

DBA Design Effectiveness Awards entry:

Voltaren Flip-Top, Easy-Open Cap: Bringing Back Joy with Flipping Good Design

Client: GSK

Entry: 2021

For Publication



Executive Summary

Applying pain relief gel is a daily necessity for many Osteoarthritis and joint-pain sufferers, but the simple act of unscrewing a conventional cap, painlessly and without help, is often nigh on impossible. For those who choose to buy Voltaren 12 Hour Gel, however, it's new, flip-top cap will be a revelation. Launched at the beginning of 2020, the innovative, flip-top is a bespoke design unique to Voltaren, and a first for the topical pain-relief category.

Versatile, inclusive and frustration-free, the cap flips open effortlessly with a finger, palm of the hand, or even a table edge. Gone are the days of fiddly screw-caps, annoying safety seals and dropped caps rolling under the sofa – all irritations users experienced with Voltaren's existing screw-cap. The new cap's innovative features – the integrated tamper seal, soft edging, larger surface area, haptic click on closing - all meet the needs of the people it's designed for – those with hand-pain and dexterity issues.

Users love the new flip-top and much prefer it to the old opening – a big ask against the familiarity and perceived convenience of a screw cap that was already considered best-in-class. Testing shows that 93% of topical pain-relief users agree that the new cap is easier to open the first time, significantly higher than 86% for the original cap. 93% also agree that the new cap is more intuitive finding it easier to understand how to open, compared to 86% for the old cap.

It's also now proving itself in the market, helping Voltaren to safeguard its market-leading position, fight off newer competition and justify the 12 Hour Gel's premium price. Germany is Voltaren's biggest European market, and one of its toughest - a perfect backdrop to showcase the success of the new cap:

- A year after the launch of the new cap, sales are up 5.76%, that's 35% ahead of market growth for topical gels over the same period.
- This is compared to a decline in sales for Voltaren's cheaper, sister product – Voltaren 1.16% Gel – which doesn't have the new cap, showing that the cap is helping to convince buyers to trade up.
- The cap is helping to bringing new users to the brand, with 83% of growth coming from new category buyers in the year to June 2021.
- Market share data shows that the cap is helping Voltaren stand firm as the number one topical pain relief brand and persuading people to trade up – an important part of the brief. This is despite a new direct competitor making its entrance into the market in 2021.

All this has been achieved with a cost-effective design that's been brought to market at the same cost as the old cap, and manufactured faster on the same equipment. The design's inclusivity has already been recognised, winning several awards including a German Packaging Award. It's also been independently certified as 'Easy to Open' by Arthritis Australia's Accessible Design Division.

Jonathan Smithers, CEO, Arthritis Australia - **“This new cap considers the real challenges facing those living with osteoarthritis, and we are proud to announce that it is the first therapeutic product that has packaging certified as ‘Easy to Open’ by Arthritis Australia’s Accessible Design Division”.**



Outline of Project Brief

Voltaren – known as Voltarol in the UK – is the number one topical pain-relief brand for joint-pain sufferers around the world. GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), the brand's owner, asked us to rethink the screw-cap for Voltaren 12 Hour Gel, to make it easier for people with hand-pain and limited hand-mobility to use independently.

By redesigning the cap, GSK saw an opportunity to improve the user experience of Voltaren 12 Hour Gel. Voltaren is a premium brand, with a higher price than competitors. As such, the functionality of its packaging has to be the best on the market – be a delight to use, not a frustration, for its target users, and support its promise to bring back the joy of movement.

Our brief, then, was to create a cap that would do the following:

- Meet the specific needs and frustrations of hand Osteoarthritis and hand-pain sufferers, who find conventional tube openings very difficult to use;
- Safeguard Voltaren's position as market leader, whilst reinforcing its premium, brand proposition as a preferred, trusted, 'dedicated expert'.
- Help drive loyalty with Voltaren's existing customers but also attract new users to Voltaren Gel;

Our scope of work was to focus on the cap only. We needed to create a new opening that fitted on the existing tube of gel which was not changing. In addition, the final pack needed to be assembled and filled using the same machinery and for the same cost as the original screw-cap.

