

**DCA**



# **Beauty comes in small packages:** The redesign of the Scented Oil Warmer for Air Wick

**DBA**

**Design Effectiveness Awards 2018**

Project Title

**Air Wick Scented Oil Warmer**

Category

**HOUSEHOLD GOODS & HOME CONSTRUCTION**

Client Company

**RB**

Design Consultancy

**DCA**

Submission Date

**June 2017**

**FOR PUBLICATION**



# Executive Summary

As plug-in airfreshners are intended to perform the everyday task of masking odours or creating a mood, they are typically hidden away and rarely evaluated for their design merit. However, we believe that this small under appreciated everyday object deserves no less design consideration.

Electric devices that warm and disperse a refillable liquid fragrance oil into the air have been on the market for over 20 years. Devices typically retail at \$1.30 with refills costing around \$3.50. Despite this mature and cost sensitive market, Air Wick has been able to introduce an innovative device that offers real consumer benefits with an improved gross margin.

The aim of this device and refill redesign was to drive segment penetration with non or lapsed consumers, in addition to reinforcing Air Wick brand loyalty amongst their core target consumer. The outcome was intended to address two key purchasing barriers:

- 1. Better fragrance control for small and larger rooms.**
- 2. Improved aesthetic appeal to better fit with home decor.**

The New Scented Oil Warmer from Air Wick now gives up to 5x intensity control to suit a wide range of rooms and has been widely praised for its visual design through direct consumer feedback and several industry design awards.

Despite a dip in the category as a whole, the sales for this device have bucked the trend and are continuing to rise since launch. Cost of goods have been reduced by 12% and changes to the technical design have seen a 25% improvement in energy efficiency meaning a reduction in running costs for the consumer.

## There are 4 measures we have used as evidence for the success of the device design:

- 1. Innovation in a stagnant market**
- 2. Wide recognition of good design**
- 3. Improved user interaction**
- 4. Reduced Cost of Goods**

293 words





# Project Overview

## Market overview

The aircare market can be divided into: candles, aerosols/sprays, slow-release (solid, gel, liquid, reed diffusers), battery-operated devices and plug-in liquid electricals. Globally it is a \$4 billion market.

Liquid electrical diffusers are sold in all global regions with the refills being available in a range of fragrances. They are predominantly sold through traditional retail such as supermarkets where the shelves are crowded with competitor brands carrying a similar number of fragrance refills. Recent years have seen private label offerings threatening the share of the key players in the category.

At the start of the project, the liquid electrical segment had been declining at -3.4% value driven by continuing exit of current users and less non-users buying into the segment.



## Business objectives

To drive segment penetration and Air Wick brand loyalty in the liquid electricals segment via best-in-class innovation by improving fragrance experience through better intensity control.

Offer a superior design that illustrates the improvements in adjustability and is visually appealing to consumers on a global level.

Improve the GM or at least meet a parity cost target with the device it is replacing.

The Air Wick logo is displayed in a stylized, green, serif font. The word "AIR" is positioned above "WICK". A small orange circle is placed above the letter "I" in "AIR". The logo is set against a circular background that transitions from a bright yellow-green at the top to a darker green at the bottom.

## Design objectives

1. Design a new global plug-in device to replace the existing base devices
2. Redesign the refill, dialing-up fine fragrance cues (needs to be backward compatible with previous devices)
3. Make fragrance adjuster integral part of overall design language to truly communicate superior fragrance experience.
4. Introduce home décor cues that consider global tastes.
5. Leverage the brand language developed across the Air Wick product portfolio.

## Target Audience

The core target Air Wick consumers are women aged 25-55. Consumers can be split into light/medium users, who prefer a low fragrance intensity, and heavy/super heavy users preferring stronger fragrance intensity. For her, air care is not just about removing odours but an essential part in making her house feel like a home.

She is highly engaged with the category and uses multiple products to fragrance and vitalize her home.

