

Cassies 2006 Cases

Brand/Case: MINI

Winner: Sustained Success—Silver

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Crossover Notes: All winning cases contain lessons that cross over from one case to another. David Rutherford has been identifying these as Crossover Notes since Cassies 1997. The full set for Cassies 2006 can be downloaded from the Case Library section at www.cassies.ca

- Crossover Note 1. What a Brand Stand For.
- Crossover Note 2. Brand Truths.
- Crossover Note 3. Core Equity versus Price & Promotion.
- Crossover Note 10. Conventional Wisdom—should it be challenged?
- Crossover Note 14. Refreshing a Continuing Campaign.
- Crossover Note 27. Share of Mind. Share of Voice. Spending.

To see creative, go to the Case Library Index and click on the additional links beside the case.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Business Results Period (Consecutive Months): 2002 - 2006
Start of Advertising/Communication Effort: February 2002
Base Period for Comparison: Year Ago

Four years after its launch MINI has one of the most distinct and potent brand images in the Canadian automotive market.

It was a daunting task to live up to the legacy of the original Mini - voted one of the top two automobiles of the 20th century. But a solid strategic foundation, and creative that never wears a seat belt, has put MINI in the same ring as the big guys.

A brand that might have been a fad is in fact a long-term success, and sales have set new records every year since launch.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

a) Overall Assessment

The MINI has always been hard to classify. In its original 1960s incarnation it captured Britain with an appeal that ranged from mods to milkmen and from rock stars to royalty. Today, MINI remains a car unto itself, appealing more to a mindset than a demographic profile. To launch this icon in Canada we would need to favour the unconventional appeal of the car over the conventions of the automotive category. **Crossover Note 10.**

As the maker of the brand, BMW's ambition for MINI was not for it to be a volume player, but rather to create a new segment for premium small cars. Yes, there were quantitative goals, but success would also be defined by image and attitude.

The Double-Edged Sword of Familiarity

MINI's heritage was an advantage, but it also introduced complications that entirely new brands don't have to face. The new MINI had to create its own fresh identity. It had to be consistent with the original, but distinct in its own right—and also synergistic with the global MINI strategy. Our younger target wanted a car with a contemporary attitude. But the older British enthusiast was looking for a brand that spoke to his memory of the original. We had to find common ground for these very different segments.

The Threat of Being a Fad Car

MINI had to be a *long-term* success. No one sets out to create a fad, but the risk is there—witness what happened to the new Beetle. Volkswagen re-introduced its iconic model in 1998 to great fanfare, but did not generate ongoing sales. We had to build a brand with more than novelty as its appeal. **Crossover Note 2.**

A Broad Competitive Set

Just as the MINI needed to set itself apart from its predecessor, it also needed to mark its turf relative to other brands. The MINI had two factors that determined the competition. First, there were the cars with similar looks and performance—Honda Civic, VW Golf and Acura RSX. Second, there were cars that might appeal to a similar mindset. This included VW Beetle, BMW 3 Series and Mercedes smart fortwo coupé.

A Market That Has Undermined Itself

The North American automotive manufacturers have introduced a new dynamic to the category. Zero percent financing and “employee pricing” have sent an unintended message about the value – or more accurately, the lack thereof. Rather than creating brands that consumers will pay full price for, General Motors, Ford and Chrysler have shifted the decision to price. This puts pressure on cars like the MINI that succeed on the strength of the brand, and not on zero percent financing. **Crossover Note 3.**

Resulting Objectives

- ***Stake Out Our Turf.*** We wanted to be defined by big attitude instead of small size. We believed the appeal of a ballsy, vivid brand would be less vulnerable to changes than a brand based on tangibles like the number of cup holders or miles to the gallon.
- ***Leverage the MINI Legacy and Make it Stronger.*** We had to establish our credentials for today’s drivers. We needed to be more revved up than the quirky original. We would be edgier, more urban and more aggressive.
- ***Long Term Growth.*** As each year's goal was achieved (or actually exceeded) the pressure was on to keep that growth going.

STRATEGY & INSIGHT

From the launch through to the current campaign, our approach has been an ongoing demonstration that *size is deceptive*. The car might be small, but the attitude is big. Even our choice of a brand personality (“shit disturber”) is an indication of a strategic focus on an engagingly defiant attitude.

The Target Audience

Arguably the most significant decision was to overly position MINI as a male car. While women are comfortable driving a guy car, men wince at the thought of being seen in a chick-mobile. (Note the rise and fall of the new Beetle—as more and more women chose the Bug, fewer and fewer men did.)

Creative

This is a direct reflection of our target decision. The work has had a decidedly male sensibility, putting a premium on performance and exhilaration. An important nuance is that male does not mean macho. We were after a confident, extroverted and in-control attitude—not a monster-truck, WWF testosterone mindset.