Description of the Project

Safeguarding Number One

Voltaren is one the biggest topical pain relief brands in Europe, holding a leading position in many of its markets. It's an NSAID, containing the active ingredient, Diclofenac, which has been proven to be particularly effective at treating joint pain associated with Osteoarthritis and other long-term conditions. Voltaren comes in a range of strengths and formulations, from the gel to creams and patches. Its leading position, however, is increasingly threatened by the rise of generic diclofenac topicals that are available at a lower price. It also faces competition from other high-profile brands such as Reckitt's Nurofen Ibuprofen Gel and alternative, non-medicated products, such as easy to use sprays and creams. As a result, GSK is always looking for ways to safeguard Voltaren's leading position against new and generic competitors. Its strategy for doing this is to build love for the brand, by making sure Voltaren is always doing the right thing for its consumers. The effectiveness of the packaging - opening and closing the tube, dispensing the gel, the pack's durability – is central to this.



Learning by Watching

In the case of Voltaren 12 Hour Gel, the right thing to do was to invest in a cap that would be a delight to use for those with hand mobility issues. And that was despite quantitative research, comparing the benefits of the original screw cap with an existing 'off-the-shelf' flip top closure, telling the team that the old cap was adequately designed for their needs. The screw-cap's triangular, grippable design made it easier to twist and turn. But the team at Voltaren was still not happy, and felt that there was a real opportunity to improve the user experience through the cap design. Further ethnographic research allowed us to observe how people were opening and closing the screw cap and where the frustrations were. It soon became evident there were clear areas for improvement:

- Users found it difficult to unscrew and screw the cap back on unaided, without reaching for a tool, such as scissors, to help;
- The cap was frequently dropped on the floor because it completely unscrews from the tube;
- Breaking the tamper seal on first open was extremely fiddly and it was hard to work out how to do it.



Original best in class screw cap



New bespoke Voltaren flip-top cap

Note : different countries have different graphics

Better than Best-in-Class

Our challenge was to design a cap that solved these issues. The existing screw-cap was already considered a best-in-class example for people with hand-dexterity problems. But we needed to set a new benchmark for inclusive cap design that promoted Voltaren as the first choice for those with joint-pain. Ethnography clearly favoured the familiarity of a flip-top cap and, together with GSK, we began to look at a bespoke design for a category-leading flip-top closure. Our research also showed us that apart from the physical problems, there is also the real emotional distress that comes with being unable to use packaging independently. We knew then that we needed a design that would be a joy to use, so people could apply pain relief when needed, and then get on with their lives.

Design Solution – a bespoke, intuitive, inclusive design

The new, easy-open, flip-top cap solves all the above challenges with a series of carefully considered, innovative features.

It's versatile. The cap can be opened in various ways – and doesn't only rely on using fingers in the conventional way. The groove under the lid accommodates different hand sizes and different parts of the hand. It effortlessly flips open and closed, not just with a flick of a finger, but also the nudge of a palm or even a tap on a table's edge.

It's comfortable. The closure's surface area has been enlarged and paired with a soft touch TPE rubber to reduce the pressure placed on sore and tender hands and joints when opening. The result is a cap that opens and closes in a way that is comfortable and painless for each individual.

It's intuitive. One of the main frustrations with the screw cap was the star-shaped tamper evident seal. The screw-cap had to be removed, reversed and used to break this seal. The new design removes this stress by integrating the tamper seal into the flip-top cap. When the cap is opened for the first time, the seal is broken automatically, all in a single upward flip.

