

CASE STUDY: HONDA CR-V

'Dress for it'



Background

The Honda CR-V was first introduced to Australia in 1997, entering the category with a fresh, highly innovative and competitively-priced product that quickly became the market leader. However, an influx of competitive new entrants to the category from 2001, began to chip away at CR-V's sales success.

By 2004, the compact 4WD category was highly competitive with over 16 different brands vying for the attention of consumers. Prior to the new model launch earlier this year, CR-V was still having reasonable success but had failed to take the leading market position.

Objectives & Challenges

Honda wanted to announce the arrival of the all-new CR-V and regain a stronger position within the compact 4WD category. In order to achieve this, they felt it was important to break the mould that typifies the segment with its familiar 4WD imagery reflecting freedom and versatility in an unemotional and uninspiring manner.

The strategic and creative challenge that Honda and creative agency Draftfcb faced, was to communicate the unrivalled versatility associated with the CR-V in an emotional way – something which hadn't really been done before in the category.

Insights

Draftfcb senior account director, Chris Ivanov, says in-depth qualitative research provided access to valuable information which helped better understand the consumer and the way they perceive the Compact 4WD category.

"To them, the appeal of the category is primarily functional but there is a very strong emotional dimension underpinning interest in the category," says Ivanov.

He says this appeal relates to the promise of being able to 'go anywhere' rather than being about going 'off road' per se.

"It's the freedom and confidence that comes from knowing the vehicle will handle whatever situation or occasion life throws at it – rocking up to the valet parking of an exclusive restaurant, going to the beach, negotiating the narrow streets of the inner city, moving furniture, going to the Opera or tackling windy mountain roads with ease and confidence."

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Target

The target market for Honda CR-V is quite diverse and defined more by mindset than demographics. Honda wanted to connect with active and image conscious people who want to enjoy all of life's possibilities, no matter where or when. They are all unified by a similar attitude: 'life is for living'.

The Solution

The core campaign idea of 'Dress For It' was brought to life through a refreshing 45 second television commercial which feels more like a music video from Video Hits than an advertisement. There is also a 30 second version which has been running since the initial launch burst.

Fuelled by a pumping electro music track, the spot sees a rugged male exit a building in what looks like downtown New York. Wearing a suit we follow him walking down the street, stripping his clothes off to reveal a number of different outfits – jeans and a casual top, a tuxedo and finally board shorts and a singlet.

As the film clip reaches its climax, the CR-V's dynamic new redesign is revealed as the man approaches the car. The commercial cleverly exploits the different outfits to highlight the versatility at the core of the new CR-V in an emotional, uplifting fashion.

The TV idea was also leveraged across magazines, outdoor street furniture, cinema, direct mail and e-DM.

The Role of Free TV

As a new model launch, Ivanov says it was important to achieve broad awareness whilst emotionally connecting with the audience.

"Television is a fantastic medium when trying to reach a diverse group, especially if there is the need to create a splash in the market and announce the arrival of something new," says Ivanov.

"It played a key role in the media mix and was utilised because of its power and ability to deliver our message to the market."

Results

While it's still early days, the CR-V 'Dress For It' campaign has already significantly contributed to a strong lift in CR-V sales.

In the two months since the campaign went to air, CR-V market share has increased from 8.6 per cent to 13.4 per cent year on year.

In March, CR-V once again took the leading market position and was the number one selling Compact 4WD in the segment. Further to this excellent sales result, the CR-V spot has become one of the most talked about and recognised ads on television.

Who

Client: Honda

Creative agency: Drafftcb

Media agency: ZenithOptimedia