The USA is the biggest consumer of this category and is the launch market for this new design. Although most design validation research was conducted in this region, global consumer tastes identified in similar historical projects have provided insights from other regions.

## Consumer Insight

Research shows that over-powering fragrance experience together with refill longevity and refill value for money are key reasons for lapsing / barriers to trial among new users.

Consumers have a perception that the devices are costly to run due to the fact that they are on all the time, consuming both electricity and fragrance. Many devices offer a level of adjustability but are difficult to see and use as most are plugged in at floor level. When they are placed out of sight, users are often not aware that they have run out.

Although these devices tend to be placed out of sight, consumers still want them to look attractive and like them to blend into their home. Current devices have a functional look making consumers want to hide them away.

***The old [Air Wick] is like a public bathroom - very commercial; non/lapsed, 25-35***

***I wouldn't have [the current Air Wick] out; I would have it behind the couch or something.***  
SH/H, 25-35, AW user



Previous Air Wick Device

***The ones that are in the market now have 3 settings, and it doesn't make a difference what setting you put it on.***  
SH/H, 25-35, AW user



Competitor device by Glade

## Technical Challenges

The low retail pricepoint commanded by this category typically mean that the devices are small, utilise low cost materials and simple manufacturing processes. The low cost of goods target was the greatest challenge on the ambition to create a premium looking device.

As the new refill is to be rolled out as a replacement, it is required to be backwards compatible with all previous Air Wick devices currently in use. The new device and refill needed to be able to fit into the same pack footprint of its predecessor in order to avoid changes to the packing line and supermarket relisting fees.

In order to meet a global requirement, the devices need to be adaptable to a wide range of power sockets.

## Materials and Manufacturing Process

The main device housings need to be made from Polypropelene in order to resist any degradation that would occur with prolonged exposure to fragrance oils. Glass was the preferred material for the refill as it continued to reflect the premium qualities of the brand.

The production of around 28 million units a year demand that a simple and partially automated assembly process for the device is employed.

## Regulatory Requirements

Prevent any fingers from touching the heater element. Be tall enough to prevent power sockets above the device from being used. Conform to global electrical device regulations. The device design would need to be validated and CE marked.

## Brand Fit

The new Scented Oil Warmer is the latest addition to the Air Wick product family. This unified range has been developed over the last few years with an aim to encourage brand recognition beyond the supermarket shelf. The distinctive flared top section of the product range is intended to express the benefit of superior fragrance delivery and reflects the brand message of 'Brightening the Air'.

