

# Cassies 2009 Cases

**Brand/Case: Nissan *Gros bon sens***

**Winner: Consumer Durable, Automotive & DIY—Bronze**

**Client Credits: Nissan Canada Inc.**

Jeff Parent, Vice President Sales & Marketing  
Donna Trawinski, Corporate Manager, Nissan Marketing  
Derek Lunghino, Corporate Manager, Nissan Brand Marketing  
Catherine Green, Manager, Nissan Marketing  
Claude Brunet, Directeur sénior, Exploitation régionale des ventes

**Agency Credits: TAM-TAM\TBWA**

Martin Sansregret, Président/Leader de compte  
Brigitte Melançon, Directrice Groupe Conseil  
Hugues Choquette, VP Création  
Yvon Gosselin, VP Média  
Martin Bélanger, Concepteur-rédacteur pigiste  
Paul Derome, Concepteur-rédacteur  
Michelle Turbide, Productrice imprimée  
Marie-Hélène Cimon, graphiste  
Lyne Leclair, Productrice électronique pigiste

**La Fabrique d'Images**

Caroline Singher-Boucher, Productrice  
Jean-François Asselin, Réalisateur

**Toronto Partners**

Adam White, Business Leader, TBWA\Toronto  
Richard Phillips, Group Account Director, TBWA\Toronto  
Karena K Phidd, Group Director of Strategy, OMD

**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 Cassies1997. The full set for Cassies 2009 can be downloaded from the Case Library section at [www.cassies.ca](http://www.cassies.ca)

- Crossover Note 1.** What a Brand Stands For.
- Crossover Note 10.** Conventional Wisdom—should it be challenged?
- Crossover Note 16.** When a campaign stumbles.
- Crossover Note 32.** Internal Marketing.

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

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

<b>Business Results Period (Consecutive Months):</b>	April 2008 – April 2009
<b>Start of Advertising/Communications Effort:</b>	April 2008
<b>Base Period for Comparison:</b>	2007 Calendar Year

### a) Synopsis of the Case

In late 2007, Nissan brand awareness and share in Québec had been flat and stagnating for the past two years. **Crossover Note 16**. Although it did not have the sales, market share or budgets of Toyota, Honda and Mazda (the leaders in Québec), Nissan saw an opportunity to reposition the brand and completely rethink its advertising activities and investments.

### b) Summary of Business Results

Nissan recorded its largest-ever percentage growth in sales in 2008—23.4%. This compared to the average 4% increase for all manufacturers in the province. And despite the especially difficult economic context, the results continued into the early months of 2009, with sales exceeding monthly targets three months out of four.

## SITUATION ANALYSIS

### a) Overall assessment

In the fall of 2007, Nissan's SOV and brand awareness were low in Québec and the media presence was of great concern. Competition had increased enormously over the preceding few years because most American manufacturers, when competing with Japanese automakers, had become very aggressive on pricing, discounting and financing.

While Nissan is a Japanese brand, the leadership of Honda and Toyota in product and advertising, particularly in Québec, was the main obstacle to Nissan's sales.

### b) Resulting business objectives

- Increase Nissan sales (2007 target: 21,000; initial 2008 target: 23,000).
- Establish an original creative campaign for Québec to increase awareness, appreciation and purchase intention.
- Completely rethink the communications strategy, including media planning.

### c) Budget Range/Share of Voice

Over \$5 million, Quebec only

## STRATEGY & INSIGHT

### a) Analysis and Insight

Automobile manufacturers' advertising efforts fall into two categories: brand campaigns and retail campaigns. For some time there has been a disconnect between the two.

One of the main insights into the Québec retail automobile market is its higher preoccupation with value for money compared to the rest of Canada.

Average income is lower in Québec, even if the gap is narrowing, than in other provinces (except Atlantic Canada), and Nissan vehicles are still perceived as expensive (although this perception has moderated in recent years).

