



ACARA CHALLENGE 2015

Domestic Division
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MISSION

Ova Woman promotes the use of reusable menstrual products that are both practical and well designed.

Ova Woman

Promoting Reusable Menstrual Products

Who We Are

Ova Woman is an online retail and marketing company that sells menstrual cups and fashionable absorbent underwear. Unlike other online retailers in this market, Ova provides women an opportunity to feel and discuss our products in a safe space. We create interactive displays and distribute them to women's health-focused organizations (clinics, yoga studios, and athletic gyms) across the US. Reusable menstrual products not only increase the mobility of women during menstruation, but also prevent approximately 350 disposable feminine hygiene products from entering the waste stream each year.

Why We Matter

Menstruation is a biological process that almost every women undergoes each month for approximately 40 years¹. In the United States, the majority of women use disposable tampons. When tampons were first commercially available in the 1930s, women were joyous. Tampons allowed women more freedom during their periods. However, for all of the benefits of tampons, there are many drawbacks:

- Tampons leak.
- Tampons have to be changed frequently.
- Tampons can cause vaginal dryness and micro tears.²
- Synthetic fibers in tampons can provide a breeding ground for harmful bacteria.³
- Tampons are disposable and generate a lot of waste.
- Tampons are expensive.

For the past 80 years, there has been minimal innovation in feminine hygiene. Large corporations such as Proctor and Gamble and Kimberly Clark control 90% of this \$3.1 billion industry.⁴ Historically, feminine hygiene marketing perpetuated the idea that periods were embarrassing and should be kept discrete. This may explain the lack of discourse and demand for innovation in this industry. But there is an alternative to disposable tampons.

Reusable menstrual cups have existed since the 1800s and are currently gaining exposure in the United States. Unlike tampons, menstrual cups can be worn for up to 12 hours; users also experience far fewer leaks with menstrual cups because they catch rather than absorb fluid. Additionally, menstrual cups do not cause vaginal dryness, micro tears, or Toxic Shock Syndrome. All of the major drawbacks of tampons are alleviated by menstrual cups.

Beyond the practical value, there are many environmental benefits to using reusable products. In a lifetime, a women will generate over 1,000 lbs. of waste from tampons and pads⁵. For every menstrual

¹ <http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/menstruation.html>

² <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/122-a70/>

³ <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/122-a70/>

⁴ Heinrich, Thomas and Bob Batchelor. *Kotex, Kleenex, Huggies: Kimberly-Clark and the Consumer Revolution in American Business*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2004.

⁵ http://lunapads.com/learn/why-switch?geoip_country=US

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cup a woman uses, over 3,000⁶ disposable products are prevented from entering the waste stream. The environmental degradation caused by tampons is only furthered in the manufacturing process as most tampons are bleached and processed with other harsh chemicals to increase absorbency⁷.

Although the menstrual cup has many benefits, a large portion of women in the US have never even heard of menstrual cups. Only 25% of the 40 women we interviewed at the University of Minnesota had heard of menstrual cups. However, there is growing evidence that US women are curious about menstrual cups and want to experience the benefits firsthand. This past fall, a European company launched a Kickstarter campaign for a compact menstrual cup. Their goal was to raise \$7,800. However, once women found out about the product they were intrigued and by the end of the campaign they raised \$325,000⁸! Over the last year, there have also been several articles on popular websites highlighting the benefits of menstrual cups⁹. Ova Woman will generate even more awareness for menstrual cups, and support women in making the switch.

Ova Woman aims to expose more women to the benefits of menstrual cups. Menstrual cups remain a fringe product, but with strategic marketing can gain significant market share in the US. Ova will employ a unique strategy of installing interactive menstrual cup displays in women's bathrooms, locker rooms and clinic waiting rooms. These displays will be visually appealing, allow women to see our products, touch the product materials, and read concise and relevant information (Fig.2). Ova Woman's brand and website will be prominently featured on these displays, and will direct women to our online store.

