adoption among the initial target group and subsequent target groups. In addition, it entails investigating the long-term implications of changing society's attitudes towards menstruation and establishing CupHub as the leading expert on new menstrual solutions.

The brand strategy will be visualized by a strategic and technical roadmap, consisting of time defined goals and steps to take, working towards the future vision. The brand identity will be delivered in a brand booklet, including a vision, mission and a positioning. The outcome will be executed by the start-up CupHub.

Project planning and key moments

*To make visible how you plan to spend your time, you must make a planning for the full project. You are advised to use a Gantt chart format to show the different phases of your project, deliverables you have in mind, meetings and in-between deadlines. Keep in mind that all activities should fit within the given run time of 100 working days. Your planning should include a **kick-off meeting**, **mid-term evaluation meeting**, **green light meeting** and **graduation ceremony**. Please indicate periods of part-time activities and/or periods of not spending time on your graduation project, if any (for instance because of holidays or parallel course activities).*

Make sure to attach the full plan to this project brief.
The four key moment dates must be filled in below

Kick off meeting	08-04-2024
Mid-term evaluation	17-06-2024
Green light meeting	02-10-2024
Graduation ceremony	06-11-2024

In exceptional cases (part of) the Graduation Project may need to be scheduled part-time. Indicate here if such applies to your project

Part of project scheduled part-time	✓
For how many project weeks	27
Number of project days per week	4

Comments:

Motivation and personal ambitions

Explain why you wish to start this project, what competencies you want to prove or develop (e.g. competencies acquired in your MSc programme, electives, extra-curricular activities or other).

Optionally, describe whether you have some personal learning ambitions which you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project itself. You might think of e.g. acquiring in depth knowledge on a specific subject, broadening your competencies or experimenting with a specific tool or methodology. Personal learning ambitions are limited to a maximum number of five.
(200 words max)

During my BEP at IDE I discovered the problem about cleaning your cup in public spaces. For me, the taboo aspect is one of the fun parts of the project: there are so many people talking about menstrual cups because of my choice to do my project about this!!

The reason for this particular graduation project is that I want to set up a real business. Therefore I need to know the market, the trends, the possibilities, the target markets and the best way to launch. This all results in a lot of research which I am now able to do while also getting support from two experts. My ambitions and learning goals for this project are: learning how to perform an extensive research to indicate the target audience, learning what kind of impact a strategy can have and how to translate a strategy to practical steps. One little learning goal for me is knowing how much time a task takes, to get better in time management and time expectations.

1. Introduction

1.1 Explanation Sub research questions

Sub Research Questions:

1. How does education influence the adoption of menstrual products?

To understand how radical innovations can be successfully launched, it is essential to first examine whether the target group is involved and knowledgeable about the product. Consequently, this subquestion is designed to evaluate their knowledge gaps and familiarity with menstrual cups. This understanding is important because prior research on the adoption of innovations indicates that awareness and comprehension have a main influence on the likelihood of adoption (Rogers, 2003).

Four extra questions were formulated to deepen this insight. The first three questions (1.1, 1.2, and 1.3) look at individuals' current knowledge of menstrual products, the sources from which they acquired this information, and the contexts in which they learned about it.

    a. What do menstruators know now about menstrual products?

By addressing these sub-questions, the research identifies knowledge differences across different groups, allowing for a better understanding of how menstrual product awareness develops and where interventions (such as improved education, marketing, or peer influence) could be most effective.

        i. What do kids know about the products?

Understanding children's current knowledge of menstrual products provides insight into the foundation of menstrual education. This helps determine whether early education is sufficient and where misconceptions or knowledge gaps exist.

        ii. What do mothers know about the products?

Since mothers are often primary sources of menstrual education for their children, assessing their knowledge helps evaluate the accuracy and completeness of the information they pass on. If mothers have limited or outdated knowledge, this may impact the next generation's awareness and attitudes toward menstrual products.

        iii. What do potential consumers know about menstrual products?

Potential consumers (for example: Cup-Doubters) represent a main demographic for product adoption. Their level of knowledge reveals what information is missing or misunderstood, which may contribute to hesitation or resistance to switching to alternative products like menstrual cups.

    b. What source provides menstruators information about menstrual products?

By addressing these sub-questions, the research will uncover which sources play the most important role in shaping menstruators' knowledge and attitudes toward menstrual products. This information can help brands, educators, and healthcare professionals tailor their communication strategies to ensure menstruators receive accurate and accessible information.

        i. Where do potential consumers learn about menstrual products at first?

        ii. Where do potential consumers now learn about menstrual products?

Understanding the early and current influences provides insight into how first impressions about menstrual products are formed, which can shape long-term attitudes. Besides, this examines how and where menstruators seek new or updated information, such as online sources, social media, or direct conversations with peers. Comparing this with their first sources of information helps determine if their understanding has evolved and whether certain sources remain dominant or new ones have become more influential.

    c. What do menstruators learn about menstrual products?

By addressing these sub-questions, the research will uncover how different sources contribute to menstruators' knowledge, whether there are inconsistencies or gaps. This understanding can help shape more effective educational strategies and marketing approaches to promote informed decision-making. Understanding this influence helps in identifying intergenerational patterns in product adoption and stigma.

These questions look at how menstruation is discussed in educational settings, whether it's factual, stigmatised, or incomplete. Mothers are often a primary source of menstrual knowledge before formal education (Plan Internationaal, 2019). The question examines what information is shared at home, including preferences,

taboos, and misconceptions. Peer influence also plays a main role in shaping attitudes towards menstrual product adoption, particularly regarding menstrual cups (Oster & Thornton, 2023). This question assesses whether conversations with friends reinforce stigma, provide practical guidance, or encourage openness toward alternative products. Additionally, it evaluates whether doctors offer guidance on menstrual products, highlighting potential gaps in medical education. Finally, it looks at if menstruators are exposed to alternative products, personal experiences, or misinformation.

       i. What do menstruators learn at school about menstruation?
      ii. What do menstruators learn from their mothers about menstruation?
     iii. What do menstruators learn from their friends about menstruation?
     iv. What information about menstruation is provided by a doctor?
      v. What do menstruators learn from social media about menstruation?

2. What barriers and motivations influence menstruators' decision to adopt new menstrual products?

The insights from potential consumers provide an understanding of both the barriers and motivations that influence menstruators when considering switching to new menstrual products. This research can offer actionable insights into how to design strategies, overcome resistance, and encourage adoption of new menstrual products.

3. How do taboos influence adoption of menstrual products?

These questions help provide a comprehensive understanding of the social, cultural, and societal factors that influence the adoption of menstrual products. They reveal how external forces, including taboos, cultural beliefs, social expectations, and imitation, shape menstruators' decisions, which is essential for addressing barriers and promoting wider acceptance of alternative menstrual products.

    a. How do cultural differences influence adoption of menstruation products?
    b. How do societal influences influence adoption of menstruation products?

4. How can a positioning strategy be designed to ensure scalability while maintaining a targeted focus?
    1.1. How can a brand maintain focus?
    1.2. How can a scalable positioning strategy be developed?
        1.2.1. What changes should be implemented in the positioning strategy to transition from targeting early adopters to the majority market?

Together, these questions contribute to creating a product GTM strategy that is inclusive, sequential, and adaptive. The goal is to not only target early adopters effectively but also ensure that other potential consumer groups are in stages introduced to the product. They look at how to focus on specific target audiences while leaving room for future expansion into other groups without excluding them permanently. This approach is important for ensuring the product remains relevant and accessible to new segments as the market evolves.

5. Which factors influence the successful adoption and diffusion of radical innovations in the market?
    a. Which factors influence the successful adoption and diffusion of radical innovations in the market?
       i. What strategies facilitate the adoption of radical innovations among early and mainstream consumers? (What changes should be implemented in the positioning strategy to transition from targeting early adopters to the majority market?)
      ii. How can radical innovations achieve widespread market diffusion?

1.2 Extra Terminology

Innovation: A new idea, practice, or product that is perceived as novel by an individual or group (Rogers, 2003).

Launch vs. Go-to-Market Strategy (GTM Strategy):

- Launch: The process of introducing a product to the market (Schuhmacher et al., 2018).
- GTM Strategy: A long-term plan that outlines how a company will position, market, and sell a product to its target customers.

Barriers vs. Attitudes Toward Switching: To analyze adoption behaviour, this study distinguishes between barriers and attitudes toward switching (Schuhmacher et al., 2018). A negative attitude can create or reinforce barriers (for example: "It's too much hassle": Less motivation to overcome knowledge barriers). Conversely, addressing barriers (for example: better education or convenience) can help shift attitudes positively. An example can be found in the appendix.

