



Menstrual Health and Women's Leadership

Flex Co. Global Expansion by Entrepreneur, Lauren Schulte Wang

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This case is intended to be used as the basis of class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a management situation. All of the material in this case study is based on secondary data from published sources. The authors have not interviewed the business leaders in this case.

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Abstract

Flex Co's vision is to "reimagine and deliver life-changing period products everywhere" by "creating body-positive and life-changing experiences through the products that we make and the conversations we spark" (Wang, 2017). This case examines period poverty and social stigma as issues women and girls face during their menstrual cycle and how insufficient infrastructure impacts women's menstrual health and hygiene. It also analyzes how Flex Co., the U.S.'s #1 sustainable period brand, can expand its success into the Global Market. It also considers the effectiveness of its marketing strategy in the U.S. market and considerations to adapt or adjust the strategy when marketing to other cultures.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this case study, the students should be able to:

- Understand how culture shapes the perception of women and girls on their menstrual period, especially in developing countries.
- Identify the challenges women and girls face in maintaining healthy menstrual hygiene.
- Reflect on how the company leaders can turn their pain points into a global solution that many can access, just as Lauren Schulte Wang did.
- Explore the growth opportunities for global expansion available to Flex Co.

Leadership Challenge¹

Lauren Schulte Wang stepped through the front door of her Los Angeles home and kicked off her high-heeled shoes. She had just returned home from The Red Dot Awards ceremony, where her company, The Flex Co., won two major awards in innovation for their new menstrual disc products. Lauren was incredibly proud of her team's accomplishments and reflected on the endless hours spent in R&D labs perfecting the design. From the beginning, Lauren founded Flex on the idea that women should not have to settle for the same old menstrual products. "This is proof that the world agrees," she thought.

Over the last few years, the team at The Flex Co. has worked to end the stigma around menstrual products, education, and marketing. Their growth in the U.S. market had been incredible – but Lauren worried it was not enough. "There are women all over the world who menstruate each month. Do they have access to comfortable, safe, and effective products?" she pondered. The thought continued, "Are they even aware of all the existing products?". Lauren was not naive. She understood that "the right product" varied not only from culture to culture but from person to person. She also knew that her experience as an American student, professional, and now CEO

¹The authors have not interviewed the business leaders in this case. The authors used creative license to write a protagonist story to help the reader imagine leader thought processes and feelings.



was very different from that of most women across the globe. Flex's products were sustainable but not cheap, and the reusable products needed to be kept clean.

On top of that, she wondered if other regions were open to Flex's liberal, "no blue dye" approach to product marketing. As Lauren changed from her awards-ready outfit into her pajamas, she asked herself, "If Flex is going to grow globally, how will we have to adjust our approach to connect with *all* women?" Tonight was a night for celebration, but tomorrow, the next phase of work will begin!

Lauren Schulte Wang and the Birth of Flex Co.

Lauren Schulte Wang is not your typical multi-million-dollar, revenue-generating CEO. She did not attend any Ivy League or a private university with one of the top-ranked Business Programs. She did not come from a family with a ton of money to help her get on her feet and start her company. Furthermore, she certainly did not intend to start a medical device company after almost a decade into her successful marketing career. Instead, Wang began by attending "night school at a state university while working a full-time job" (Wang, 2017). Her hard work and superb dedication to her studies at Georgia State University landed her various Marketing positions from start-ups to well-known companies like IBM and Coca-Cola (Schulte, 2022).

However, while growing her successful marketing career through Corporate America, she struggled with chronic yeast infections and finding the correct menstrual products that fit her needs. While sitting in her tiny apartment, hearing friends constantly complain about the same issues, Wang felt cheated. Specifically, by society and how they "cheated and lied by this massive multibillion-dollar industry that kind of makes us go and buy these products every single month that nobody seems to love, and nobody seems to hate either" (Nouri, 2022). That was when she decided to act in the Summer of 2014.

Wang would go to the store, buy every menstrual product, test them in her bathroom, and then contact the manufacturers and designers for more information. Specifically, "how the product category worked, what was happening in the markets both in the U.S. and globally, and why the major tampon manufacturers were not investing in innovation" (O'Connor, 2016). A year later, in 2015, Lauren Schulte Wang founded Flex Co with Erika Jensen, whose specialty was in the e-commerce industry. Together, they united on a mission to bring their startup product, a menstrual disc, to the availability of women (O'Connor, 2016).

The Flex Co Company Timeline

The idea of Flex Co and the menstrual disc was generated in 2014 when Lauren Schulte Wang committed to finding a better period product alternative for women besides tampons. After the company was founded in 2015, they joined the Y Combinator, a "prestigious start-up accelerator for the most promising new companies." With the start-up accelerator's help, Flex Co established its brand and acquired its first company, SoftCup (Flex Co. (n.d.c).



Immediately, Flex Co continued to grow and attract consumers across the United States and Canada. Within a year of starting to ship their products to customers, Amazon US and Canada began to sell their menstrual disc products. This was just the beginning, as Flex Co grossed 4 million dollars of revenue within its first year. Furthermore, 86% of their growth within the first year was attributed to organic means by building email lists of over 200,000 potential customers (Wang, 2017).