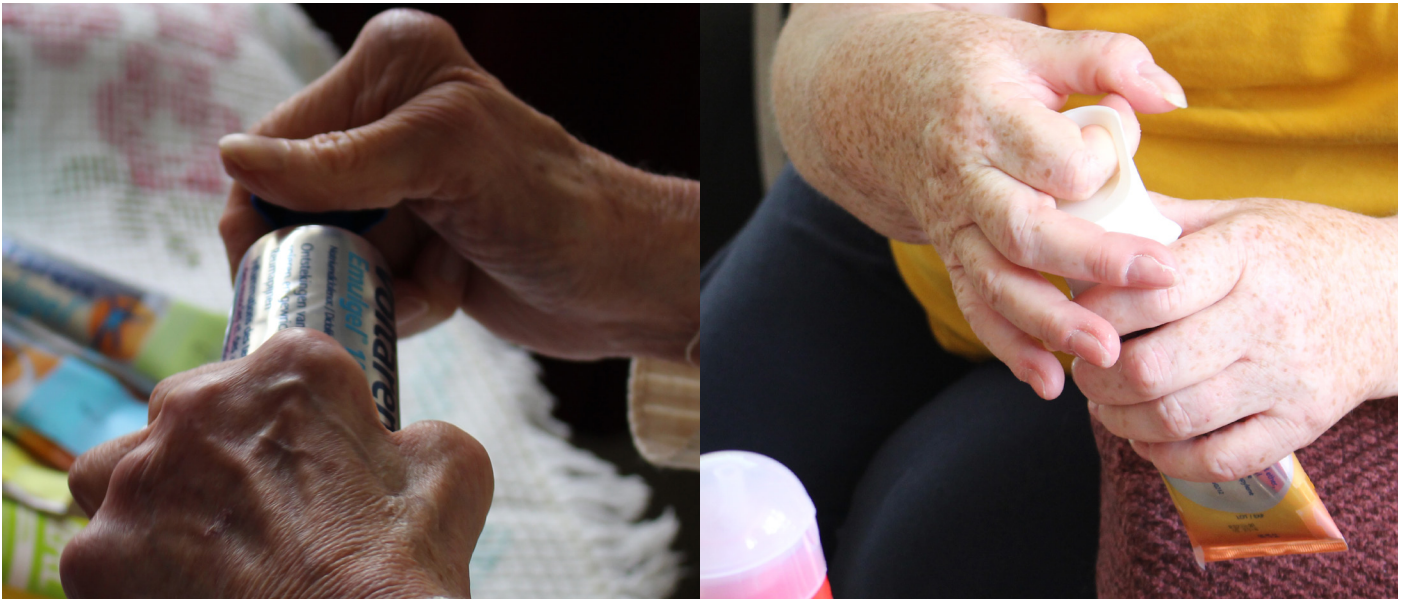
It's convenient. The fact that the flip-top cap is attached to the tube at all times means it's impossible to drop the cap on the floor, eliminating a constant irritation users had with the old screw-cap.

It's reassuring. The cap's functionality is enhanced with haptic feedback – a satisfying click when the cap is properly closed. Combined with the use of softer TPE, the impact is of a design that's well considered, reinforcing Voltaren's proposition as a 'dedicated expert'.

It's inclusive. Features such as the groove under the lid, the soft blue rim, the enlarged closure area mean this flip-top cap is designed to meet the needs of a range of people with varying degrees and types of joint-pain, in a way that suits their individual needs.

It's brand-building. The idea of a flip-top cap may seem generic, but all the above features take the design into a different realm that's unique to Voltaren. The quality of the new user-experience befits a premium brand. The softer edging is signposted in Voltaren's blue, and the plectrum shape represents the brand's 3D visual brand language. The result is a patent-pending design for a cap that people not only immediately understand how to open, but also recognise as belonging to Voltaren.

It's cost-effective. Innovative core back tooling, and a faster assembly speed have brought the new flip-top cap to market at the same cost as the old cap, and within timeframe targets, meeting GSK's business requirements.



Key Facts

Launch Date: Launched in Q4, 2019 in Germany.

Results

Voltaren's easy-open, flip-top cap has made a major contribution to GSK's objectives for the brand.

“This was a brilliant team effort between GSK and our 3D design agency. The Voltaren 12hr Easy-to-Open Cap has been created to deliver inclusive design for our consumers, an approach that seeks to ensure our products are accessible to, and usable by, the largest number of people, irrespective of age or ability. Looking at the world from the user's perspective, and asking the question, ‘how could we make the user's experience better through great design’, has been our guiding principle.”