High and Low Education: In academic literature, education is often categorized into "higher" and "lower" forms, typically distinguishing between theoretical and practical education. In this research, the terms *theoretical education* and *practical education* will be used to describe these differentiations. High education refers to individuals with a university degree or equivalent, who are more likely to engage in critical thinking, research, and early adoption of innovations (Acheampong & Cugurullo, 2019). Low education refers to individuals with limited formal education, which may impact their access to information and perceived complexity of new products (Jászberényi et al., 2024). Studies suggest that those with lower education levels rely more on peer influence and real-world demonstrations to assess product usability (Boer & De Bovengrondse, 2019).

2. Market:

2.1 Stakeholder Map extra

Legend:
Name = a specific company that is currently a partner
Name = intended partner

Stakeholders	Primair	Secundair
Internal	Aart Sophie	Intern Advisors: - Team Mentor (Tim) - Kickstart lab - TSEP - YES Delft - Marketing advice (Equinix)
External	Production Funds (Fast) Investors: - Graduate - TAI Subsidies: - Municipality of Rotterdam - Haalbaarheid Subsidie	Transporter Packaging Consumers: - Cup-Users - Cup-Doubters - Cup-Stoppers - Non-Cup-Users - Gift buyers - Parents - Pilot group Financial partner Press and media Cup competitors: - Bamboozy - Beppy

				- YONI
				- EasyToys
				Casey competitors:
				- Emanui
				- Divacup
				- All Matters
				Partnerships:
				- Project M
				- Diversey
				- VO Patents
				Sales venues
				- Universities
				- MUPs
				- Municipalities
				- Drogisterij
				- Festivals
				- HHB
				Education:
				- Schools
				- Parents (moms)
				- Menstrucation
				- Rutgers

	Importance for stakeholder			
		Low	Mild	High	Very high
Stakeholder influence/ power	Very high	Press and media	Funds VO Patents Sales venues	Subsidies Cup-Doubters Cup-Stoppers Parents as buyers Education	Aart Sophie Investors Cup-Users Pilot group

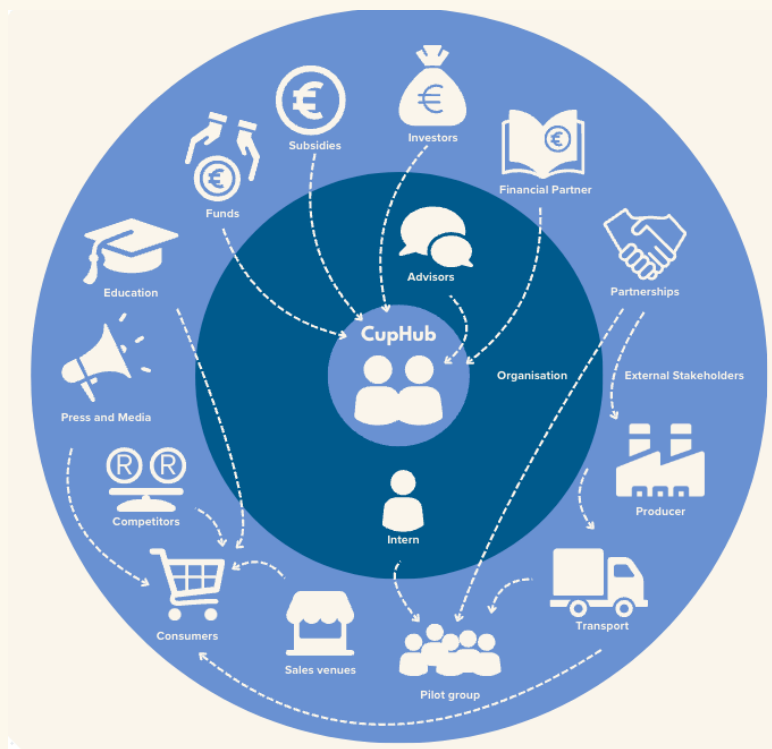|				
	High		Production Transporter Packaging Cup competitors Diversey Project M	Intern	
	Mild	Non-Cup-Users Financial partner	Advisors	Gift buyers Casey competitors	
	Low				

Figure XXfixme: Overview Stakeholder Map

2.2 Extra explanation Brand Competitors
The analysis of competitor strategies in the menstrual cup market reveals several key insights regarding brand positioning and benefit communication:

Firstly, all analyzed brands consistently highlight sustainability, health, and convenience as their main benefits. Among these, AllMatters and Bamboozy particularly emphasises these aspects strongly and frequently across their online presence.

Yoni differentiates itself primarily by emphasizing health and providing trustworthy, transparent information. While all brands mention the materials used in their products, none underline the direct health advantages of these materials, leaving a gap in communicating explicit health benefits clearly to consumers.

Distribution strategies vary among the brands. While physical retail chains such as Kruidvat and Etos offer menstrual cups, their online sales likely remain minimal given consumer shopping preferences toward physical stores. Conversely, Bamboozy and AllMatters mainly use online platforms, including their websites and third-party sites like bol.com, to reach consumers. Beppy takes an even more exclusive approach by focusing on online sales via their own website.

Beppy uniquely emphasizes specific functional benefits of its product, such as the suitability for swimming, sauna use, and sexual intercourse without leakage. Moreover, Beppy actively engages in consumer education, aligning closely with Yoni's approach of providing comprehensive and credible information, although Beppy is notably more proactive.

Yoni specifically addresses period poverty by distributing products for free through Menstruatie Uitgifte Punten (MUPs). In contrast, Kruidvat and Etos, despite offering the lowest-priced menstrual cups, do not explicitly position themselves as tackling period poverty but rather focus on broad accessibility through extensive retail presence. Beppy, notably, has the highest price point at 49.95 euro, selling exclusively in packs of two, reflecting a premium positioning.

Additionally, only AllMatters and Bamboozy directly address consumer concerns about the upfront investment in menstrual cups by offering money-back guarantees, thus reducing perceived purchase risk.

Regarding website presentation, most brands exhibit visually appealing designs. Nevertheless, the websites of Beppy and Yoni, while adequately presented, still hold room for improvement. Enhancing these websites could enhance brand trustworthiness, as a well-designed online presence generally correlates positively with consumer perceptions of reliability and credibility.

2.3 New Developments in the Menstrual Market

Over the past years, improvements have been made in menstrual product innovation, ranging from usability enhancements to entirely new product categories. These innovations aim to improve menstrual health, hygiene, and overall user experience, addressing diverse needs across different consumer segments. Several emerging products have been developed worldwide, reflecting a growing focus on menstrual care solutions.

Overview of Menstrual Product Innovations and Their Origins

Product	Function	Country of Origin	Year Developed
Gaia	Storage and disposal box for menstrual products	India	2021
Myoovi	Wearable menstrual pain relief device	UK	N/A
Hey Zomi	Chemical cleaning solutions for menstrual cups	Australia	N/A
Merula Douche	Vaginal rinsing product for menstrual Cup-Users	Germany	2020
Emm	Smart menstrual cup for cycle tracking	UK	2023
Looop Can	Washing and drying solution for reusable pads	UK	2023

These menstrual product innovations show the industry's development towards individualised care, hygiene, and sustainability. These developments help to further the more general goal of improving menstrual health globally by developing innovations that tackle various issues.

Improving User Friendliness: One notable innovation is Gaia, a storage solution designed to help users segregate and store old and unused menstrual products in a single box, ensuring proper disposal and waste management (Budholiya, n.d.). This product improves the user friendliness of disposable products.

Pain Management: For individuals experiencing menstrual pain, the Myoovi device was introduced as a wearable pain relief solution (Finney & Finney, 2023). By providing non-invasive pain relief, Myoovi offers an alternative to traditional painkillers, contributing to a more comfortable menstrual experience.

Menstrual Cup Maintenance and Hygiene: The adoption of menstrual cups has led to innovations that improve cup hygiene and maintenance. Hey Zomi, an Australian company, developed specialized chemical solutions for cleaning menstrual cups, ensuring thorough and safe sanitation (Hey Zomi, n.d.). Similarly, the Merula Douche, a German innovation, allows users to rinse the vagina after using a menstrual cup to remove menstrual residue (Grace is Green, 2020).

Smart Menstrual Monitoring: Advancements in menstrual technology have led to the creation of smart menstrual products. The Emm, a smart menstrual cup developed in the UK, is designed to monitor menstrual blood flow, providing users with insights into their cycle and reproductive health (Emm, n.d.).

Solutions for Water-Scarce Regions: Innovations also focus on accessibility in regions with limited water availability. The Looop Can, invented in the UK in 2023, offers a solution for washing and drying reusable menstrual pads in water-scarce locations, addressing an important barrier to sustainable menstrual product adoption (Looop Can, 2024).