The Problems We Solve

Ova Woman will address two core issues: the ineffectiveness of tampons and the limited accessibility of menstrual cups. Current menstrual products do not provide adequate protection. Tampons leak and require frequent bathroom visits. Over 70% of the women we interviewed, stated that they had experienced tampon leakage within the last three months. These women also stated that they found themselves frequently going to the bathroom during their period to check for leaks. When asked to describe their ideal menstrual product, many women stated that they wanted a product that was worry free. Some women also mentioned the high cost of tampons. Although this wasn't the primary issue women identified, many noted that tampons and panty liners were expensive.

Ova Woman also aims to address the lack of menstrual cup marketing. Many women in the US either have never heard of menstrual cups or aren't aware of the benefits of using a menstrual cup. Current reusable menstrual product companies have poor marketing strategies, mainly relying on grassroots marketing. When we spoke with menstrual cup reviewers, they frequently mentioned the terrible pink, flowery packaging and antiquated websites. Menstrual cup marketing needs to appear modern and fresh to new customers; consumers expect quality design, especially for products that require a behavior change.

⁶ Women use approximately 350 reusable menstrual products in a year and menstrual cups can last up to 10 years.

⁷ Thomas, P. (2007). Tampons. *Ecologist*, 37(9), 20-21.

⁸ <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/intimina/lily-cup-compact-the-menstrual-cup-reinvented>

⁹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/26/menstrual-cups_n_6512730.html; <http://www.refinery29.com/menstrual-cup-pad-africa-nonprofit>

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The Diva Cup, which is the leader in the US for menstrual cup sales, focuses time and energy on attending tradeshows and securing shelf space in major retailers. However, generating sales requires consumer awareness. When menstrual cups are carried in retail stores such as Whole Foods, they have very little visibility (tiny shelf space and on the very top shelf). Also, women do not linger in the feminine hygiene aisle. We observed consumer behavior at Target and watched as women quickly entered the aisle, grabbed a product, and scuttled away. This is not an aisle that women want to spend time learning about a new product; they have to first hear about menstrual cups before buying them at a retail store.

How We Solve Problems

Ova Woman addresses the core issues stated above through the marketing and selling of menstrual cups and absorbent underwear. Menstrual cups are reusable and can be worn for over 12 hours at a time. The cup is inserted into the vagina and forms a seal around the cervix. Women face far fewer leaks with menstrual cups than with tampons because the cup catches, rather than absorbs fluid. The menstrual cup is designed for women who need to move freely through their lives without the hindrance of disposable products. We also sell absorbent underwear, which provide women more comfort and security during their period. These underwear are not only sexy, but can hold 3 tsps. of liquid. The majority of the women we interviewed reported wearing panty liners in addition to tampons. Women wear panty liners to protect their clothing from blood stains. These beautifully designed underwear eliminate the need for panty liners.

Menstrual cups are also much cheaper than tampons. Over the course of their reproductive lives, women spend over \$3000 on feminine hygiene products. If a woman were to use menstrual cups instead, she would only spend \$200 over her reproductive years. Within only six months, women using Ova's products will begin to see a reduction in the money they spend on feminine hygiene products.

Ova Woman is reinventing how reusable menstrual products are marketed to women. Reusable menstrual products can seem intimidating. Consumers want an opportunity to see and feel the product before they buy. But this exposure has to take place in a safe environment where women are free of judgment and can ask questions. Several women we interviewed, when asked where they would be interested in learning about alternative menstrual products, said they would like to learn more from their gynecologist. Ova Woman will seek out spaces where women feel safe and strategically place displays in these spaces that are visually appealing, interactive, and informative.

These spaces include women's restrooms next to tampon dispensers, in gym locker rooms, and in clinic waiting rooms. Reusable menstrual products are not currently showcased in these areas, and these locations provide relevant and timely exposure. Bathroom advertising has recently grown in popularity because of the heavy customer traffic and limited competition for attention¹⁰. To date, we have one women's health clinic and one athletic facility who have agreed to support our initiative. This spring we will be cultivating more partnerships. Our goal is to have 20 display sites by the end of August 2015.