Flex Co then acquired Keela in 2018, who helped them launch the Flex Cup, a menstrual cup and yet another alternative to tampons. Their product line continued to grow with the Flex Disc™, Flex Cup™, Softdisc®, and Softcup® being patented in the U.S. and abroad. By 2019, other major stores in the US, including CVS and Target, became national retailers of the Flex Cup and Flex Disc. Flex Co began to reach many admirable milestones, as it “surpasses 20-yr industry leader DivaCup as the #1 sustainable period care brand.” In 2021, Walmart awarded them full supply-chain distribution, which allowed Flex Co to become available to “over 95% of the U.S. population that has access to a Flex product within five miles of their home” (Flex Co. (n.d.c)).

The Flex Company Product Lines and Patents

The Flex Company offers a range of period products, including menstrual cups, discs, and cleansing agents. All of Flex’s products are hypoallergenic, made from medical-grade materials, and contain no BPA, phthalates, or rubber latex. PR Newswire states, “The Flex Co. is the only company in the world to make both disposable and reusable menstrual discs, in addition to menstrual cups, all of which meet FDA standards” (Flex Co., 2021). The unique features of Flex products are covered under various U.S. and international patents, detailed in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Flex Retail Product Patents (Flex Co. (n.d.a))

Patents

Retail Product	Patents
Softdisc®, (Softcup®, in Canada)	US6,796,973, US6,241,846, Australia 732781, Canada 2,259,506, Japan 4303788, Mexico 212917
Flex Disc™	US6,796,973, US6,241,846, Australia 732781, Canada 2,259,506, Japan 4303788, Mexico 212917
Flex Reusable Disc™	US11,234,857
Flex Cup™	US10,357,395
Discovery Kit	US6,796,973, US10,357,395, US6,241,846, Australia 732781, Canada 2,259,506, Japan 4303788, Mexico 212917

Flex Cup™ is a reusable, zero-waste menstrual cup. It is worn in the vaginal canal and features a patented pull tab that allows the cup to be removed like a tampon (see Figure 2a). The Flex Cup™ can be worn for up to 12 hours and is meant to be washed between uses. With proper care, the cup can last 2-3 years. Flex Cup™ is offered in two sizes, both of which are priced at \$34.99. The Flex Cup™ has a 4.7/5-star rating based on 441 total reviews, and 94% of reviewers responded that they would recommend the product to a friend.

Menstrual disc is a term coined by Lauren Schulte Wang in 2016. Discs sit in the vaginal fornix just below the cervix (see Figure 2b). Unlike menstrual cups, which rely on suction to remain in place, menstrual discs are held in place by the pubic bone. The Flex line of menstrual discs includes the Flex Disc™, Plant+ Disc™, and the Flex Reusable Disc™. Flex Disc™ and Plant + Disc™ are single-use products that produce 60% and 71% less waste than traditional period products. The Flex Reusable Disc™, launched in November 2021, is a zero-waste product, and the design includes a patented notch for easy insertion and placement. The single-use products are offered at a monthly subscription, ranging from \$11.99 to \$14.99 per month. The reusable disc is priced at \$34.99 and lasts up to 2 years. Like the menstrual cup, the reusable disc is designed to be washed after use. Flex discs have earned a 4.5/5-star rating from over 1900 customer reviews. The reusable disc has earned a 4.7/5-star rating from over 300 customer reviews.

The Flex Company’s other products include biodegradable wipes, foaming cup wash, and eco disposal pouches. Aligning with Flex’s core values, these products are eco-friendly, body-safe, and recommended by OB/GYNs. The cleansing products are formulated to be gentle on silicon.

The Flex Company website notes that regular soaps may damage the reusable products and shorten their lifespan. Each of the additional products is priced below the \$10 price point per package.

Figure 2a. Flex Cup Details (Flex Co., 2022)

Meet Flex Cup

It's the menstrual cup you know and love, but with one major upgrade: Flex Cup changes the period cup game with its patented pull-tab that makes removal easier than ever (and 100% suction-free).

Made with medical-grade silicone and without BPAs, phthalates, or natural rubber latex, Flex Cup is the easy and sustainable tampon alternative you've been searching for. It's reusable, stain-proof, and doesn't absorb odor—plus, it's engineered with just enough rigidity to make insertion a breeze.

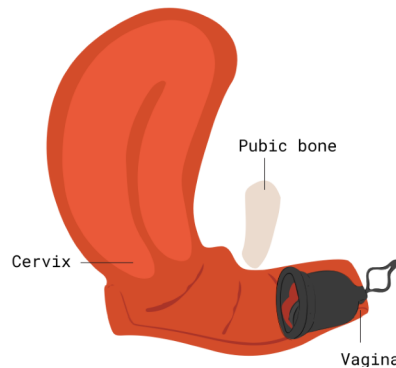


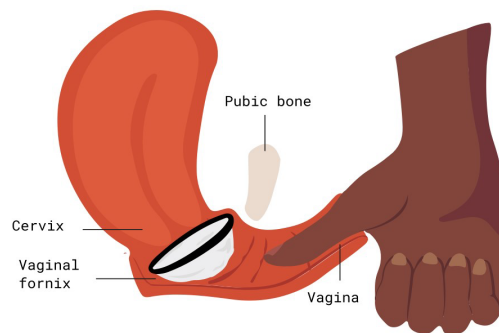
Figure 2b. Flex Disc Details (Flex Co., 2022)

Meet our discs

A menstrual disc is a comfortable, sustainable alternative to tampons and pads that sits in a different part of the vagina: the vaginal fornix. It's the widest part of the vaginal canal, all the way at the back and just beneath the cervix.