2.4 Job to be done Details

Functional jobs:

1. Cleaning the Menstrual Cup

One of the essential tasks associated with menstrual cup use is ensuring proper cleaning. The direct competitor for this function is owning a second menstrual cup, allowing users to switch cups instead of cleaning between uses. Less direct competitors include various cleaning methods, such as wipes, toilet paper, water bottles, and cup douches, which provide on-the-go cleaning solutions. Indirect competitors include microfiber cloths and soap, which, while not explicitly designed for menstrual cups, are commonly used for general hygiene and cleaning purposes.

2. Storing the Menstrual Cup

Menstrual cups require storage between uses, whether during the cycle or between cycles. The direct competitors for this function are portable cup cases and cotton storage bags, which are specifically designed for menstrual cup storage. Less direct competitors include general-purpose storage solutions such as bowls, plastic bags, and mugs, which menstruators may use as an improvised solution. Indirect competitors for cup storage include Tupperware-style containers, which, although not intended for menstrual cup storage, provide a sealable and hygienic alternative.

3. Sterilizing the Menstrual Cup

To maintain hygiene, menstrual cups need to be sterilized before and after each cycle. Direct competitors for this function include foldable sterilizing cup containers, which are designed specifically for boiling or steaming menstrual cups. Less direct competitors include household sterilization methods such as boiling a cup in a pot on a stove, using a cup steamer, or chemical sterilization tablets. Indirect competitors include UV-light cleaners (commonly used for dentures or baby teats), flames, hand sanitizer gel, and microwaving the cup, all of which can serve as alternative sterilization methods, though not all are recommended for menstrual cups.

Emotional Job-to-Be-Done (JTBD) Analysis

Beyond functional needs, emotional and psychological factors play a main role in the adoption and continued use of menstrual cups. Consumers seek ease, comfort, discretion, and security in their menstrual care products, making these main emotional jobs that influence product choices. Understanding these emotional motivations helps position products effectively and highlights areas where direct, less direct, and indirect competitors fulfill these needs.

1. Ease of Use

Many menstruators prefer products that are easy to use, requiring minimal effort and learning. Direct competitors in this area are menstrual cups with easier insertion and removal mechanisms, such as cups with pull-tabs or collapsible designs. Less direct competitors include discs, tampons, and reusable pads, which are perceived as simpler for beginners. Indirect competitors include disposable products such as disposable pads and tampons, which require no maintenance and eliminate the need for cleaning or sterilization.

2. Feeling Free and Unrestricted

Menstruators value products that allow them to engage in daily activities without discomfort or worry. Direct competitors include soft menstrual cups and cups designed for high-intensity activities, offering flexibility and comfort. Less direct competitors include period underwear and tampons, which allow users to move freely without concerns of leaks. Indirect competitors include hormonal birth control methods that reduce or eliminate menstruation altogether, removing the need for menstrual products.

3. Privacy and Discretion

Discretion is a main concern, as menstruation remains stigmatised in many societies. Direct competitors include cups designed for discrete removal and cleaning, such as collapsible cups or those with spill-proof features. Less direct competitors include tampons and period underwear, which are seen as more socially accepted and do not

require cleaning in public restrooms. Indirect competitors include subscription services that deliver menstrual products discreetly to avoid in-store purchases, as well as portable privacy solutions such as small restroom curtains that provide a temporary enclosed space for added discretion while cleaning or changing menstrual products in shared bathrooms.

4. Feeling Secure and Leak-Proof
Menstruators seek reassurance that their products will provide reliable protection throughout the day, particularly during physical activity or long hours without access to a restroom. Direct competitors include menstrual cups with reinforced leak-proof designs and discs that adapt to the body's movements for added security. Less direct competitors include high-absorbency tampons, period underwear, and reusable pads, which offer backup protection against leaks. Indirect competitors include double-wear solutions, such as combining a menstrual cup or tampon with an external (reusable) pad for extra security. This layering strategy ensures peace of mind and prevents leaks, particularly for those new to using menstrual cups or during heavier flow days.

Conclusion JTBD

The emotional JTBD framework reveals the psychological motivations behind menstrual product choices. Ease of use, freedom, privacy, and security all shape consumer preferences and influence product adoption. While menstrual cups offer long-term benefits, they must address emotional concerns effectively to compete with more familiar and widely accepted alternatives. Understanding these emotional needs provides valuable insight into how Casey should be positioned to reassure potential users and encourage long-term adoption.

3.1 Extra Theories

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory

In addition to the adoption process, Rogers (2003) identifies five attributes that determine the rate of adoption:
- Relative Advantage: The perceived benefits compared to existing solutions.
- Compatibility: The extent to which the innovation aligns with users' values, experiences, and social norms.
- Complexity: The degree of difficulty in understanding and using the innovation.
- Trialability: The opportunity for consumers to test the product before full commitment.
- Observability: The visibility of product use and benefits to others.

Furthermore, Rogers (2003) categorizes adopters based on their willingness to take on innovation:
- Innovators (2.5%): Risk-takers who seek new solutions early.
- Early Adopters (13.5%): Influential opinion leaders willing to try new ideas.
- Early Majority (34%): More cautious but open to adoption after seeing positive examples.
- Late Majority (34%): Skeptical and risk-averse, adopting only when innovations become mainstream.
- Laggards (16%): Resistant to change, often due to traditional beliefs or lack of awareness.

3.2 Menstrual Problems

Menstrual hygiene:
Menstruators must navigate various challenges to manage their periods hygienically. These include a lack of awareness, inadequate facilities, social stigma, and restrictive taboos, all of which can negatively impact their health and well-being (UNESCO New Delhi et al., 2023).
Menstrual Product Accessibility:
Access to period products is a main barrier, particularly for those facing financial constraints or living in areas with limited availability (UNESCO New Delhi et al., 2023). Even when products are accessible, many facilities lack the necessary conditions for proper menstrual hygiene. Public and private restrooms often do not provide privacy, reliable water supply, or disposal options, forcing menstruators to manage their periods under unsanitary conditions (Van Eijk et al., 2019). This lack of infrastructure increases the risk of infections and further contributes to the stigma surrounding menstruation.
School facilities Influencing Stigma:
Schools often lack adequate sanitation facilities and free menstrual hygiene products, presenting main barriers for young menstruators. These challenges contribute to fear of leakage, odor, and public embarrassment, leading some menstruators to skip school during their period, negatively affecting their education (UNESCO New Delhi et al., 2023). This cycle of stigma continues into adulthood, influencing product choices and further limiting the adoption of new menstrual solutions.

4. Methodology

4.1 Method of coding

The interviews with the Potential Casey Consumers, the Menstrual Teachers, Experts and the Focus Groups were coded using axial and open coding. Initially, the interviews were open coded based on Menstrual Teacher 1's interview, subsequently applying the codes to Menstrual Teacher 2's and making adjustments as needed.

To code the Potential Casey Consumers interviews the codes from the Menstrual Teachers were used. Additional codes were added during the coding of Potential Casey Consumers interviews through open coding. In addition, a list of codes that affect Consumer Innovativeness according to the literature, was defined and implemented.

The codes consist of qualitative and quantitative codes. For example, ages or level of education are codes that are quantitative: codes that provide insight in the rationale of a person, are qualitative codes. These divided codes can be find in Appendix (# FIXME).

As interview analysis is subjective, one extra person coded one interview as well. The coding was done separately, and the results were compared.

Person B developed several codes that were similar to the codes of Person A. In addition, Person B developed codes that Person A considered unnecessary to the study. These codes were not implemented. On the contrary, some codes were new and were of value to Person A. Subsequently, these codes were implemented into the codebase. The differences are elaborated in the next section.

The used codes can be described as broad codes; thereby, any reference to, for example, product switching was assigned that code. This coding method was implemented to ensure that all information was gathered by the broad code. Therefore, the data was not binary, allowing for subsequent analysis during a review.

During coding new codes needed to be added. This was also done by open coding until the Focus Group 2. After coding all the interviews and focus groups, the interviews were reviewed again by Person A.

4.2 Coding Review

The main differences between the two persons coding are displayed beneath:

- Person A named the codes very broad themes: it was more an overview of the codes. For example: ''Freetime'', was about everything the participant did in their freetime. Whereas Person B coded the activities with 'sport' or 'outside'. The reasoning of Person A was to get an overview of all the codes around a theme and then see what the differences are between the different participant groups. For Person B the motivation was to get a direct overview of the codes per interview.
- Person B also named the codes specifically what the participant was saying.
- Person B also did not code the quantitative information about the participants initially, because Person B did not see the added value of this information, regarding the goal of the interview. After the interview, Person B changed this: codes were added to code the quantitative information, as well. Person A did code this information, because the questions were included to get an insight of the adoption behaviour of the participants. As stated in the literature, the level of education influences the level of Consumer Innovativeness (Schuhmacher et al., 2018).

5.