When women walk by these displays they will first see in bold "**Leak-free 12-Hour Period Protection.**" Underneath these words they will see a *real* menstrual cup behind Plexiglas. The display will also have

¹⁰ Sanders, L. (2004). More marketers have to go to the bathroom. *Advertising Age*, 75(38), 53.

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quotes and endorsements from nurses and doctors. We have three display designs that we will be testing during our summer pilot.

Each time we launch a new display we will host a kick-off booth at the site. This will give women a chance to ask questions and feel the products. At these events we also hope to continue to build relationships with our host sites, so that employees at these sites are comfortable engaging with women who are curious and acting as product ambassadors. We will also use these launch events to sell product.

Social media is also a core component of our marketing plan. Our website will include a multimedia blog, which will include opportunities for customers to chat with nurses about their health questions. We are also creating four short videos that humorously highlight the benefits of menstrual cups. Similar videos have proven to work for tampons. In 2013, a tampon delivery startup aired two comical YouTube videos that now have over 29 million views.¹¹ Each of our social media components will have a unified, well designed presence.

We Love Our Customers

Ova's target customers are active women between the ages of 18 and 35 in the US. Ova seeks to attract three initial customer segments: professional women, physically active women, and college students. These segments need menstrual products that are leak-free and long lasting. There are approximately 15 million women in this market segment. Ova will attract customers through our displays in locations such as women health clinics, college restrooms, and athletic clubs.

Professional women are running from meeting to meeting, and the last thing they want to worry about is bleeding through their power suits. There are approximately 10 million women in this segment¹² and over 90% of these women use disposable menstrual products. Our main vehicle for connecting with these women is through our partnerships with women's health clinics and our bathroom displays in large corporate complexes.

Physically active women are those who work out regularly. From the casual treadmill walker to the triathlete, these women want to work up a sweat without worrying about leaks. The last thing a woman wants to think about when she's on the uphill ascent of a long cycle is changing a tampon. We will communicate with these women through our placement of displays in locker rooms at athletic clubs and yoga studios. We will also have information tables at women's races such as the YWCA's Women's Triathlon.

College students no longer have the luxury of mooching off their mother's tampon stash. College is also notorious for being a time to experiment. Ova Woman will connect with college students through restroom displays in academic buildings and dorm rooms. These displays will frame the menstrual cup as a modern advancement and will also highlight the cost savings.

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEcZmT0fiNM>

¹² <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf>

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We are also pursuing **military women** as an additional customer segment. Military women who are overseas can sometimes struggle to obtain effective products.¹³ Changing and disposing of tampons can also be a struggle when you are on a guard for long stretches of time. Our long-term goal is to provide a menstrual cup to all military women during basic training.

How We Generate Revenue

Ova will generate revenue through the online sales of menstrual cups, cup cleaning products and absorbent underwear. Our products are purchased at wholesale and sold at competitive prices. We are in the process of finalizing our vendor partnerships.

We conservatively estimate that each display will generate between \$120 and \$200 in monthly revenue. In year 1 our displays will be in the Twin Cities and surrounding suburbs. In year 2 we will expand to greater Minnesota and bordering states. And in year 3 and beyond we will expand to the greater US. The product line may expand as new products are designed by our partner companies.

Table 1. Per Product Gross Profit

Product	Price	COGS	Gross Profit
Menstrual Cup	\$35	\$15	\$20
Menstrual Cup Wipes	\$5	\$1.50	\$3.50
Absorbent Underwear	\$40	\$20	\$20

Table 2. Display Location Projections

Location	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 6
Women's Health Clinics	6	24	40	120
College Restrooms	10	40	60	200
Gym Locker Rooms	3	12	25	70
Military Exchanges	1	2	3	10
Total	20	78	128	400