## Budget

Confidential

## Launch date

Q1 2016

807 words



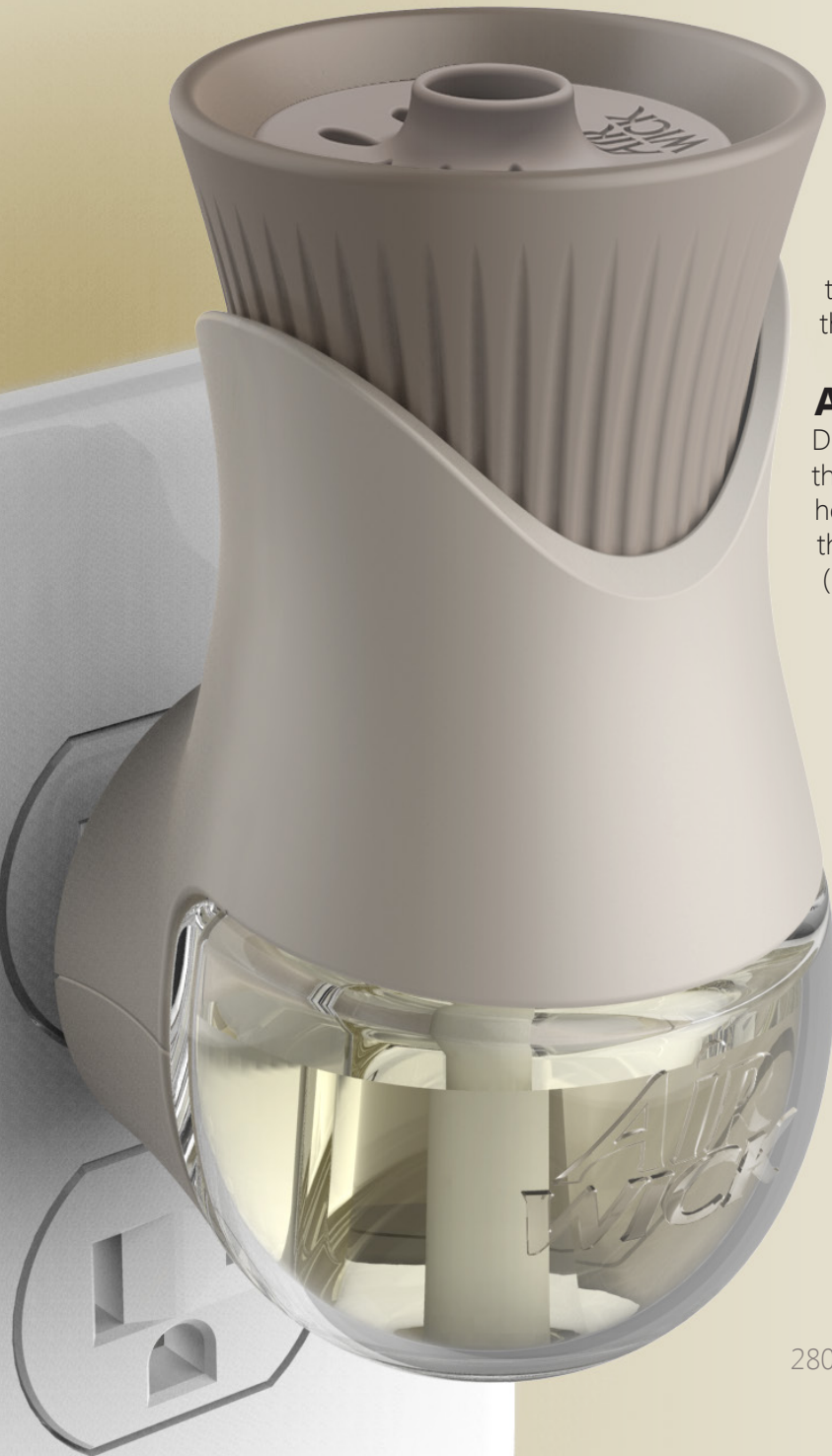


# Design Solution

The new scented oil warmer from Air Wick is designed to fit discreetly into the home. The compact design uses subtle surfacing to visually integrate the glass refill into a familiar vase like form. The shape is an expression of fragrance emanation, a distinctive feature of the Air Wick brand language.

The neutral colours help blend into the home and offer a premium feel that sets it apart from the white devices typical to the category.

The intuitive dial is prominently located to allow the user to easily adjust the fragrance intensity to suit the room size and the setting icons are large enough to be easily read at floor level.



Despite the low pricepoint dictated by this very competitive category, the unique colour, shape and finish convey a premium quality belying its relative low cost.

Qualitative research undertaken by The Big Picture Market Research Limited in February 2014 assessed the solution against the design objectives and reported the following:

## **Aesthetics**

Determining aesthetic improvement is subject to the whims and personal preferences of consumers; however, this concept was considered a 'timeless/classic' that was innovative & different. Modernity is evidenced (rather than faddish).

## **Fit to home Decor**

In addition to capturing a contemporary/classic balance this concept also possesses a strong semiotic alignment with home decor cues.

## **Ergonomics**

This solution successfully delivers on 'ease of control' and 'accessibility' with its intuitive turning mechanism. The 180° rotation is balanced and emphasises the sense of control.

An additional consumer handling study has validated this solution as the best fit for control.

## **Fit to brand**

Very good fit with the current Air Wick brand perceptions – uplifting (through upwards directional feel) & smart (ergonomically).