5.1 Detailed Switch behaviour Menstrual Products

5.3 Results Cup-Doubters MIRO

5.3.1 Reaction Tampon: Overview

a. Nadelen

b. Duur

c. Hygiene

Hygienisch / vies

Ja omdat je ook wel soms een beetje **vieze handen** krijgt en dan zit je natuurlijk in dat hokje, kan je niet je handen makkelijk wassen. Dat een beetje. Ik vond het meer gedoe denk ik.

Ja, terwijl met tampon ben je gewoon lekker een touwtje en dan...

Dan is hij er. Dan weet ik dat mijn **handen niet vies** worden.

Hygiënischer vond ik dat. Prettiger.

k vind het **hygiënische** in gebruik.

Again, in public toilet I also before putting tampons I **wash my hands** because I don't wanna be putting my hand in my vagina after **touching** the handle of a public toilet. I really don't want that.

ja. Je wil eigenlijk met die hele **hygiëne** en al die bacteriën die je in je lijf krijgt, wil je niet echt iets **aanraken**. Interessant.

And also for a long time for me, I associated with like it's more **hygienic**. Because for example, if I go to a public restroom, I don't have to be **touching** anything, I just take it, put it, leave it.

Eigenlijk wil je in het toilet ook niet te veel aan dingen zitten, **Aanraken**. Dat ding gaat er weer in. Ja,

d. Social influence

e. Secundair

Primair: Social influence

Moeder

Ja, die **(haar moeder) zei** gewoon inderdaad hetzelfde, van nou joh, tampons zijn fijn. En ik zat op **wedstrijd zwemmen**, dus ik moest wel. Dus ik werd ongesteld, en ik moest zwemmen die avond dus het was meteen van eh ja succes!

Ja. Ik dorst dus echt gewoon Omdat **mijn moeder dat kocht**, want toen je jong was Toen ik toen je moeder de producten ja, dan Samen gingen we. Ik w inderdeild mijn vele moeder maar boodschappen doen kine hur wou mij en had ji dan kan je dan kinem of van jadde zij in gewoon ee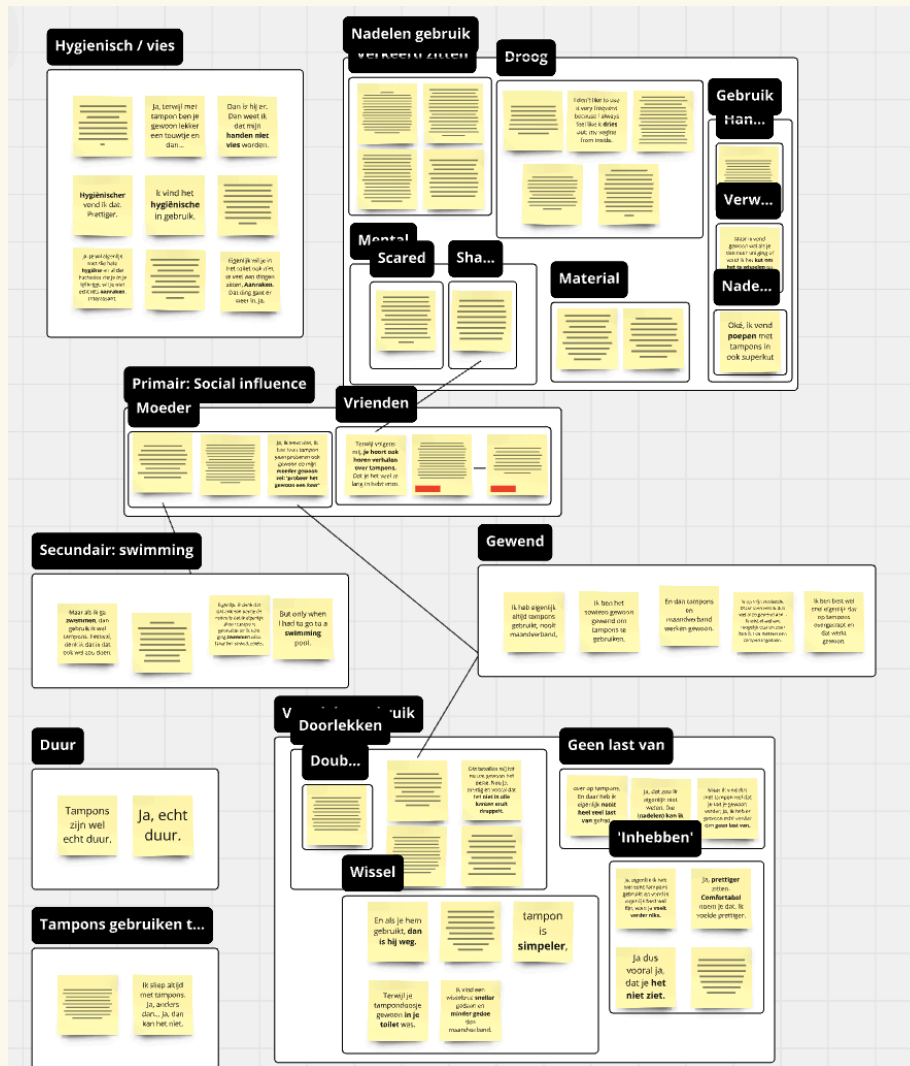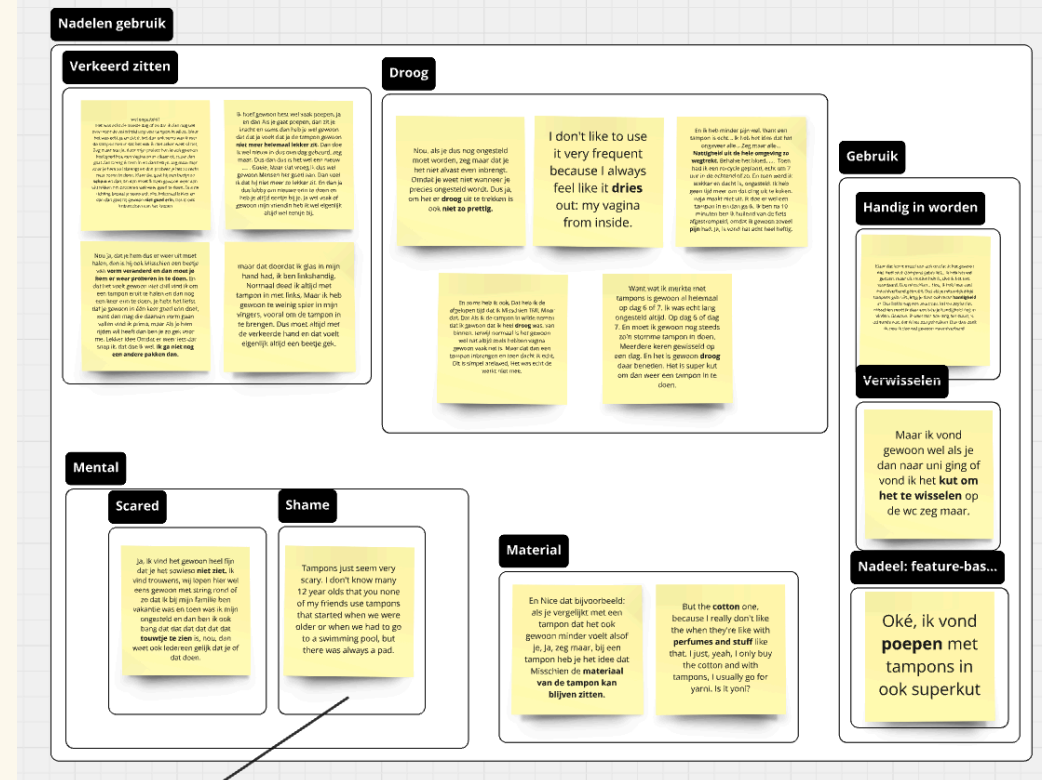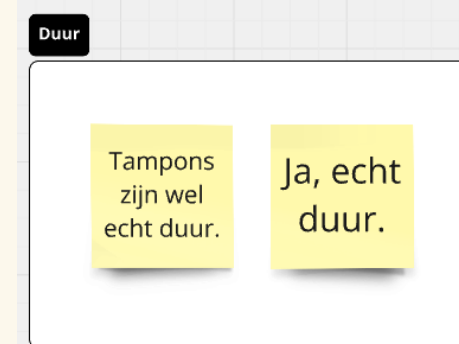ntje nou, wel vroeger heel vroeger dan zeg maar. Ik had z niet altijd Lange Tampons gehad, ik dorst bitsschien. Toen ik voor het eerst toko enzo Dat dat op een gegeven moment moet ja wel Lange wel Omdat je vagina dan gewoon Groot, dus dent net dat kan, was mir rind en dat zo werd eigenlijk, zowel, jawel dat ze een tind uitkome dan is wel een stond met eigenerit, ja. Ik denk dat dit ook wel iets met je vela heeft gehad, dun ben ik ook groter.

