

TITLE OF CASE STUDY: “Are you Venza?” Toyota motor sales - Venza

Business Situation and Campaign Objectives

Background and Business Objectives

“How do you launch a new nameplate into an already crowded automotive market?”

That was the question facing market leader Toyota as it looked to introduce a vehicle into a segment it had never competed in before: the crossover (a vehicle with the spaciousness of a sports utility vehicle but the handling of a sedan). The crossover segment had shown significant growth and both Nissan’s Murano (launched in December 2002) and Ford’s Edge (launched in December 2006) were receiving significant advertising support.

To launch the 2009 Toyota Venza successfully, there was a need to create a distinctive positioning for the vehicle. Previous qualitative and quantitative research revealed that African Americans view their vehicles as a personal statement: “What I drive is who I am.”

With that insight in mind, the hypothesis was that the key to creating a distinctive personality for the new brand was to define what owning a Venza would say about the owner.

Marketing Strategy

The marketing objectives were to:

- Create brand awareness, trial, purchase consideration and sales for the new nameplate (Toyota Venza)
- Establish aspirational imagery for Venza that created an emotional connection with target consumers by providing both personal and cultural relevance

Budget

The total budget for the assignment (“Are You VENZA?” campaign) was under \$6 million, inclusive of over production, promotion, publicity and both traditional and non-traditional media.

Research Story

Toyota placed the new Venza and several key competitors side by side in a showroom and allowed African American consumers to compare the products closely. Focus groups were then held with the consumers to probe their reactions to all of the vehicles shown. Response to the Venza among African Americans was strongly positive – “sassy”, “a big, beautiful car” with a “sweet style.” Next steps were to engage in positioning research that would help pinpoint which sub-segments of African American consumers would be the best sales prospects.

In order to deliver unique positioning in a crowded marketplace, there was a need to go beyond surface-level responses and take a deeper dive into the thoughts and feelings that frame African American consumer perceptions of crossover vehicles and ultimately, the Toyota Venza. Olson Zaltman & Associates (OZA) was contracted to conduct the study. OZA is an award-winning firm with a patented methodology for uncovering deep consumer insights that catapult new products to market success.

The study was designed to identify key thoughts, feelings and ideas African American consumers have regarding crossover vehicles and the experience of owning a crossover, while also providing the creative team with metaphors that could be used to develop engaging storytelling and brand experiences. The one-on-one sessions were held in multiple markets with African American prospective crossover buyers, and consisted of a consumer ratio that was balanced in terms of gender and marital status.

The research validated the hypothesis that African American consumers do indeed see their vehicles as an expression of their self-image (***“What I drive is who I am”***), but also identified the richness of tapping into the concept of duality. What African American consumers shared with the Venza crossover (a vehicle that was half-car/half SUV) was a dual nature:

- Each enjoyed being seen as offering both style and performance
- Each could adapt to fit into any environment without sacrificing what makes them unique
- Each refused to be easily categorized

The research led us to a great thought-starting question to build our work around:

“How do we portray Venza as a multi-dimensional vehicle for multi-dimensional people?”

In addition to primary research, an analysis of secondary research probed attitudinal and lifestyle data from Yankelovich and MRI to unearth which types of African American consumers would be most predisposed to being portrayed as “multi-dimensional” and also identify consumers who are “progressive” to tie back to Toyota’s position of *Moving Forward*. Using the primary research as a springboard, the secondary data analysis identified a segment of African American young Baby Boomers and Generation X consumers who have what is called a “Mixers” mindset.

Mixers are consumers who refuse to be easily categorized and constantly seek opportunities to escape the perceptions and expectations of others. Mixers see their racial identity as an unchanging foundation upon which they can add elements from other cultures to make up their own unique style. As individuals who enjoy surprising others with their versatility, it was thought that Mixers would actively embrace Venza’s ability to deliver both functional versatility and stylish good looks.

There was also a belief that these individuals enjoyed the act of transformation: of perhaps being a Math teacher in the morning and a Samba instructor in the evening. Creative executions, media environments and event sponsorships were considered that would show African American consumers embracing the opportunity to sample - and share with - different cultures.

Campaign Description

Target Audience

African American Adults, 25-54 years old with a “MIXER” mindset and a household income of \$70K+, with emphasis on those in the market to purchase a new vehicle.

Campaign Idea

The campaign was designed to link Venza with individuals who displayed eclectic interests in art and culture, culinary arts and travel. This idea was brought to life with the creative theme, “Are You VENZA?,” which built off the strategic insight of “You are what you drive.”