Flex Disc, Flex Reusable Disc, and Flex Plant+ Disc all work the same way: They're held in place by your pubic bone, leaving your vaginal canal totally unobstructed. This means you can enjoy all the [period sex](#)—without stained sheets—your heart desires. 😊

The main difference? [Flex Reusable Disc](#) is made with 100% reusable medical-grade silicone, whereas [Flex Disc](#) and [Flex Plant+ Disc](#) are made with medical-grade polymers and are single-use only.



The Flex Co Sustainability Practices

Flex Co emphasizes sustainability from their products to how they go about their business. To practice sustainability, Flex Co ensures that their production facilities are close to their warehouses to reduce the emissions and energy usage incurred during transportation. Furthermore, the materials used to produce Flex Co products are ethically sourced and repurposed when possible. As Flex Co touts, “Our factory partners are at the core of our business, and we ensure they are treated with care and respect.” Their Flex Cup is also a “zero-waste product,” and their Flex Disc has been shown to reduce waste by 60% compared to other popular period products like tampons and pads (Flex Co. (n.d.b)).



Mainstream tampons and pads are often made up of as much as 90% plastic, in addition to synthetic materials (e.g., rayon), toxic chemicals (e.g., phthalates and petrochemicals), and artificial fragrances. These disposable period products can then take over 500 years to break down and have been blamed as being the fifth-most common item found polluting beaches—even more so than straws and plastic bags—when flushing down the toilet and not captured properly by municipal sewer systems (Daish, 2020). A pack of pads can contain the same amount of plastic as five plastic shopping bags (Barth, 2021). Setting an example, in July 2021, the European Union banned single-use plastic cutlery, straws, plates, and stirrers. It did not ban the use of plastics in tampons, pads, and applicators. However, companies are required to indicate on the packaging that these products contain plastic and provide information about proper disposal (Rankin, 2021). Menstrual cups are made of medical-grade silicone, latex, or thermoplastic isomer, are the most environmentally friendly and cost-effective plastic-free option and save 2,400 pads or tampons in a woman's lifetime (Gordon, 2021).

The Flex Co-Marketing Strategy

Flex's marketing strategy is education forward. Flex Co. commits to expert education, stating, "Transparency is at the core of who we are. When we discover something that might benefit you, we share it" (Flex Co. (n.d.b)). The company website includes detailed product information, usage instructions and videos, and realistic imagery. Additionally, The Flex Co. publishes The Fornix Blog, a compilation of articles on menstrual health, intimacy, and insight from Flex product users (Flex Co., 2022).

In 2019, Lauren Schulte Wang wrote that Flex's mission includes "sparking conversations" and working "hand-in-hand with our customers to understand what they do not like about their periods" (Wang, 2017). The Flex Co. is actively involved in social media and provides product and educational content through platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. The Flex Co. products are available at retail locations such as CVS, Target, and Walmart but are also available for online purchase directly through Flex's website or Amazon.

Period Poverty

According to the Kulczyk Foundation, 1.9 billion women and girls currently menstruate, with around 500 million lacking complete menstrual health and hygiene (A Bloody Problem, 2020). The biggest problem facing women today is the lack of access to hygiene tools and education about menstruation. The problem of menstrual poverty is not limited to developing countries and can be found almost everywhere, even in developed countries. In the United States of America, 10% of the female college students surveyed had experienced continuous period poverty, and 14% had experienced period poverty at some point in that past year" (McLoughlin, 2021). For minority groups, these numbers are even higher. The United Kingdom has become the focus of some media attention for the growing issue of period poverty. One-third of girls aged 14-21 struggled during the pandemic with affording hygiene products (McLoughlin, 2021). While menstrual poverty was already an issue worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the issue to worsened levels.



In addition to COVID-19's impact on the availability of products, supply chain issues have also worsened the problem.

The main driving force behind the menstrual poverty crisis is economic problems. A 2017 World Bank report indicated the poverty lines below, with the international poverty line of \$1.90 a day as the universal standard for measuring global poverty (World Vision, 2021, See Figure 3). In many countries, most of the used sanitary products are imported rather than produced domestically. Women typically use over 9,000 menstrual products throughout their lifetime (Rodriguez, 2021). As prices for sanitary products rise, the problem with affordability also increases. Countries that do not produce such products domestically are subject to fluctuations in currency exchange rates and import and export taxes, which impact the prices of these menstrual products. In Lebanon, this problem is experienced firsthand. Since products are largely imported, Lebanese women are forced to pay prices that are largely dependent on currency exchange rates. With this, poverty has risen, especially menstrual poverty. Unfortunately, the government did not help by leaving sanitary products off the essential import list. This underscores the awareness of menstrual poverty that women are facing.

Figure 3: Poverty Line

Is the poverty line the same in every country?