280 words

# Summary of Results

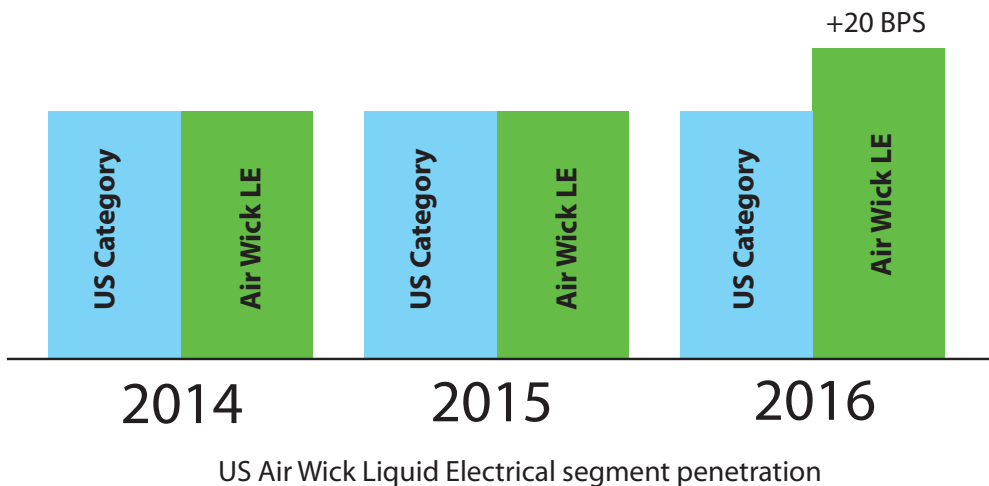
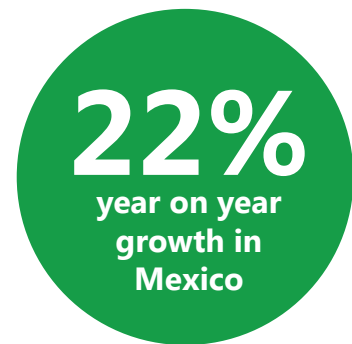
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2. Wide recognition of good design
3. Improved user interaction
4. Reduced Cost of Goods