Ja, Ik weet niet, Ik ben toen tampon gaan proberen ook gewoon op mijn **moeder gewoon zei: 'probeer het gewoon een keer'**

Vrienden

Terwijl volgens mij, **je hoort ook horen verhalen over tampons.** Dat je het veel te lang in hebt enzo.

En ik denk ook, wij hadden een vriendin, z'en mijn vriendinnen moet ik nog zo, aan het begin van de middelbaar school. Hadden we en min klietje waar we dan tampons lagen. En dat weten we dan onder de vriendinnen. Iedereen was als de dood, en ik nam een vriendinnen. En daarvan hadden we gewoon heel veel. We hadden er altijd genoeg van. Maar iedereen, het was wel een soort van, je dorst wel tampons. Dus dat wil een. **Daar hadden we het dan heel erg over.** Maar er lagen alleen tampons, want **tampons vonden we stoer** en maandverband niet. Omdat het zo groot was. Ik weet nog dat we zo dochten, dat was wel een soort van, je krijg wel eens Inoe alleen zo een tampon een een zus of zo was een ding, zagen we alleen als optie.

Toen **hoorde ik van andere vrienden** dat ze tampons deden. Nou, let's go tampons. En daarna hadden we gewoon heel veel. We hadden er altijd genoeg van. Maar iedereen, het was wel een soort van, je dorst wel tampons. Dus dat was wel een soort van, je ging niet echt iets anders doen ofzo.

[Zelfde persoon] [Zelfde persoon]

f. Gewend

Secundair: swimming

Maar als ik ga **zwemmen**, dan gebruik ik wel nog maandverband. Festival, denk ik dat ik dat ook wel zou doen.

Concert ofzo? Nee, ik denk dat ik dan wel nog maandverband zou gebruiken. Ja omdat dan niet per se de noodzaak, kijk met **tampon** kan je in zwemmen, en met maandverband niet.

Eigenlijk, ik denk dat dat ook een beetje de reden is dat ik eigenlijk alleen tampons gebruikte als ik echt ging **zwemmen** ofzo. Naar het strand, zoiets.

But only when I had to go to a **swimming** pool.

g. Tampons gebruiken tijdens ...

Gewend

Ik heb eigenlijk altijd tampons gebruikt, nooit maandverband,

Ik ben het sowieso gewoon gewend om tampons te gebruiken.

En dan tampons en maandverband werken gewoon.

Ik op mijn zestiende. Maar toen was ik dus wel al zo gewend aan... Ik wist al wel wat mogelijk was en toen heb ik ook meteen een tampon ingedaan.

Ik ben best wel snel eigenlijk dat op tampons overgestapt en dat werkt gewoon.

ergens In de middelbare schoolperiode. Ik denk nu derde, vierde of zoiets. Dus 12 jaar toen ik voor het eerst ongesteld werd en toen zat ik In de tweede, dus **ongeveer na twee jaar (geswitcht)** ofzo ja een jaartje twee jaar best wel snel denk ik dat ik eigenlijk gewoon wist, dat maakt het wel niet zo was en tampon geprobeerd te doen was.

Ik sliep altijd met tampons. Ja, anders dan... Ja, dan kan het niet.

h. Voordelen gebruik

Voordelen gebruik

Doorlekken

Double protection

Primarily, yeah, but to be honest, just like I started using pads more, since I'm working in an office. When I worked in Horeka because before that I worked four years in a kitchen in Horeka while I was studying there, I used way more tampons because during a busy shift you cannot just run to the bathroom when you feel like. Yeah. So again, the double protection was just more reassuring.

Ik kan met die tampons ook prima zeg maar allemaal **onder controle houden.** Dus dat vind ik prettig. En ik heb ook verder geen onwijze last van menstruatie klacht of zo. Dus dat, ja. Voor mij gaat dat goed zo. Als het gaat.

Ik vind het idee dus dat alles een beetje inwaarts is, vind ik gewoon een veel fijner idee dan dat het allemaal naar beneden leet en dat het ergens wordt opgevangen. Maar je weet niet hoe hoe of zo en bij die tampon heb ik toch iets meer het idee dat je dan dat **absorbeert,** dus allemaal dus dat hat het dat er minder mogel(kheid is dat er ergens anders ook **gelekt** wordt. Meer zekerheid of zo, voor mij.

Die bevallen mij tot nu toe gewoon het beste. Nou ja, prettig en vooral dat het **niet in alle kanten eruit druppelt.**

The tampons are I use when I know I'm gonna be at a place that I a toilet is not so accessible. Because I feel like a **tampon is a stronger protection,** and although I'm not the biggest fan of using them.

Geen last van

over op tampons. En daar heb ik eigenlijk **nooit heel veel last van** gehad.

Ja, dat zou ik eigenlijk niet weten. Die **(nadelen) kan ik niet bedenken.**

Maar ik vind d met tampon we je dat je gewoo verder, Ja, Ik he gewoon echt ve dan **geen last v**

'Inhebben'

Ja, eigenlijk ik heb wel eens tampons gebruikt en vond ik eigenlijk best wel fijn, want je **voelt verder niks.**

Ja, **prettiger** zitten. **Comfortabel** noem je dat. Ik voelde prettige

Ja dus vooral ja, dat je **het niet ziet.**

Terwijl ik eigenlijk wel he gebruiken ervan wel **fijn** vond zeg maar. ... Gewoo met tampon vond ik het he **prettiger,** gewoon **het rondlopen,** dan met maandverband.

Wissel

En als je hem gebruikt, **dan is hij weg.**

I would say that the most Present for me is That it's more **convenient**. In the sense you take a clean one, you use it, you **throw it away**. You **don't have to be worrying** about anything else.

tampon is **simpeler**,

Terwijl je tampondoosje gewoon **in je toilet** was.

Ik vind een wisseltruc **sneller** gedaan en **minder gedoe** dan maandverband.

5.4 Detailed *Content of Menstruation Education:*

    i.   Detailed Findings:

        1.1.1.   What do menstruators learn at <u>school</u> about menstruation?

Curriculum Content

Menstruation education in biology classes generally follows a structured format, beginning with puberty and reproductive anatomy before addressing menstrual products. While some teachers introduce a variety of options, including reusable products, others focus mainly on disposable ones. Practical aspects, such as cost and cleaning, receive limited attention. Cultural backgrounds influence student engagement, but discussions aim to normalise menstruation.

        1.1.2.   What do menstruators learn from their mothers about menstruation?

Mothers play a fundamental role in introducing their children to menstruation and menstrual products, primarily focusing on practical guidance and preparation. Across all groups, maternal education is largely centered on disposable products like pads and tampons, with limited discussion on reusable alternatives. While some mothers mention menstrual cups and period underwear, these are often presented as options for later consideration rather than immediate choices.

Cup-Doubters and Cup-Stoppers both report that their mothers' influence shaped their initial product choices, often leading them to use the same products their mothers used. However, Cup-Doubters express a stronger awareness that their education lacked exposure to alternative products, suggesting that if their mothers had introduced them to reusable options, they might have been more inclined to try them. Cup-Stoppers, in contrast, emphasise the one-time nature of these discussions and the lack of ongoing conversations about menstrual health.

A main similarity across all groups is that social influences, particularly from peers, play an important role in expanding product awareness and shaping eventual choices. While mothers provide the foundation for menstrual education, friends often introduce new products and influence decisions over time.

        1.1.3.   What information about menstruation is provided by a doctor?

Many participants reported limited discussions about menstruation with doctors, primarily focused on hormonal contraception for symptoms like heavy bleeding or cramps. Alternative menstrual products, such as cups, were rarely mentioned. Some participants, especially those who stopped using cups, cited medical advice as a reason, with one being told they could no longer use a cup after getting an IUD. Many also turned to self-research or consulted friends before seeing a doctor, highlighting a gap in professional guidance on menstrual management. This suggests an opportunity for healthcare providers to expand their approach to include alternative menstrual products and broader menstrual health education.

    j.   Detailed Discussion:

Current Knowledge Menstrual Products:

The findings reveal differences in menstrual product knowledge across target groups. Children display the most limited understanding, often holding misconceptions about basic menstrual product use and female anatomy. Their knowledge is shaped by limited exposure to the topic, leading to misunderstandings. Even teachers showed gaps in understanding, particularly regarding tampon removal.

Mothers, in contrast, are familiar with menstrual products but primarily with single-use options like tampons and pads. Their knowledge reflects the products that were most available during their menstruating years, with less awareness of reusable alternatives like menstrual discs or reusable pads.