Poverty lines aren't the same in all countries. In higher-income countries, the cost of living is higher and so the poverty line is higher, too. In 2017, [the World Bank announced](#) new median poverty lines, grouping countries into low-income, middle-income, and high-income countries:

- \$1.90 per person per day – in 33 low-income countries
- \$3.20 per person per day – in 32 lower-middle-income countries, such as India and the Philippines
- \$5.50 per person per day – in 32 upper-middle-income countries, such as Brazil and South Africa
- \$21.70 per person per day – in 29 high-income countries

In developing countries like Kenya and Uganda, women often resort to different methods. These methods are typically very unsafe as products are being reused when they should not, or they are using other means that are not intended for this use. Rags are one option many turn to as they believe they can wash and reuse. Unfortunately, this thinking often leads to unsanitary practices and the belief that period products are unnecessary when they cannot be afforded. These unsafe methods lead to an increase in health problems and infections.

A study by UNICEF on menstrual health practices of secondary (high) schoolgirls in Nigeria found that they “used cloths like napkins, pieces of materials, towels, tissue paper or other menstrual material apart from sanitary pads [and] expressed fear of the menstrual material falling



out of their underpants during active play. They also expressed fears that tissue or cloths might shift as they do not have adhesives, causing the girl to become stained. Tissues could soak quickly to cause stains if the girl was not vigilant (UNICEF, 2015).” In some cases, the girls believed that using clothes for menstruation could cause them to contract diseases. The perception of these schoolgirls is that menstruation is a secret and an unclean experience. They also “expressed special fear that used menstrual hygiene materials could be taken for rituals that could cause harm to menstruating girls” (UNICEF, 2015).

Social Stigma

Another aspect impacting period poverty is the social stigma attached to it. In many countries, especially India, social stigma plays a large role in how periods are treated and thought about. “For example, in India, it is common for women to be considered “impure” and “unclean” during menstruation” (McLoughlin, 2021). Religion in these areas increases the social stigma of being “impure” and prevents women from being able to participate in religious ceremonies, touching holy objects, and even participating in prayer (McLoughlin, 2021). As a result of this stigma, women are forced to avoid buying period products because of the attention it brings. Because of the lack of period products, many girls in school are forced to stay home during menses or drop out of school altogether. Missing time from school each month can add up over the entire year, especially for areas where attendance is tracked, such as the United States.

In Nigeria, “especially among schoolgirls and women, there is a ‘culture of silence’ and shame regarding issues of sexuality and menstruation that are attributed to cultural restrictions (UNICEF, 2015).” This culture of silence surrounding menstruation is why mothers do not educate their daughters about the onset of menstruation, its duration, or healthy practices. Girls often seek information from their peers, friends, or siblings who relay superstitions and incorrect information, which leads to fear and anxiety (UNICEF, 2015). There is also the belief that menstruation is an unclean and secret issue that should not be discussed. In some communities/areas, menstruating women are not allowed to cook for their husbands, especially those who are traditionalists. They are prohibited from collecting water from public ponds, especially traditional sources. They are also prohibited from performing certain religious rites (UNICEF, GHARF Report2008).

Insufficient Infrastructure

In many developing countries, the infrastructure is insufficient to treat and safely dispose of period products. Waste management infrastructure is lacking at work, school, and even at home, and many countries do not have adequate plumbing systems, causing sewer blockage risks if flushing down the toilet.

In the Middle East, women have only recently been entering the workplace more because of social and cultural changes. Facilities and buildings never were outfitted with disposal means for period products, but with the increase of women working, changes to the workplace are beginning (Wonnacott, P, n.d.). While there is still a long way to go, including allowing more women to



enter the workplace, improvements have begun to attempt to correct some of the existing infrastructure problems (UNICEF, 2015). Lack of appropriate facilities—gender-segregated improved toilets, safe water supply for washing hands and soiled clothes, means for drying clothes—and absence of sanitary menstrual materials can prevent girls from safe, hygienic management of their menstruation. These may result in absenteeism, reduced levels of concentration in class, and low participation in outside school activities like sports and school clean-up (UNICEF, 2015).

Menstrual Health Education

Other than economic reasons, period education is another big driver of period poverty. The lack of knowledge, awareness, openness, and understanding around it harms women globally. As mentioned previously, the lack of education available globally, especially in emerging markets, makes girls miss school every month during their menstrual period. It is also why women engage in unsafe actions to manage their periods when they do not have access to the necessary products. These discussions and awareness-building around periods are often still considered taboo for cultural or religious reasons. The stigma remains because of the lack of education everywhere and in school.

“A survey in Bangladesh found that only 6 percent of schools provide education on health and hygiene, and only 36 percent of girls had prior knowledge about menstruation before their first period (World Bank 2017c)” (World Bank Group 2022). UNICEF’s study of secondary schools in Nigeria also found that teachers, especially those in co-educational schools, were uncomfortable teaching menstruation and menstrual hygiene.