Table 3. Profit Projections

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 6
Revenue*	\$40,320	\$154,560	\$257,760	\$780,600
COGS	\$18,547	\$71,098	\$118,570	\$359,076
Gross Profit	\$21,773	\$83,462	\$139,190	\$421,524
Displays	\$4,000	\$11,700	\$10,390	\$55,040
Shipping	\$1,210	\$4,637	\$7,733	\$23,418
Web Fees	\$840	\$840	\$840	\$2,000
Salaries	----	\$50,000	\$80,000	\$200,000
Other Business Expenses	\$1,200	\$3,000	\$4,000	\$6,000

¹³ <http://phc.amedd.army.mil/phc%20resource%20library/tg281finaljuly2010.pdf>

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Professional Services	\$1,000	\$5,600	\$5,600	\$10,000
EBIT	\$13,523	\$7,686	\$30,628	\$125,066

*Revenue is estimated as follows:

- Each display will generate sales of \$160 per month (two cups, two cup wipes and two pairs of underwear)
- Social media efforts will generate initial sales of \$160/month in the first year and then grow in the first two years by 50% and level off at 5% growth rate

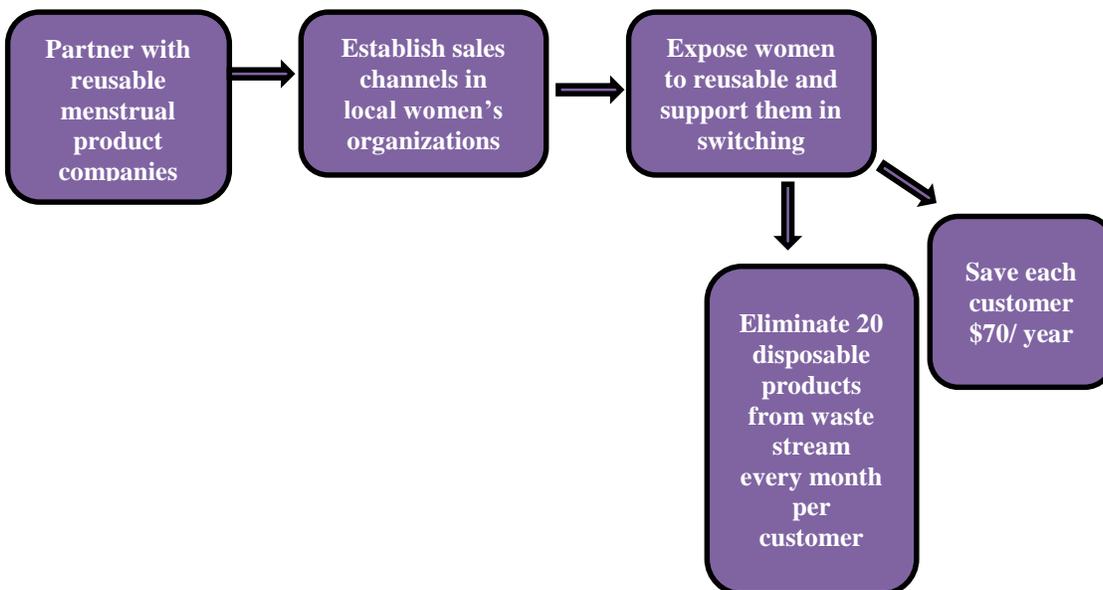
Our Impact

At Ova Woman, we work to reduce waste by providing women high-quality reusable menstrual products. Through improved marketing and strategic partnerships, we aim to expand the reach of our partner companies.

Ova will track and report the number of disposables replaced by the use of our reusable products. We will survey 10% of our customers to estimate how many women continue to use reusable products throughout the year and will use this to estimate total waste reduction.

Ova Woman is also interested in partnering with public health nurses to ensure all women have access to menstrual cups. Women facing homelessness can have a hard time accessing adequate menstrual products. Some even resort to keeping tampons in for days to stretch the products they do have access to. We want all women to have access to safe and effective menstrual products. The details of this partnership are in progress.