Cup-Stoppers and Doubters demonstrate the broadest awareness, recognizing both single-use and reusable products such as menstrual cups and period underwear. However, their knowledge remains incomplete, particularly regarding menstrual discs

and reusable pads. Despite the widespread use of tampons and pads, understanding of their proper use is often insufficient. Misconceptions continue, such as the belief that tampons can be worn overnight, indicating gaps in menstrual health education even for the most commonly used products.

Educational Source Menstrual Products:
Concluding from the interviews and Focus Groups: social influences and education influence menstrual product adoption. As figure XXfixme says, around 90% of the menstruators get information about menstruation from their mother. This fact can be found in the answers of the participants as well as most of the participants were taught by their mom about menstruation and menstrual products.

This suggests that familial sources are main in shaping early menstrual product choices. These findings highlight the importance of mothers and sisters in the transmission of menstrual product knowledge during the early stages of menstruation.

Content of Menstruation Education

Menstrual education varies depending on the source, with schools, mothers, and doctors each providing different types of information. Schools typically follow a structured curriculum, covering puberty, anatomy, and menstruation, but the depth of menstrual product education varies. Some teachers introduce reusable options, while others focus on disposable products. Practical aspects, such as cost and cleaning, receive little attention.

Mothers play an important role in initial product introduction, primarily emphasizing disposable products like pads and tampons. While some mention reusable options, these are often framed as advanced choices rather than immediate alternatives. Discussions with mothers tend to be practical but limited in scope and frequency. Peers often become main influencers in expanding product awareness.

Doctors rarely provide education on menstrual products. Consultations focus primarily on managing symptoms through hormonal contraception, with little attention

given to product choice. Some participants expressed a desire for more medical guidance on menstrual products, seeing doctors as a potential source of reliable information.

5.5 Focus Group Finding:

Taboo items:
Beyond menstrual products, participants also classified the Satisfyer (a sex toy) and period underwear as taboo items. Additionally, topics such as abortion and defecating in public restrooms were also perceived as sensitive subjects.

7. Detailed Explanation Consumers

7.1 CI-level score

7.1.1 Product Involvement and Knowledge

Cup-Doubters
Score: 2/7
Doubters have limited product knowledge and low involvement in the category. Their questions reflect basic gaps in understanding, such as how to use the cup, how to choose a size, and whether it is even available in stores. They are not actively exploring the product and require extensive education to build confidence.

Cup-Stoppers
Score: 5/7
Stoppers are moderately knowledgeable and more involved due to personal experience. They understand basic functions and benefits, but their involvement decreased after facing discomfort or complications. They are more informed than Doubters but less engaged than those who continue to use the product.

Mothers (for themselves)
Score: 4/7
Mothers considering the cup for themselves show moderate knowledge and passive involvement. They understand core benefits like cost and sustainability but still hold doubts about usage in daily life (for example: hygiene in public spaces). Their involvement depends on personal relevance and lifestyle fit.

Mothers (for their children)
Score: 3/7
When considering the product for their daughters, mothers are cautious and less informed. While they may grasp the benefits, their knowledge of practical use for younger users is limited. Their protective role increases uncertainty and limits active engagement with the product.

7.1.2 Perception of Uncertainty and Risk

Cup-Doubters
Score: 2/7
Doubters show low tolerance for uncertainty and risk. Their hesitation stems from unfamiliarity with the cup's usage, fears about hygiene and leakage, and skepticism about product efficacy. The perceived risks are high, and they are not inclined to experiment without good reassurance.

Cup-Stoppers
Score: 4/7
Stoppers initially demonstrated moderate comfort with uncertainty by trying the cup. However, their experiences with pain, removal issues, and messiness reinforced a refusal to continue. Their willingness to take risks was short-lived and reversed once negative outcomes occurred.

Mothers (for themselves)
Score: 3/7
Mothers considering the cup for themselves display a cautious attitude toward uncertainty. While some are interested in the product's benefits, concerns about practical use and hygiene make them hesitant. Their risk tolerance is limited and context-dependent.

Mothers (for their children)
Score: 1/7
When evaluating the cup for their daughters, mothers show very low risk tolerance. Protective instincts increase concerns about safety, comfort, and suitability for

younger users. They are highly reluctant to expose their children to uncertainty and potential complications.

7.1.3 Information-Seeking Behaviour

Cup-Doubters
Score: 3/7
Doubters mostly rely on external signals such as friends, family, or school exposure. Some mention using Google or social media passively, but few show consistent, proactive search behaviour. They often refer to peers' experiences and tend to avoid the effort of researching unless stimulated by others.

Cup-Stoppers
Score: 5/7
Stoppers show moderate information-seeking behaviour. While some relied on packaging or passive discovery (for example: Instagram), many also reported actively Googling, reading reviews, or watching YouTube videos to understand cup use and troubleshoot issues. Their behaviour indicates a genuine effort to inform themselves, especially when problems arose.

Mothers (for themselves)
Score: 2/7
Mothers generally do not actively seek out information. They rely on what they hear from others (for example: other parents) and do not independently research menstrual products unless a specific issue arises. Their information behaviour is low and reactive.

Mothers (for their children)
Score: 1/7
When considering menstrual cups for their daughters, mothers show very limited information-seeking. There is little to no indication of researching suitability, safety, or

usage. Their judgements are largely shaped by assumptions or indirect exposure rather than personal investigation.

7.1.4 Perceived Product Benefits and Compatibility

Cup-Doubters
Score: 2/7
Cup-Doubters prioritise practicality and ease of use. They are skeptical about health, hygiene, and effectiveness, and show little motivation to change existing behaviour despite some awareness of environmental benefits. Novelty does not appeal to them unless perceived barriers are first addressed.

Cup-Stoppers
Score: 4/7
Stoppers are moderately open to novelty, as they were initially attracted to the cup's innovative benefits, especially sustainability and cost savings. However, their willingness to change behaviour was ultimately limited by negative user experiences. Their openness was conditional and quickly reversed when compatibility with existing habits (ease, comfort) proved insufficient.

Mothers (for themselves)
Score: 4/7
When considering the cup for their own use, mothers show moderate openness to innovation, especially appreciating cost savings, sustainability, and health benefits. However, convenience and hygiene, particularly in public spaces, remain concerns that may limit long-term use.

Mothers (for their children)
Score: 2/7
In evaluating the cup for their daughters, mothers are much more cautious. They prioritise ease of use, safety, and emotional comfort, often doubting the cup's suitability for younger users. Despite recognizing long-term benefits, they resist promoting behavioural change in this context.

7.1.5 Social Influence and Peer Adoption

When examining the role of social influence and imitation, differences emerge not only between user groups but also within the role mothers play. On a scale from 1 (reluctant adopter) to 7 (early adopter who influences others), Doubters score lowest (2/7), as they tend to follow family norms and express a strong need for social proof before trying a new product. Stoppers score moderately (4/7): they are open to peer influence and have experimented with cups, but their negative experiences make them cautious in influencing others.

Mothers require a nuanced interpretation. As menstruators, they score low (2/7), rarely changing their own product habits and typically remaining loyal to familiar disposables. As caregivers, they score moderately (5/7), as they play a central role in shaping their children's menstrual product choices. However, their influence is often limited to recommending disposable products, as most mothers do not have direct experience with alternatives and they perceive the alternatives too frightening for their children. This means that while their influence is strong, it does not yet extend to supporting more innovative or sustainable options, unless they are exposed to them through other trusted sources (for example: other parents, education, or health professionals).

7.1.6 Accessibility and Affordability

Cup-Doubters

Score: 2/7

Cup-Doubters are highly price-sensitive. Many expressed hesitation to spend €20–25 on a product they're unsure about. They emphasized the need for free trials, low-cost versions, or installment options before committing. Concerns over "wasting money" on something they might not like were common. Although some saw potential long-term savings, the initial investment and uncertainty created a main barrier.

Cup-Stoppers

Score: 4/7

Stoppers are moderately price-sensitive. They are more open to spending if they perceive value, such as durability and personal benefit. Some leveraged discounts or special offers, and others noted that the cup becomes cost-effective over time. However, financial considerations still influenced their decision-making, especially when experimenting with other products like period underwear.

7.1.7 Cultural and Societal Factors

Cup-Doubters
Score: 2/7
Cup-Doubters are highly influenced by social norms and stigma. They frequently referenced peers, family (especially mothers), school environments, and religious or cultural expectations as shaping their product choices. Many described menstrual cups as taboo or unfamiliar, and social discomfort (for example: boiling the cup in a shared kitchen) strongly hindered use. Peer usage was often a prerequisite for personal consideration, and minimal representation in their social circles created hesitation.

They appear open to new products in general when these are socially validated (for example: period underwear endorsed by influencers), but with cups specifically, stigma and unfamiliarity dominate.