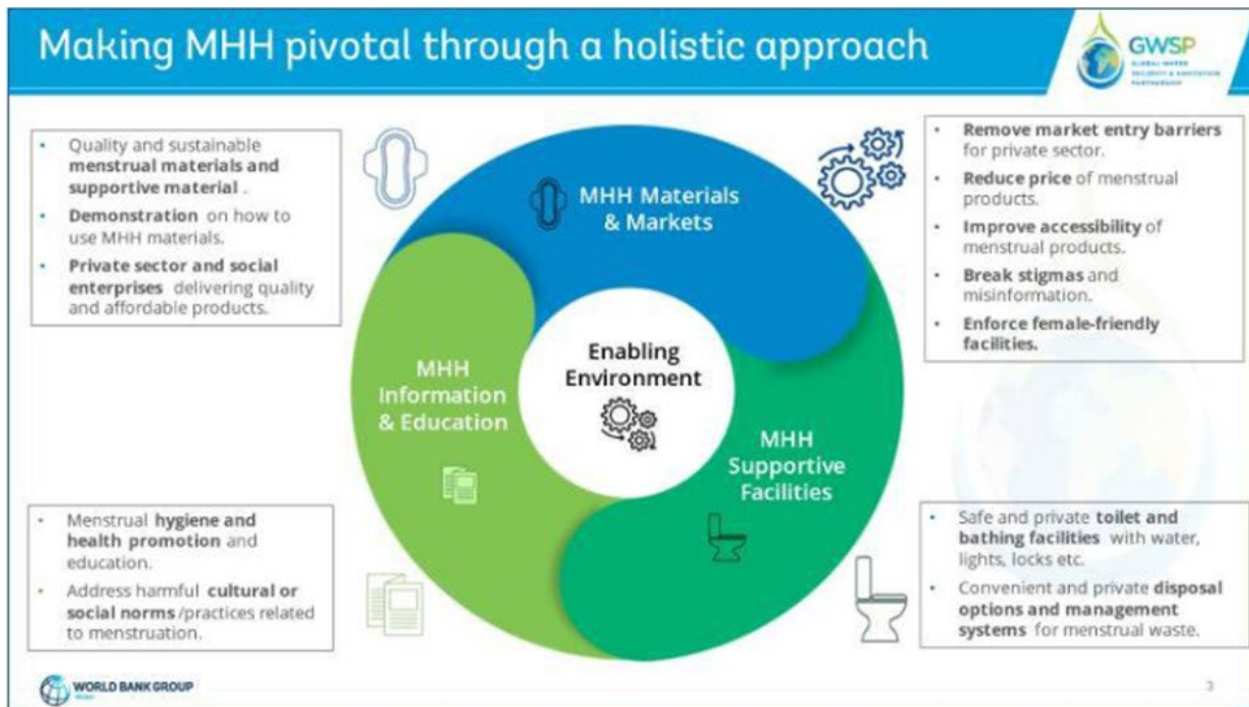
It may be harder to quickly change the economic, social, or cultural opinions on period poverty. However, education around period poverty is a primary avenue for making a difference and is currently being taken by many global organizations. Organizations like the World Bank are trying to combat the educational gap around period poverty. “Twenty-five percent of World Bank education projects had components that addressed menstrual hygiene management, provision of sanitary and hygienic toilets, or separate toilets for girls and boys in their schools” (Khan, 2022). These efforts focus on countries greatly impacted by period poverty, such as Haiti, Uganda, Sri Lanka, and Togo. These educational programs and campaigns help reduce negative connotations with periods to break the stigma and are crucial to help provide safeguards for women’s rights. These rights include women’s dignity, privacy, bodily integrity, and self-efficacy. Gender discrimination around period poverty should be focused on in countries and areas where it occurs.

Even in developed countries, such as the United States, period poverty often exists because of a lack of knowledge or awareness. The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) in the United States has an active program through its primary healthcare network. CHOP actively screens all youth in their primary care facilities for period poverty. “For youth who screen positive, we created a handout with resources for free or low-cost menstrual products in Philadelphia, and we hope to expand screening efforts into the CHOP Primary Care Network” (Period Poverty). Providing the needed support and knowledge is crucial, and such programs should be expanded

nationally. Developing nations do not have the funding within their healthcare networks to have these programs, but organizations that provide outreach can hopefully fill that gap.

The one clear thing about the global crisis is that education and knowledge alone are insufficient. Providing the knowledge, but additionally, the infrastructure and period products are needed together to tackle the problem. The diagram in Figure 4 shows the three-pronged approach to effectively addressing the issue of period poverty:

Figure 4. Approach to Addressing Period Poverty (World Bank Group 2022)



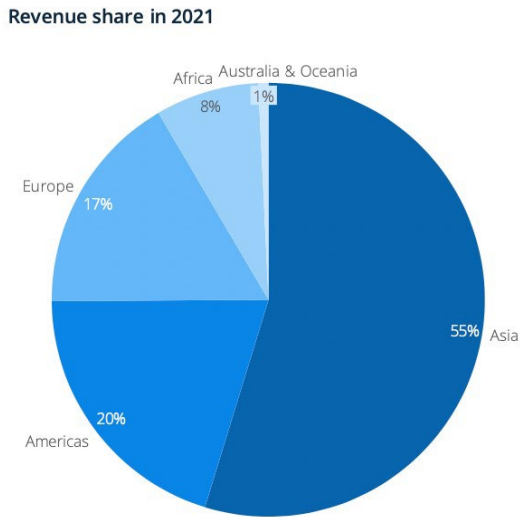
An example of the needed efforts being combined to provide an effective approach can be found in Ghana. “A sanitary pad intervention in Ghana found that after six months of free sanitary pad provision and puberty education programming, girls missed significantly less school” (World Bank Group, 2012). Although a brief initiative, the early returns on the effectiveness had a positive impact.