Figure 1. Theory of Change



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Our Development Plan

Ova Woman will launch in May 2015 and will grow in three phases. Our goal is to become the leading online US retailer of reusable menstrual products.

Launch—May-August 2015

This spring we will launch our online store and begin installing displays in 20 locations. At each of these locations we will host a kick-off event that allows us to engage with the women at that site. During this initial phase we will also release our first promotional video on platforms such as YouTube and host our first nurse call-in hour where customers can call in to ask health related questions. This will be recorded and accessible on our website.

Phase 2—September-March 2016

During the fall of 2015 and early spring of 2016 we will expand our display locations to include all of Minnesota, focusing primarily on college towns. During this phase we will also release two more promotional YouTube videos.

Phase 3—April 2016—on-going

In the summer of 2016, Ova Woman will expand our display locations to nearby cities such as Chicago, Madison and Milwaukee. We will continue to expand to other cities through strategic partnerships with college groups, women's health clinics and athletic clubs. During this phase we will also pursue a military partnership. Additional YouTube promotional videos will be released—these will primarily focus on how our products have changed our customer's lives.

Our Competitors

The reusable feminine hygiene industry is fledgling. Less than 10% of menstruating women use products other than tampons and pads¹⁴. Without Ova Woman, this industry will continue to grow at a slow pace, leaving many women unaware of the benefits of menstrual cups. Without more companies actively marketing this product, menstrual cups will remain on the fringe.

Currently, our partner companies are also our competitors; our vendors also sell their products online. Our goal is to become the #1 seller of our vendors' products. This will help evolve the relationship to an equal partnership. Luna Pads is our largest non-partner competitor, but it relies on word of mouth and does not utilize the display model to drive sales. Luna Pads also has a different target customer. The women who shop at Luna Pads are typically women who are seeking alternative products for either environmental or social reasons. Ova Woman is primarily targeting women based on product performance.

¹⁴ Heinrich, Thomas and Bob Batchelor. *Kotex, Kleenex, Huggies: Kimberly-Clark and the Consumer Revolution in American Business*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2004.

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Summer 2015 Pilot

Ova has three main assumptions to test during the summer 2015 pilot.

1. Athletic clubs, women's clinics and college campuses are willing to host our displays.
 - Test: We will utilize our networks to establish partnerships with organizations in the Twin Cities. We currently have one clinic and one athletic club that have agreed to work with us. This summer we will test to see how readily organization are to allow us to host our displays in their facilities. We may learn that we have to provide incentives to these locations.
2. Our displays will drive online sales.
 - Test: We have three initial display designs that we will test. When a customer checks out of our online store we will ask them to select how they found out about our website. We will then track which display designs result in sales. We may find that we need to offer a discount code on the displays to drive sales from displays. We may also find that displays do not work in driving sales and will have to focus primarily on our social media campaign.
3. Customer interaction with our displays will generate the same amount of sales irrespective of the location type.
 - Test: When a customer checks out of our online store we will ask them to select how they found out about our website. We will then track which locations drive sales. We will also monitor the sales at each of the kick-off events. We may find that only one of our initial location types generates revenue. We may also find out about other location types during this process.

How You Can Help

We are requesting \$12,000 for our summer pilot. This money will pay for the displays, the initial product inventory, the website and kick-off booth promotional materials. We are also seeking strategic marketing and ecommerce guidance. In August, we will have an additional funding request for phase 1 development. This request will be based on our summer findings.

Meet Ova Woman

Elise Maxwell is a full-time MBA student at the Carlson School of Management. She has forgone a lucrative MBA track career to work on Ova Woman full-time. Elise has successfully led new initiatives for several organizations and is a skilled project manager. Elise was recently awarded a Sands Fellowship to pursue Ova Woman this summer.

Martin Meyer is a designer and architect in the Twin Cities. He currently works for MSR Architects. He graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2013 with his master's degree in architecture. Martin is a skilled designer and will bring the Ova Woman displays to life.

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Figure 2. Draft 2-dimensional Ova Woman display



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