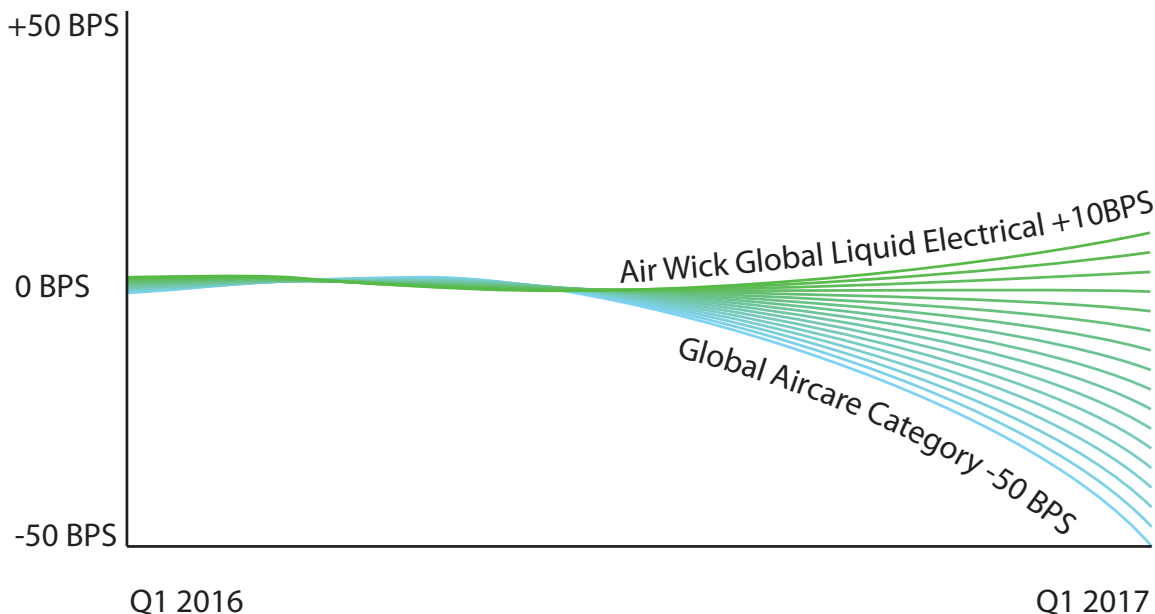


## 1. Innovation in a stagnant market

The global Air-care market has remained largely stagnant for several years. The launch of the Air Wick Scented Oil Warmer has been the only major innovation in the Liquid Electrical (LE) category so it is likely to have been a significant driver in the overall category growth. The lower cost of goods and visual design improvements of this device has contributed to the 22% year on year growth of the Air Wick brand in Mexico.



In terms of sales, there has been a global growth for AW LE of +2.5% in the first 12 months after the launch. LE segment penetration in US remained flat (globally +10 bpts for LE – total air care declined -50 bpts). Air Wick LE penetration in US grew by 20 bpts.



## 2. Wide recognition of good design

In addition to results of the qualitative research where consumers overwhelmingly voted for the new design (compared to 3 new concepts, the previous device and a competitor devices), the new design has been recognised by several prestigious industry awards.

**iF Design Award** - For 60 years, the iF product design award has been a coveted and internationally recognised label for award-winning design and the iF brand has become a symbol for outstanding achievement in design. A total of 4,783 contributions from 53 countries were submitted to the 2015 iF DESIGN AWARD.

**Good Design** - Founded in 1950, the Chicago Athenaeum GOOD DESIGN Awards programme is one of the oldest and most prestigious for design excellence worldwide. For 2015, the Museum received submissions from several thousand of the world's leading manufacturers and industrial and graphic design firms from around the world representing the most important and critical mass of influential corporations worldwide in the design industry from over 47 countries)

**Product of the Year** - This is the world's largest consumer-voted award for product innovation. Established 30 years ago in France and operating in 37 countries with the same purpose: Guide consumers to the best products in their market and reward manufacturers for quality and innovation.

*I think this could fit in my current home or my dream home. It doesn't scream plastic air freshener; it looks upscale.*  
non/lapsed, 36-55, competitor user

*...timeless, in 10 years it will still look modern.*  
SH/H, 25-35, AW user

*I love the design I think it's cute. I love it.*  
non/lapsed, 36-55, competitor user



**DESIGN AWARD 2016**





### 3. Improved user interaction

The device has been developed to create a user experience that is simple and intuitive, requiring minimal instruction. Simply insert the glass refill, plug it in to a power socket and enjoy the fragrance of your choice.

Power sockets are normally hidden in places that are difficult to access so adjusting plug-in air fresheners can be difficult, particularly for the elderly. Air Wick's Scented Oil Warmer can be adjusted to suit any sized room via the easily accessible fragrance intensity dial. The positive tactile increments of the dial provides a good level of user feedback that helps reinforce the level of control and premium quality of the device. The simple display can also be clearly read even when located near floor level without the need to stoop.

It is considered that a more engaging design encourages regular user interaction resulting in a consumer benefit of lower fragrance consumption. More engagement with the device is also likely to promote brand recall upon repeat purchase of the refill at the crowded supermarket shelf.

***I don't have to  
bend down and  
look closely***  
*SH/H, 25-35, AW user*

***The control  
doesn't stick out;  
it's part of the  
design, which is  
pretty cool.***  
*non/lapsed, 25-35, AW user*

***Lacks the  
'fiddly-ness' of  
the current dial***  
*non/lapsed, 36-55,  
competitor user*



### 3. Reduced Cost of Goods

The target in the brief was to meet parity on cost of goods with the predecessor device. This was a difficult challenge as its predecessor had gone through several rounds of refinement over many years of manufacturing. This challenge was made even more difficult as improvements in performance and quality were also being demanded.

