

BILLY BOY | THE CONDOM

BILLY BOY
Das aufregend andere Condom

George Bernard Shaw described it as the greatest invention of the century: the condom made of natural latex rubber. It was made possible thanks to the achievements of Charles Goodyear in the field of rubber vulcanisation. The American pioneer initiated a revolution in 1855 which was to have wide-ranging consequences.

But the story of this form of contraception and infection protection goes back a lot further. Cretan King Minos is credited with using condoms made out of goats' bladders in 1200 BC in order to prevent disease. Centuries later, experiments were carried out with linen sacks and natural intestines. English court physician Dr Contom was among those involved in the research, and his name was to go down in history as the inventor of this effective form of contraception. And, of course, this sort of intimate introspective would not be complete without mentioning Casanova, the man who brought real luxury to contraceptives, by lining them with velvet and silk. They were, of course, reusable.

However, all this has very little to do with the mass-produced and, above all, safe medical product which has become a fixed part of our modern lives. This is where another name crops up, a fictitious name that has undergone a remarkable metamorphosis into a brand: Billy Boy.

The basis for this success is the almost provocative marketing strategy of giving a cheeky name to a product that had previously only been bought surreptitiously and discreetly in chemists' shops. Suddenly, condoms had more to do with fun than with hygiene. Suddenly, "johnnies", or "rubbers" were "cool" and "fun". Launched in the early Nineties, Billy Boy expressed a new concept, a new attitude towards sexuality. Dealing with the issue aggressively and providing knowledge about the dual protection offered added up to a higher level of acceptance, as condoms are the only form of contraception that also offers protection against infection. Billy Boy brought this point home, especially for the younger generation.

This is the only way the company's enormous success can be explained: Within its first year, Billy Boy achieved a market share of nearly four per cent. Today, over thirteen years later, the brand has a market share of nearly 23 per cent. Billy Boy is the undisputed market leader in Germany, and nearly every fourth condom sold is a Billy Boy. 94 per cent of all Germans between the ages of 14 and 49 know the brand.

This could also be down to the fact that the communications strategy used to advertise Billy Boy is an offensive in itself. Promotion tours ("Condomobil") and an original event marketing strategy ("Love-Academy") guarantee a constant brand presence, especially for young target groups. This keeps the brand "young" and therefore helps it to find acceptance among the young and young at heart. Billy Boy is also set to remain the strongest brand from MAPA GmbH in Zeven, which produces other branded condoms as well.

Since 1973, MAPA GmbH has belonged to the French Hutchinson Group, one of the leading European rubber and plastics companies, which is itself part of the mineral oil conglomerate Total. MAPA turned over 160 million euros in Germany in 2002, with 21 million euros of that coming from the condom segment. The trend is still rising, and the company has plans to conquer the European market, using Billy Boy as its main weapon. In Spain, England and Greece, there is still no modern alternative to the "traditional" brands.

This means the target in Zeven is clearly defined: Whether you want a "capote" in Belgium, a "kumi" in Finland, a "gomma" in Italy or a "johnny" or "rubber" in England, the aim is to sweep aside all language barriers in the future and make sure everyone understands when you ask for a Billy Boy.



Company name
MAPA GmbH

Sector
Rubber and
plastic products

Established
1947 in Zeven/
Germany

Employees
653

Awareness
94 % (aided),
76 % (unaided)

Main production site
Zeven/Germany