Non-Traditional Media

Defying conventions of big broadcast effort, the MINI image has been built on media traditionally considered by the category as ‘secondary.’ Over four years, only three commercials, all part of a single campaign, have aired on TV. Our strategy favoured impact over tonnage. By choosing high visibility opportunities we amplified a budget that was small by automotive standards. [Crossover Note 27](#). And once MINI was established we used the interactive abilities of the Internet to create a high-involvement relationship with prospective buyers.

Brand Consistency

We have been consistent across all touch points. [Crossover Note 14](#).

Insight

We expressed this in an acronym—FLIP. It stands for Fun, Legacy, Individuality and Performance, and it was the touchstone for all work. [Crossover Note 1](#).

Fun is the key emotional driver for MINI. It comes from the joy of driving, from the go-kart-like handling, from the small size and unconventional looks. Particularly for city drivers, it represents urban mobility and maneuverability.

Legacy represents the British roots—a link to the quirky and exuberant spirit of the original. Evoking the rally heritage and the notoriety of the 60s icon was an important aspect of building a distinct presence.

Individuality represents the target, who see themselves as people who don’t blend into a crowd, and the car, which offers custom styling and limited editions.

Performance is the proof that MINI delivers the goods The base model MINI Cooper offers 115hp and a top speed of 200km/h; acceleration of zero to 100km in 9.1 seconds; 6 airbags; and power everything. Beyond this, MINI offers a variety of sports and performance combinations that combine design and heritage in a potent package.

EXECUTION

The MINI has spawned a prodigious amount of creative. Following the initial campaign, which brought the MINI’s attitude to life, later campaigns focused on performance attributes such as winter driving, or significant news such as the introduction of the convertible.

The campaign’s overall signature is its cheekiness. For example, a police officer forgoes handing out a traffic ticket in exchange for a turn at the wheel. Billboards near radar traps say “Cops Hide Here.” And we turned a MINI into a luge, running it down the side of a building to show the car's suitability for winter driving.

MINI – SUSTAINED SUCCESS

PHASE 1 LAUNCH TV



OUTDOOR



Life-sized MINI was mounted on a downtown wall.



These billboards were placed near known speed traps around the city.

BUSINESS RESULTS

MINI Canada's Success on the International Front

- Despite being a small market, MINI Canada has the 8th highest sales in the world for the new MINI
- MINI Canada is in the top 10 markets in the world for profitability

Success in Canada

In the five years since launch, MINI sales have shown steady and consistent growth, and have consistently exceeded target.

| Time Period | Target Retail | Achieved Retail | Achieved vs Target | Growth vs Year Ago |
|-------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Launch Year | 1,800 | 2,102 | + 14% | n/a |
| 2003 | 2,700 | 2,708 | + 1% | +7%* |
| 2004 | 2,700 | 2,800 | + 4% | +4% |
| 2005 | 3,375 | 3,401 | + 1% | +21% |

*March-Dec 2003 compared to March - Dec 2002. (For 2006, sales for each month from January to May have exceeded same-month sales in 2005.)

MINI Buyers Know What They Want

The MINI has the highest close rate of all cars measured in the JD Power 2005 Study. Brands with strong levels of commitment before the purchase process find it easier to close the deal without relying on low prices or special offers. MINI supersedes four high volume brands (Dodge, Chevrolet, Pontiac and GMC) that had aggressive incentives in place at the time the study was done.

The Success Extends to Non-Traditional Media As Well

A four-phase CRM initiative was highly successful. Compared to an average industry response rate of 3% to 8%, this MINI initiative enjoyed double-digit response.

“Inkblot” (www.mini.ca/experiment) got a 29% response.

“Choice” (www.mini.ca/choice) got a 23% response.

“Black Sheep” (www.mini.ca/family) got a 20% response.

“Date” (www.mini.ca/date) got a 12% response.

Other online efforts have also generated strong results. [Information was supplied.]

CAUSE & EFFECT BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND RESULTS

The MINI had a small research budget, so we have no long-term tracking for reference. However, in support of the advertising as the chief driver, here are the salient points:

- In automotive terms, the investment in advertising has been modest. Brand perception has been created on the strength of the creative, and not on media tonnage.
- The consistency of the MINI campaign has built a distinct brand in a crowded market. It has established a brand personality and brand voice that no other car could claim.
- Price promotion has not been a factor. MINI does not engage in 0% financing or employee pricing tactics—in fact, MINI has never had a sale. When someone buys a MINI they're not doing it because of deal pricing – they're doing it because they have bought into the brand.
- Every year MINI Canada sells its entire allocation of cars, and would sell more if the quota was increased.