Global Market Analysis: Feminine Hygiene

Feminine Hygiene is a subset of the overall Tissue & Hygiene Paper market. Feminine hygiene products—sanitary pads, tampons, menstrual cups, and menstrual discs—comprised 15% of the total Tissue and Hygiene Paper market in 2021, and sales for feminine hygiene products totaled \$42.4 billion. This market is growing, and is expected to continue at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.5% from 2021 to 2026.

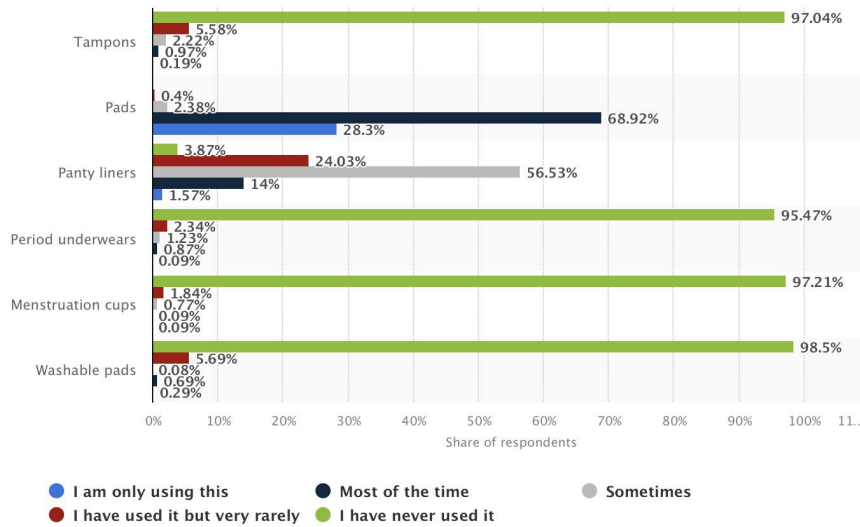
Asia comprised 55% of the revenue share in 2021, followed by the Americas and Europe at 20% and 17%, respectively (see Figure 5). China and India were the leaders in Asia, with a \$15.5 billion combined revenue. The United States led the Americas with a revenue of \$4.2 billion. Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy had a combined revenue of \$2.6 billion (Statista, 2022).

Figure 5. 2021 Feminine Hygiene Revenue Share by Region (Statista, 2022)



Asia-Pacific is noted as the fastest-growing region for feminine hygiene product demand (Statista, 2022). Sanitary pads dominate the region’s sales. A 2020 survey of Chinese women indicates that roughly 97% of respondents use sanitary pads for most/all, their menstrual cycles (Zhang, 2021, see Figure 6). In 2016, only 12% of Indian women purchased commercial menstrual products, and 99% of these sales were for disposable sanitary pads (Kishor and Gupta). The most popular sanitary pad brand in China is Sofy™, owned by the Japanese company Unicharm (Zhang, 2021). In contrast, the Indian sanitary pad market is led by American companies Procter & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, and Kimberly-Clarke (Kishor & Gupta, n.d.). The lack of adoption of insertable products, such as tampons, cups, and discs, in both China and India is attributed to a lack of sex education and a level of “taboo” around menstruation (Kishor, et.al., n.d.a).

Figure 6. Popular period products among female respondents in China in 2020, by type (Zhang, 2021)

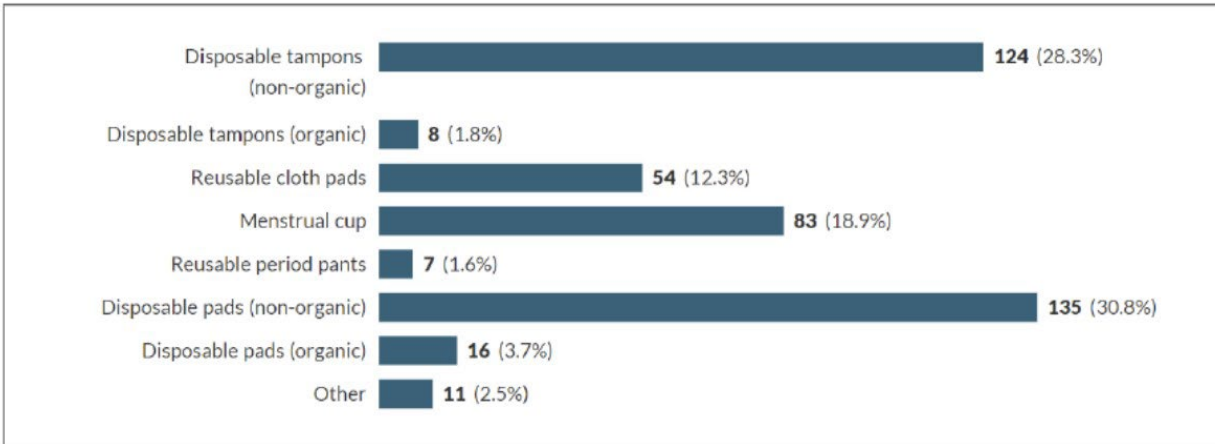


Consumers in the United States use a broader range of menstrual products. Sanitary pads are still the leader, accounting for roughly 50% of the total revenue of United States feminine hygiene product sales in 2018. Tampons followed more closely, accounting for 30% of total revenue. Menstrual cups and discs were included in the “other” category, which accounted for 10% of total revenue (Statista, 2020). Procter & Gamble (P&G) was the clear market leader in the U.S. P&G’s Tampax Pearl™ was the leading tampon brand in 2018, earning more than twice the total sales as the second-place brand. P&G’s Always™ was the top sanitary pad brand in the U.S., earning almost three times the total sales compared to its closest competitor (Statista, 2020). Although the U.S. menstrual cup market is smaller, reports cite Diva Cup, Fleurcup, and Blossom Cup as key players (Future Business Insights, 2022). Analysts expect the menstrual cup market to grow through 2026. Companies are using educational and de-stigmatizing marketing strategies to gain market share.