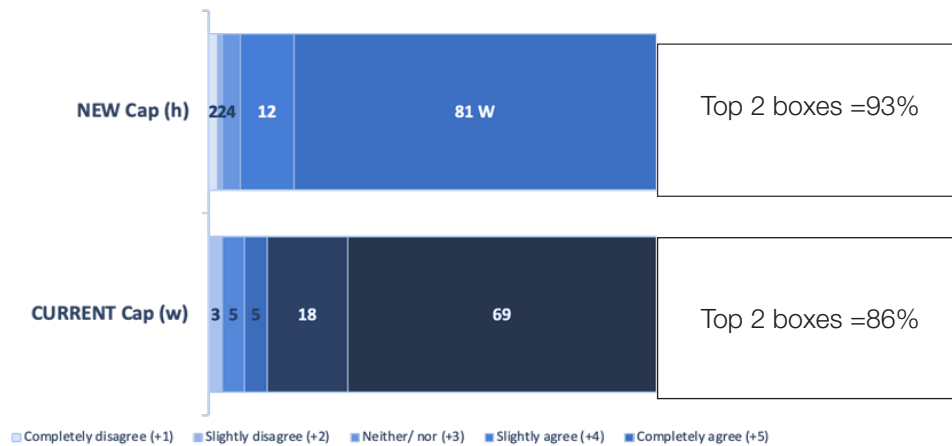
- Brad Athay, Global Design Director for Voltaren

Most importantly, people with hand-pain prefer the new flip-top cap

User research¹, carried out to test the final design of the flip-top, shows that people with hand-pain clearly prefer the new flip-top to the old screw-cap, and agree that it makes the opening experience easier and more intuitive. This was the most important part of the brief - doing the right thing for the target consumer through a more user-friendly cap. The research was carried out with people that use topical pain relief, with around 50% suffering from Osteoarthritis hand-pain and the other 50% general hand-pain sufferers. A screw-cap is a familiar type of opening for this group of both non-Voltaren and Voltaren users, and sets a high benchmark for comparison against the new design. That's why the preference rates, below, for the old design are still high. These results are significant, as they highlight the benefits that this bespoke design brings. An earlier study, comparing the screwcap with an off-the-shelf flip-top, showed little perceived difference in preference.



Opening The Cap First Time – New Flip Top v Original Screw Cap



Source: In-Use Test Consumer Claims Research, PPL Insights.

- 93% agreed that the new cap was easier to open the first time, significantly higher than
- 86% for the original cap. This includes breaking the tamper seal, which is integrated into the new flip-top and a seamless part of the opening experience.
- 94% of non-Voltaren users also agreed that the cap was easier to open first time.
- 93% agreed it was easier to understand HOW to open compared to 86% for the old cap, evidence that the flip-top cap is even more intuitive than the familiarity of the screw-cap.
- Overall, 56% preferred the new cap to the old. Only 38% preferred the screw cap.

The flip top cap has also received an independent endorsement from the Arthritis Australia's Accessible Design Division, as an important accessible design solution for Australians living with osteoarthritis.

“This new cap considers the real challenges facing those living with mild osteoarthritis, and we are proud to announce that it is the first therapeutic product that has packaging certified as ‘Easy to Open’ by Arthritis Australia’s Accessible Design Division,”

- Jonathan Smithers, CEO, Arthritis Australia.

These user endorsements are now being reflected in the market. Data now available from its launch market, Germany, show the new cap is helping to grow sales, support Voltaren’s proposition and bring new users to the brand.

In a challenging German market, the new cap is helping to drive sales growth for Voltaren 12 Hour Gel.

Germany is Voltaren’s largest European market and where the new cap first launched at the end of 2019. It’s also one of its toughest with newcomers and generics fighting for some of Voltaren’s 60% share of the topical pain-relief category. Sales data for Germany shows that the new cap is encouraging purchase. We can see this by comparing the performance of Voltaren Gel’s two variants:

- Voltaren 12 Hour Gel is the more expensive product with 2.32% of the active ingredient Diclofenec, and launched with the new flip-top cap;
- Voltaren 1.16 % which still has the old screw-cap.