Cup-Stoppers
Score: 4/7
Cup-Stoppers demonstrate moderate openness to experimentation. They challenged norms by trying the cup in the first place, often stimulated by sustainability motivations or peer influence. However, their continuation depended heavily on social support, shared experiences, and ease of use. Lack of peer use, fear stories (for example: IUD dislodgement), and absence of positive reinforcement led many to

stop. While not as constrained by stigma as Doubters, they are not fully independent decision-makers and are swayed by negative narratives and discomfort.

Mothers (for themselves)
Score: 3/7
Mothers tend to favour conventional solutions and draw from traditional norms. Many did not seek out new products actively and referenced friends, daughters, or social media as sources of awareness. Their comfort with menstrual cups was often low unless normalised in their environment. However, some openness existed when encouraged by peer trends or environmental concerns.

Mothers (for their children)
Score: 2/7
When evaluating menstrual cups for their children, mothers were particularly conservative and protective. Cultural acceptability, simplicity, and hygiene were emphasized. Cups were not often seen as suitable for adolescents, and unfamiliarity reinforced resistance. The decision-making was guided less by curiosity and more by safety, comfort, and cultural fit.

7.2 Attitude Results per Potential Consumer

7.2.1 Results Attitude toward Switching

Cup-Doubters:

The participants' attitudes towards switching to menstrual cups reveal both openness and resistance, influenced by convenience, hygiene, and environmental concerns.

Openness or Resistance to Switching
Many participants are resistant to switching due to ingrained habits with pads or tampons. One participant mentioned, "I've used pads for a long time," highlighting the challenge of breaking routines. Others felt satisfied with their current products, such as tampons, stating, "I can manage with tampons just fine." However, some became more open after considering the environmental benefits, with one saying, "It's sustainable... and doesn't have bleach, like tampons or pads."

Factors Encouraging or Discouraging Product Trial
Encouraging Factors:
Environmental sustainability emerged as a main motivator for some, with participants expressing a desire to switch due to the benefits for the planet. One participant noted, "I would like to use it, but there's a lot of pressure on consumers to change their behaviour."
Discouraging Factors:
Convenience and hygiene concerns were the main barriers. Participants worried about managing the cup outside the home and feared leakage, with one remarking, "I thought you had to change it every four hours."

Comparison of Attitudes Before and After gaining Knowledge
Before learning about the benefits of menstrual cups, many participants were hesitant due to perceived inconvenience. However, after being exposed to educational content, some showed more interest in trying the product. One said, "I'm going to sign up for the pilot," suggesting that marketing and education can help reduce concerns and increase openness to trial.

In summary, while convenience and hygiene remain barriers, increased awareness of the environmental and health benefits can encourage more participants to try menstrual cups.

Focus Group Doubters:

The focus group with Cup-Doubters revealed a hesitant attitude toward switching to menstrual cups. While some participants expressed curiosity and openness, others showed resistance due to lack of knowledge, habit, and perceived inconvenience.

Openness vs. Resistance

Most participants were accustomed to their current menstrual products, with tampons and pads being the default choice. One participant compared this to brand loyalty: *"It's like having an iPhone and not wanting to switch to a Samsung. This is just how I do it."*

However, exposure to new information shifted some perspectives. One participant initially dismissed the idea of using a cup but later reconsidered: *"And then I thought, why not actually? It has a lot of benefits. You don't need to keep buying products, it's sustainable, and it doesn't contain bleach like tampons or pads."*

Factors Encouraging or Discouraging Trial

1. Lack of Knowledge & Familiarity: Many participants did not know how to use a cup and saw this as a main barrier: *"I wouldn't even know where or how to insert it. I really have no idea."* They preferred clear, realistic information, including awkward situations: *"I would want a guide with videos that explains everything, even the awkward stuff."*
2. Social Influence & Exposure: Seeing others use the cup played an important role: *"If no one around you is using it, you're not going to be the first in high*

school." Positive experiences from peers could make switching easier: *"If you hear more experiences, the barriers go down. Money also plays a role."*

3. Cost & Accessibility: The upfront cost was a barrier: *"If I have to pay €20 for something I'm unsure about, I won't buy it. But if I get it for free, I might try."* Some suggested free trials or subsidized cups to lower the barrier.
4. Concerns About Comfort & Convenience: Participants worried about leakage and usability: *"You want certainty that it won't leak. That's less pleasant."* Some saw dryness with tampons as a disadvantage and considered the cup a better alternative: *"On day 6 or 7, tampons are uncomfortable. A cup might be more comfortable."*

Cup-Stoppers:

Participants displayed both openness and resistance to switching to menstrual cups. Some were open to trying the product after discussions with others, such as one participant who said, "I started using it after talking to colleagues". Others, however, reverted to traditional products due to negative experiences, like one who shared, "I tried it once, but it didn't work for me, so I went back to tampons".

Encouraging Factors:

Environmental benefits motivated some participants, with one noting, "You don't have to keep buying or throwing away products" . Social influence also played a role, as one participant mentioned, "When everyone in my house stopped using the pill, I thought I should try it too".

Discouraging Factors:

Concerns about inconvenience and discomfort were common. One participant said, "It didn't feel right… so I gave up", and another worried about leakage, stating, "I thought it would leak if I wasn't careful".

Attitudes Before and After Exposure to Education or Marketing:

Before exposure, many participants felt unsure, with one saying, "I thought it was too much trouble, so I didn't really look into it". After learning more, some became open to trying it again, as one noted, "Now that I know there are solutions, I would consider trying it again". Education and product improvements helped shift perceptions, suggesting that better information could encourage product trials.

In conclusion, while concerns about comfort and convenience hindered some, environmental benefits and peer influence encouraged others. Education and product innovations helped overcome initial resistance, showing potential for increased adoption.

7.2.2 Discussion Attitude toward Switching

The attitudes of menstrual Cup-Users, Doubters, and focus group participants reflect a mix of openness and resistance to switching products, influenced by factors like convenience, comfort, and environmental concerns.

Openness vs. Resistance to Switching:

Resistance to switching was common due to established habits and satisfaction with current products. Many participants were hesitant to try menstrual cups, often due to perceived inconvenience or unfamiliarity. However, exposure to information about environmental benefits and sustainability led to greater openness in some cases.

Encouraging and Discouraging Factors:

Environmental sustainability and social influence were main motivators for trying menstrual cups. The desire to reduce waste and peer encouragement encouraged some participants to consider the product. In contrast, concerns about convenience, comfort, and hygiene were main barriers. Many participants feared issues like leakage and discomfort, which hindered product trials.

Attitudes Before and After Exposure to Education or Marketing:

Before exposure to educational content, many participants were resistant to trying the cup, citing convenience and lack of knowledge. However, after being informed about its benefits and improvements, some participants showed greater openness to trial, suggesting that education plays a vital role in overcoming initial resistance.

7.2.3 Conclusion:

In summary, while convenience and comfort concerns remain main barriers to adoption, factors like environmental sustainability, social influence, and exposure to education can encourage greater openness and facilitate the trial of menstrual cups.

8. GTM

8.1 GTM Requirements

8.1.1 Strategic & Market Fit

- ☐ Differentiation & Uniqueness: Casey must stand out from existing solutions and competitors, offering a clear value proposition that addresses unmet consumer needs.
- ☐ Appeals to Early Adopters: Since Casey is a radical innovation, the strategy should effectively target early adopters who are most likely to try new menstrual products.
- ☐ Increases Cup & Casey Adoption: The strategy must not only drive Casey sales but also contribute to the broader adoption of menstrual cups.
- ☐ Education & Awareness Component: Addressing knowledge gaps and tackling stigma through consumer education is needed to overcome adoption barriers.
- ☐ Regulatory Compliance: The GTM strategy must align with health and hygiene regulations, ensuring proper labeling and marketing.

8.1.2 Operational Feasibility

- ☐ Aligned with CupHub's capabilities: The strategy needs to match the expertise and resources of the founders, ensuring that execution is realistic and scalable.

- ☐ Clear steps for Implementation: The GTM approach consists of clear steps for CupHub to follow, making execution manageable.
- ☐ Financially Viable & Scalable: The strategy should define a sustainable revenue model (for example: recurring revenue, direct sales, partnerships).
- ☐ Distribution & Logistics: The strategy must align with CupHub's operational model (D2C, B2C, or retail partnerships), ensuring smooth production.
- ☐ Stakeholder fit: The approach should meet the needs and expectations of relevant stakeholders (for example: retailers, policymakers, NGOs).

8.1.3 Brand & Positioning Considerations

- ☐ Maintains Brand credibility & trust: Given the stigmatised nature of the menstrual industry and the transparency trend, the strategy must ensure transparent, ethical, and trustworthy communication.
- ☐ Scalable Positioning: Marketing must focus on potential consumers and does not alienate potential subsequent consumers.
- ☐ Influencer & Community engagement: Given that peer influence is a main adoption motivation, the strategy should look at ambassadors, influencers, and user-generated content to enhance credibility.
- ☐ Retail & Pricing strategy: The pricing must reflect Casey's value proposition while remaining accessible to target groups.