In the European market, pad and tampon usage is more comparable. A study conducted in Great Britain around the public awareness of the environmental impact of menstrual products found that an even percentage of survey respondents commonly used tampons and sanitary pads (30% for each). The survey results also showed that 19% of respondents mostly used menstrual cups. Finally, when only considering the subset of respondents classified as “highly aware” of environmental impacts, the percentage of people who commonly used menstrual cups rose to 30% (Peberdy et al., 2017, see Figure 7). A survey conducted in Germany in 2018 found that roughly 55% of respondents identified tampons as important during their menstrual cycle, compared to 40% and 33% for panty liners and sanitary pads, respectively (Koptyug, 2020).

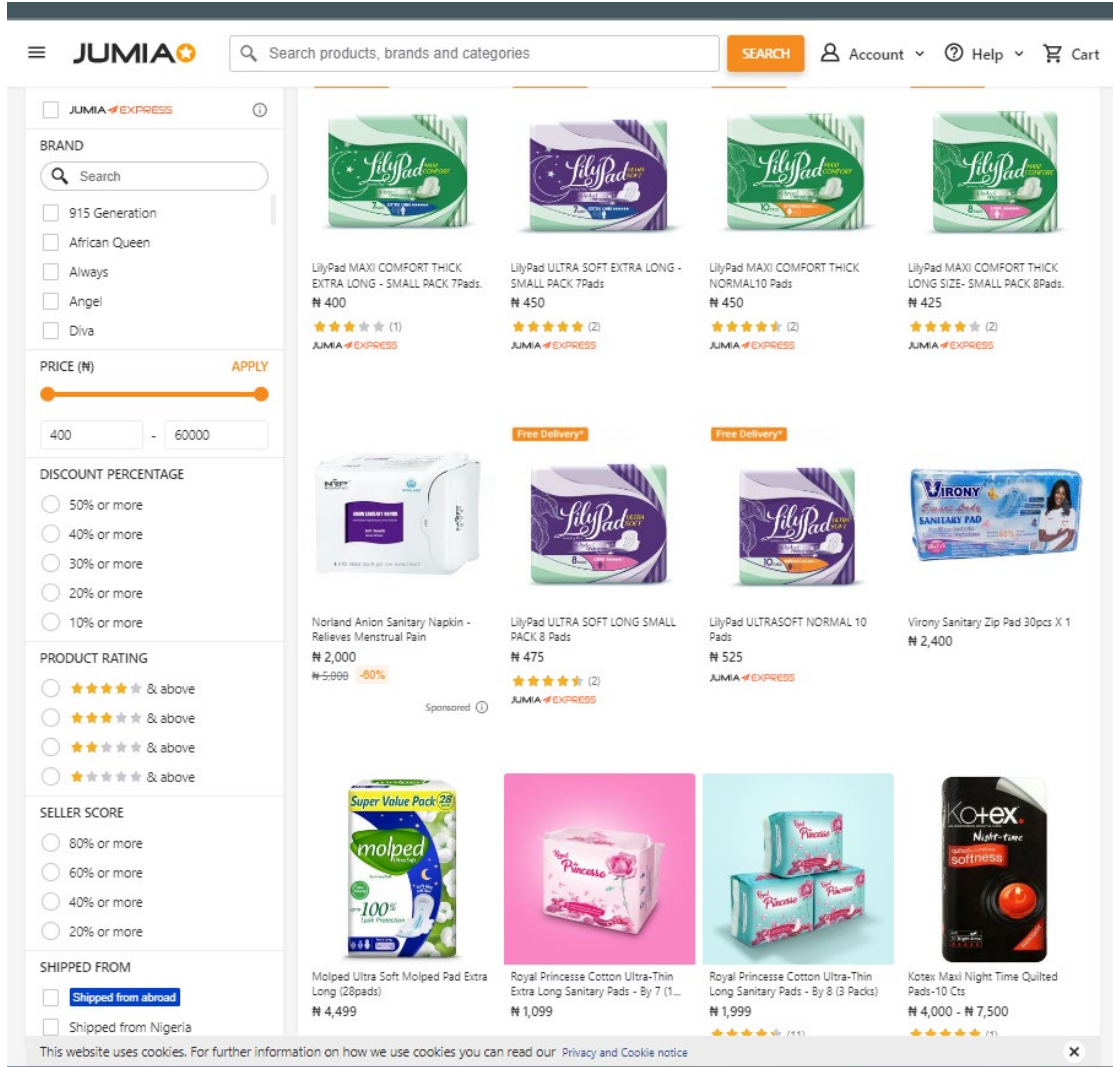
Figure 7. Most used menstrual products of U.K. survey respondents (Peberdy et al., 2017)

Which menstrual product(s) do you most commonly use?