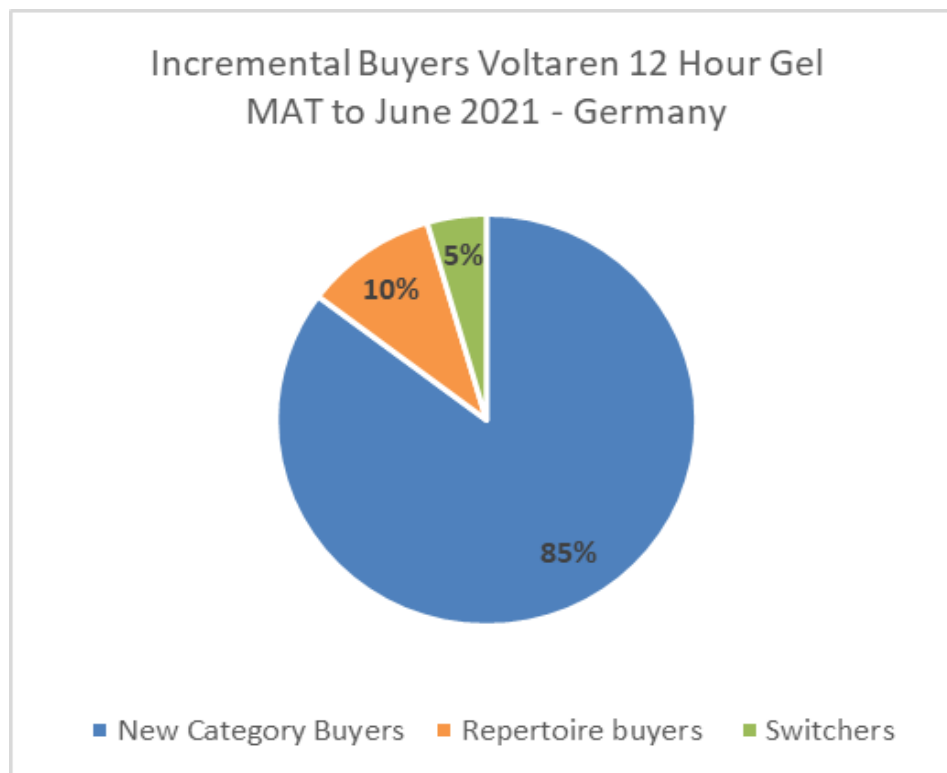
Safeguarding Voltaren 12 Hour Gel's premium position in the market against new competitors

The new cap is also helping the brand stand firm against new, cheaper rivals. In February 2021, a new topical gel launched into the German market – the first direct competitor to Voltaren 12 Hour Gel. Ratiopharm's Diclox is a 2% Diclofenac gel with a price point in between Voltaren's 1.16% Gel and the 12 Hour 2.32% variant. Despite undercutting Voltaren 12 Hour Gel on price, Diclox is having little impact, only nudging 12 Hour Gel's share down by just over 1% before it starts to recover in March. Instead, Voltaren 1% Gel – without flip-top cap - is the one that's losing sales to Diclox.

New cap is helping to bring in new buyers to Voltaren gel – an objective of the design.

Consumer Panel findings show that Voltaren 12 Hour Gel's gains mostly come from new buyers.

85% of incremental sales come from new category buyers in the year to June 2021.



Source: GfK M'Scope Panel with 20,000 individuals,
November 2021

Influencing Factors

- Voltaren 12 Hour 2.32% Gel was relaunched in Q4 2019 in Germany with the new flip-top cap and new consumer claim. The gel contains a formulation that helps the gel penetrate the skin to get the pain more effectively. Consumer research carried out by Ipsos, however, found that the claim by itself was not enough to motivate new buyers to the gel. The winning relaunch concept combined the new easy-open cap and the permeation claim. It was this proposition that had the most potential, especially for driving new buyers to brand.
- Shopper Activation: marketing materials were sent to pharmacies and retail customers in Germany. The material all heavily featured the new cap as a selling point.
- Media campaign: Launched to promote the relaunched gel and brand's message to bring the joy back to movement. Messaging also featured the new cap, and ease of opening, as key part of proposition.
- Covid pandemic, and the subsequent lockdowns in Germany had a negative impact on sales of Voltaren. Many people stayed at home and lived sedentary lifestyles. Voltaren is a movement product, and as people were moving less at the beginning of the first lockdown, sales dipped. An increase in active, home-based activities, such as gardening, however, helped to mitigate some of these losses.

Sources

Voltarol 12 Hour Gel, New Easy-to-Open Cap In-Use Test, Consumer Claims Research, PPI Research, 2018
Voltaren OA structural redesign, Qualitative Research Debrief, Big Picture, 2017
Voltaren Relaunch Concept Testing Research, Ipsos, 2018
GFK M'Scope Consumer Panel with 20,000 individuals, November 2021
GSK Consumption Data for Voltaren and Topical Gels – 2018-2021