8.2 Brainstorm

1. Taboo benoemen
2. Normalise: lifestyle
3. Maak het cool (kan cool de norm worden?)

Brand Positioning: *For menstruators who are curious but hesitant to try new menstrual products, CupHub offers a menstrual cup cleaner that is hygienic and easy, that reduces perceived risks around health, cost, and social discomfort, and gives people the confidence to make informed, independent menstrual choices without fear of judgement.*

Short term strategy:
1. Awareness & Trust Building
   - Focus on community engagement (social media, menstrual health discussions).
   - Build credibility via educational content & thought leadership.
2. Product Readiness & Early Adopters
   - Pilots with potential consumers
   - Partnerships with organisations (for example: "WeAreEquinix (WRE)" for workplace awareness (Equinix Sustainability, 2024)).
   - Introduce Casey in targeted spaces (corporate offices, universities, sustainability events).
   - Consider subsidy options to support affordability.
3. Scaling via Influencers & Larger Marketing Campaigns
   - Influencers can increase product attractiveness once there is some adoption already.
   - Target audiences beyond ideological buyers (those who already prioritise sustainability) to practical users who value convenience and hygiene.

1. Idea 1

The Cup is the new Tampon!
Introduce the cup when people tend to switch to the tampon. The switching could be motivated by several reasons: but the most important one is swimming.

Although the tampon is now introduced as a 'solution' to being able to swim whenever an individual is menstruating, it can become saturated. Which can cause leakage as the tampon also absorbs the water. A cup does not absorb the water, but only collects the menstrual blood, thereby preventing leakage upon leaving the water. In addition, the cup requires less switches than a tampon during the day. Switches as in, the cup can be used up to 8-12 hours, whereas the tampon needs to be switched every 2-4 hours. Especially when swimming, the tampon can leak directly when coming out of the water. The cup could therefore be a better product to use when swimming.

For example, when the menstruator plans to swim and remain on a boat or beach for the entire day, there is no private place to switch tampons. After one swim the tampon will become saturated, causing leakage.

Target groups:
1. Swim kids: (from pad to cup)
   Start selling at a swim pool where kids of 15 years or so swim. (local, normal, features are really needed), beginning of the year. Mothers could be involved as well.
   a. Note that this method requires a lot of social influences, so the age at which a tampon is used must be considered and perhaps whether they have had education about this subject. (However, social taboo and that it is not normal, and that young people are sensitive to wanting to belong. So it is important that we make the cup as normal as possible.) It could be possible if the education around the cup has really improved, as taboos are reduced by knowledge.
2. Swim lessons (elder people) (from tampon to cup)
   a. Slightly older menstruators who have already switched to tampons.
   b. However, the benefit of not having to switch to the cup after the tampon, is gone.
3. Recreational swimming: (from tampon to cup)
   Are there specific target groups that swim and are not so easily influenced by their social environment?

2. Idea 2

Direct texts for posters.

As the interview participants declared that they started thinking of buying a cup when they were asked directly.
   a. ''Why didn't this exist yet?''
   b. ''Hehe, finally an IO'er came up with this''
   c. ''Hehe, finally it's on the market''
   d. ''Why don't you have the cup yet?''

 (In Dutch:
   1. ''Waarom bestond dit nog niet?''
   2. ''Hehe, eindelijk heeft een io'er dit bedacht''
   3. ''Hehe Eindelijk is het op de markt''
   4. ''Waarom heb jij de cup nog niet?'')

3. HUB

CupHub as a central Hub for information, products and experiences of consumers about menstrual products. In combination with the trend of the need for information transparency, this could work.

9. Stages of Adoption

9.1 Persona-Specific Insights

0. Unawareness Before Rogers' first stage (Awareness), many menstruators are completely unfamiliar with the concept of menstrual cups. As reusable products are not yet structurally included in school education, most awareness arises via social media, peer conversations, and observations of close friends.

1. Awareness to Interest
- Imitators: Become interested primarily through benefit-based messaging (for example: sustainability or health), but their interest often fades due to a lack of social norms around cup use.
- Heavy-Flowers: Gain awareness through passive exposure to benefits but do not actively search for more information.
- Adventurers: Actively seek out product information online and become interested through both social trends and personal values like sustainability and health.

2. Interest to Evaluation
- Imitators: Require a shift in social norms; if menstrual cups are normalised in their peer groups, they are more likely to move to evaluation.
- Heavy-Flowers: Will evaluate if they encounter feature-based messaging (for example: swimming, less changes).
- Adventurers: Evaluate quickly, driven by the alignment of cup benefits with their lifestyle values.

3. Evaluation to Trial
- Imitators & Heavy-Flowers: Will only try the cup after receiving positive personal testimonials from trusted peers. Influencers and brand-led messages are not perceived as trustworthy.

- Adventurers: More self-motivated, particularly when they encounter practical, feature-based messages, they are likely to try the product based on their independent assessment, even without peer support.

4. Trial to Adoption
- Imitators: May stop trying the cup if convenience is not experienced. Need confirmation from peers (which needs to be provided passively) that the product is convenient and worth using long term.
- Heavy-Flowers: Will adopt only if they experience convenience (for example: fewer changes, less leakage). If they stop trying, they can still be motivated through passively received information (for example: friend's story or social media).
- Adventurers: If the initial experience is challenging, they tend to actively seek solutions online and are more determined in achieving successful adoption.

9.2 Detailed information CJ

Cupstoppers: Start using Cup Age:
Interviews indicate that individuals who menstruate typically begin using a menstrual cup by the age of 25. This age is relatively late, as menstruators typically have been menstruating for 10-15 years by that point. A cup has a lifespan of 10 to 15 years, allowing for its use throughout that duration.

Implication:
For CupHub, this could be valuable if consumers use cups sooner, as it would lead to increased cup sales and consequently greater opportunities to sell Caseys. It also benefits individuals, as they can avoid purchasing single-use products repeatedly, thereby conserving financial resources. Nonetheless, individuals are creatures of habit, as noted in the focus groups: "I'm simply used to using tampons". This indicates a lack of motivation to switch to an alternative menstrual product, suggesting an absence of interest in seeking alternatives, which results in no switching behaviour.

9.3 Extra Customer Journeys

9.3.1 Customer Journey 1: Contraceptive Switchers

Profile:
Women (often 20s–30s) who stop taking hormonal contraceptives (for example: the pill) after prolonged use. They re-experience menstruation after years of suppression, often without knowing what to expect.

Stage	Description
Unawareness	Periods return unexpectedly intense or long after stopping the pill. They are unaware of how to manage it and are unfamiliar with reusable options like the cup.
Awareness	Triggered by high costs of pads/tampons after healthcare stops covering the pill. They begin talking to friends and doctors about alternatives, discover the cup.
Interest	Curious about cups as a sustainable and cost-effective option. Still uncertain about usability and safety, especially with new contraceptive plans (like IUDs).
Evaluation	Weigh pros and cons: cost vs convenience, and risk of cup use with IUD. Doctor's advice and stories of expulsion (sometimes uninformed) cause hesitation.
Trial	May attempt cup use before or after IUD placement, sometimes without correct information.
Adoption or Stopping	Adoption occurs only if they find convenience, comfort, and reassurance. If they experience leakage, discomfort, or confusion, they stop. Risk of expulsion further complicates their experience.

Strategic Needs:

- Clear communication about safe use with contraceptives (especially IUDs)
- Real stories of other switchers navigating this phase
- Financial framing (cups vs recurring product costs)
- Guidance from trusted sources (peers or medical professionals)

9.3.2 Customer Journey 2: Natural Cyclers

Profile:

Individuals who reject hormonal contraceptives for health, wellness, or lifestyle reasons. Often influenced by trends, bodily autonomy, or concerns like acne or mood swings.

Stage	Description
Unawareness	Know about periods and cup alternatives through Instagram, wellness influencers, or friends, but don't consider them seriously.
Awareness	Become more aware of their body, cycle, and hormone-free living. Start using cycle tracking apps or reading about natural options.
Interest	Actively interested in products that align with their values (natural, low-waste, non-toxic). Cups match this philosophy.
Evaluation	Explore brand values, materials, and compatibility with active lifestyles. Look for peer stories and scientific content.
Trial	Try the cup with high expectations. May face challenges but are motivated to continue. Likely to seek help online or via peers.
Adoption	Most likely to adopt if the experience is empowering and supports their holistic lifestyle. May even become ambassadors.

Strategic Needs:
- Messaging around natural living, autonomy, and hormone-free.
- Transparent, science-backed information
- Community-led content: testimonials, tips, and relatable influencers
- Premium aesthetic and ethical brand storytelling