SpacerPAD is a new and seemingly revolutionary prototype developed at the Swedish School of Textiles and the University of Borås. It is a sanitary pad made from new, quick-drying, recyclable, and reusable materials for women in developing countries (Medical Xpress, 2017). SpacerPAD, although yet to hit the market, prides itself on its sustainability measure. This is a challenge for Flex Co. to continue innovating. The graphics in Figures 8 and 9 are taken from Jumia, one of Nigeria’s top online retail stores. When converted to US dollars, most sanitary pads on display below cost about \$1-\$3. If Flex Co would break into the African market and other developing countries, it would need to design products within this price range.

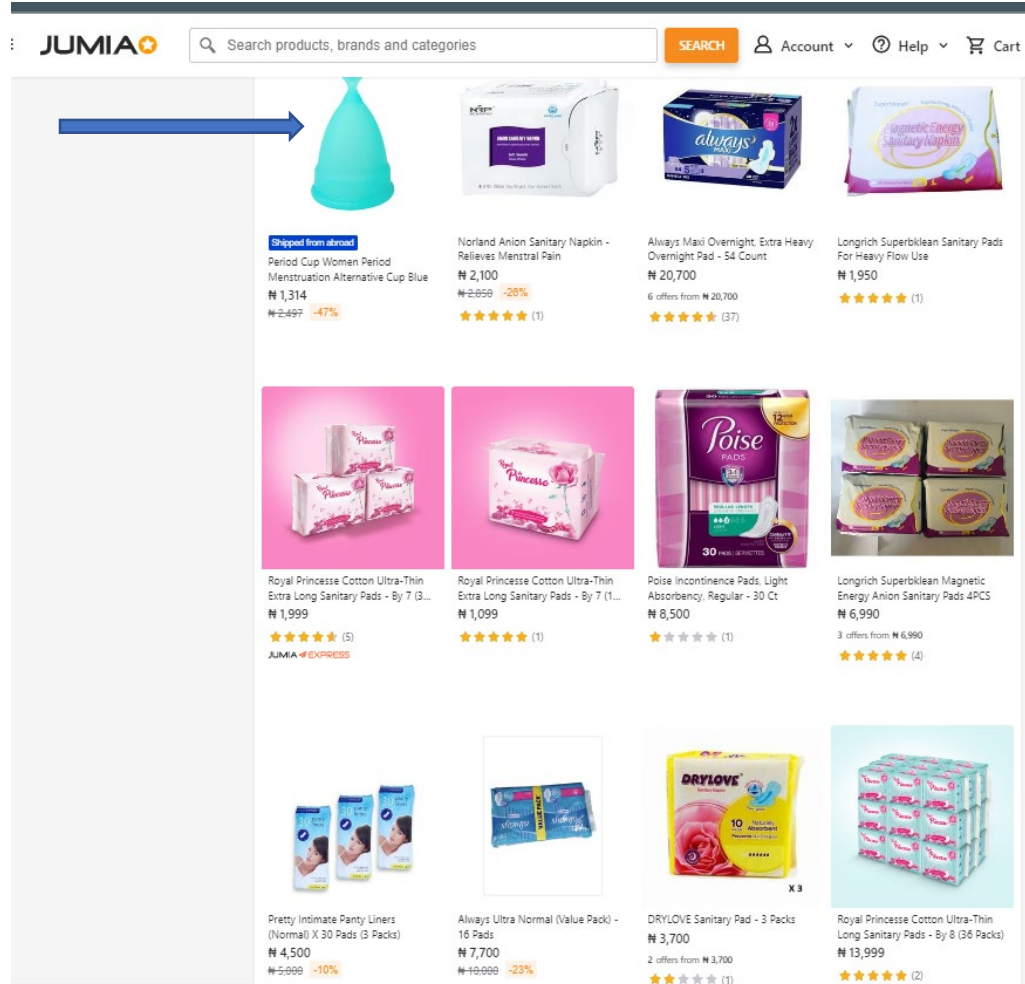
Figure 8: Snapshot of Some Sanitary Pads Used in Nigeria as Seen on Jumia.com.ng



The snapshot of other sanitary products used in Nigeria below shows a period cup (Figure 9). Although not locally produced, it costs #1,314, which is about \$3. This suggests that a Flex Co product market exists in Nigeria and other developing countries. Flex Co could adopt the 4 Ps marketing mix: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. Flex Co. would need to design and develop products that innovatively reflect the solution to the customers' needs. The product would be at a competitive price that is accessible to customers at their various locations (place) while leveraging promotional strategies to achieve Flex Co's marketing objectives (Harvey, 2018).



Figure 9: Snapshot of Some Sanitary Pads Used in Nigeria as Seen on Jumia.com.ng



Lauren Schulte Wang's Global Next Steps

As a business leader with social and environmental missions, Lauren Schulte Wang has limitless options for growing her company, helping millions of women and girls, and significantly reducing waste from disposable period products. Her challenge is where to start, how to bring down her manufacturing costs and price point for developing country markets, and how to market her products in culturally sensitive ways.



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