The creative idea, called “Faces”, featured an African American with a love for African masks, with the TV commercial showing one of the masks morphing into the front grill of the Venza, symbolizing both man and machine being “of the same spirit”. The print and digital work portrayed the Venza as an elegant extension of the style and sophistication you would expect from someone with a Mixer mindset.

Contextual planning was used throughout the media plan to isolate niche environments where Mixers were sure to congregate. In addition, it also provided lead generation for Toyota’s Dealers as well as directed traffic back to Toyota’s website for consumers seeking further information. Venza-sponsored “e-blasts” and radio personalities were also used to target key influencers who reflect the Mixer lifestyle and spark “buzz” around the new vehicle. The media mix was in market from February 2009 through August 2009 and consisted of TV, radio, print and digital. Although developed for an African American audience, Toyota also exposed the “Faces” commercial to a huge general market audience by allocating 50% of the general market TV rotation behind the spot and also included the TV commercial within its 2009 Super Bowl package.

Public relations and promotional efforts aimed to bring the “Are You VENZA?” theme to life by creating brand experiences where Mixers were invited to interact with the new vehicle in environments that celebrated culture and the arts. The cornerstone of this effort was having Venza sponsor the 50th anniversary of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (AAADT). Ailey positions itself as a “performing arts organization that plays a social role, using the beauty and humanity of the African American heritage and other cultures to unite people of all races, ages and backgrounds.” A Venza-sponsored art gallery traveled with the AAADT as it toured major cities around the country, featuring an electronic “Are You VENZA?” ink blot test containing multiple choice questions that would define an individual as a Mixer based on their “passion points”. Completing the inkblot test earned participants a commemorative AAADT poster and back-stage tours with the Ailey dancers. The net result was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that Mixers could use to create cachet for themselves and an emotional connection with Venza.

Business Results

Within the first six months of the launch, the “Are You VENZA?” campaign was indexing at 234 vs. the goal. In calendar year 2009, the campaign generated vehicle sales among African American consumers that were 14% higher than the in-going sales goal. [Source: Toyota].

Sponsorship of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Tour series was very effective at driving purchase consideration and awareness. Prior to the event, 41% of attendees were unaware of the new vehicle. After seeing Venza on display at the event, 65% of the attendees said they were somewhat more or very likely to consider purchasing the new vehicle. [Source: AAADT Sponsorship Survey].

Toyota conducted a wide range of research against African American consumers, both pre- and post campaign launch – product clinics, positioning research with OZA, and communications testing – and while levels of success varied by medium, the net effect of the campaign was to position the Venza as “contemporary”, “sophisticated” and “having a stylish design”.



Results Summary

Goal #1: Create brand awareness, trial, purchase consideration and sales for the new nameplate (Toyota Venza)

- **Change in Brand Awareness for Venza:**
 - Print ad results were significantly higher than the norm on believability (Index of 186) and providing new information (Index of 157)
 - Brand Awareness, Pre-event (Alvin Ailey): 41%
 - Brand Awareness, Post-event (Alvin Ailey): 65%
Index (Post vs. Pre): 159
- **Trial/Purchase Consideration:**
 - Consideration among Alvin Ailey event attendees – 65%
 - Ad tracking results showed higher brand endorsement than all of its key competitors – 65% for Venza vs. 46%-56% for Nissan Murano, Honda CX-7 and Ford Edge.

- **Performance vs. in-going sales goal:**
 - Sales index of 234 within the first six months of campaign launch
 - Calendar year sales 14% higher than the goal

Goal #2: Establish aspirational imagery for Venza that creates an emotional connection with target consumers by providing both personal and cultural relevance

- **Print ad meaningful and relevant to African American consumers**
 - Relevance rating 10% above the Norm (Index of 131)
 - Venza seen as contemporary, sophisticated and intelligent

Verbatims:

“ ‘Are You VENZA?’ asks you to defy categorization because that’s what the Venza does.” (Group #1)

“I liked the African artwork because it’s talking to me as an African American.” (Group #2)

“The message was ‘Are you a fusion of style and functionality?’ “ (Group #2)

“Although the commercial was very simplistic, it was communicating he was a different kind of individual.” (Group #4)

“Venza is challenging, risk taking and different, and I think I could be Venza. I could be that person and I could see myself driving that car.” (Group #5)



Presenting The New Toyota VENZA. Its bold styling will turn your head. Its surprising spaciousness justifies the effort. Available 20-inch alloy wheels. Distinguished interior. A strong, yet fuel efficient available V-6. Refined functionality. Finally, a car that actually represents the many facets of you. **Ask yourself, are you VENZA?**

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