Although the device has one more part than its predecessor, the new design utilises less material and incorporates clever mechanical detailing to simplify the assembly process. These improvements have allowed for a partially automated assembly line to be built, contributing to a significant reduction in time to manufacture each unit.

**12%**  
reduction in  
cost of goods

Despite the original challenges the new design has resulted in 12% reduction in costs opening it up to distribution in more markets.

**10%**  
weight reduction

### Sustainability Improvements

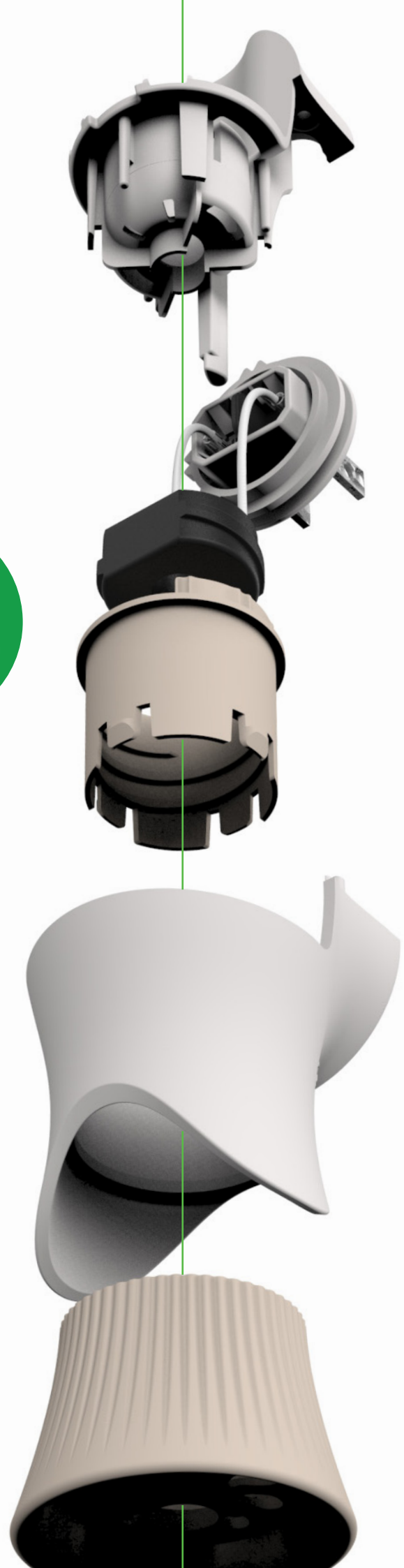
An internal assessment at RB found that the new design offers a more sustainable solution. There has been a 10% reduction in overall part weight which not only uses less raw material, it also improves transportation costs.

The partially automated assembly process uses less energy and the number of weld points have been reduced from 6 to 2. This improvement also makes it easier to disassemble when being recycled.

**25%**  
less electricity  
to run

Changes to performance and electronic components means that the new design uses less electricity creating a 25% improvement of running costs over its predecessor.

**28m**  
units sold  
per year



## Other Influencing Factors

Most of the countries in which the Air Wick Scented Oil Warmer has been launched, there has been an uplift in sales without the support of TV advertising. This excludes the US, where there has been very limited advertising support. Significant TV support is typically given to new fragrance launches. As the Scented Oil Warmer was launched without a new fragrance range, it received limited TV advertising support.

The packaging structure and graphic has remained largely unchanged with the exception of the inclusion of an adjustability icon.



## Research Resources

**Neilsen Data Scan**

**Bloom Qualitative Design Research Debrief** – The Big Picture Market Research Limited 21st February 2014

**RB sales data**

**RB Sustainability Assessment (Scented Oil Warmer)**