### b) Communications Strategy

We decided to create one campaign for Nissan in Québec that combines brand and retail, **Crossover Note 10** to build a strong brand that is accessible, reliable, effective and connects with Quebecers.

Nissan's target is adult men and women 25-54, educated and well informed. They want a good deal, without compromising overall quality, performance and fuel efficiency.

Since small vehicles are the majority in Québec, the decision, unlike in the ROC, was to focus on four models that generate volume: Versa, Sentra, Altima and Rogue – rather than dilute effort (and impact) with the complete line. In 2007, four of the five most popular vehicles sold in Québec were small cars, while four of the five most popular models in the ROC were full-size pickup trucks.

Two Nissan models, Versa and Sentra, represent 60% of sales in Québec. So the budget and creative priorities in the new communications strategy focused on these two models.

## CREATIVE EXECUTION

Nissan took ownership of the overarching phrase: "*Gros bon sens.*" There's no exact equivalent in English but the literal equivalent "Big Common Sense" gives the idea of straight-ahead common sense. **Crossover Note 1.** It had multiple applications:

- with various models;
- with the proprietary technology;
- to establish rapid credibility for price and product through third-party endorsement by the *Gros bon sens* character (see later);
- with the Nissan corporate team and the retailer network throughout Québec. **Crossover Note 32.**

This concept helped alter the Québec perception that Nissans are expensive. And the concept was so generous, friendly and relevant that it created a strong and positive Québec personality for the brand.

*Gros bon sens* was the central concept for the campaign and was applied to every component, including newspaper, online and POS in dealerships. On television, *Gros bon sens* was an approachable guy who arrives at a Nissan plant and connects with employees, engineers, receptionist, etc. He's not a spokesman or Nissan employee. Rather, he's the symbol of Nissan and its products.

The actor was selected to embody all the elements of the role. He represents the typical consumer, is uncomplicated, likeable, has no pretensions and displays an obvious and natural logic. In choosing an actor who was not widely known we were also able to associate him exclusively with the brand.

Since Nissan does not have the revenues of Honda, it does not have the means to compete with the campaigns of Martin Matte, Québec's advertising leader in this niche for many years. The creative strategy was to use intelligent humour in order to get the same impact, creating an entirely new personality that strikes a strong chord in Québec: *Gros bon sens*. The campaign launched in April with three TV messages:

- The **intro** message shows the arrival of the *Gros bon sens* character at Nissan:



- The **Versa** message has *Gros bon sens* working with engineers at the Nissan plant to ensure that it is the best vehicle possible:



- The **Sentra** message has *Gros bon sens* making recommendations for the sedan:



Added to the three TV ads were a newspaper teaser ad and newspaper ads, a web banner and POS materials for dealerships, all under the *Gros bon sens* theme. A few examples:

The image displays several Nissan advertisements:

- Top Left:** A newspaper ad with the headline "ENFIN UN CONSTRUCTEUR QUI N'A PAS PEUR DU GROS BON SENS." and the Nissan logo.
- Top Middle:** A newspaper ad titled "C'EST L'ESSENCE MÊME DU GROS BON SENS." featuring the Altima 2.5S CVT 2008 (298\$) and Versa 1.8S 2009 à rayon (188\$).
- Top Right:** A newspaper ad titled "NOUVEAUX PRIX 2009" featuring the Rogue (23 798\$) and Versa 1.8S 2009 à rayon (13 598\$).
- Bottom Left:** A gas station sign that reads "20¢ DE RABAIS SUR CHAQUE LITRE" with a red gas pump nozzle.
- Bottom Middle:** A sign that reads "FAITES LE PLEIN DE GROS BON SENS." with the Nissan logo.
- Bottom Right:** A Quebec license plate that reads "GROS BON SENS" and "Je me souviens".

Five more TV ads followed, as well as newspaper, POS and web banners. Some magazine and outdoor also covered July to December.

- A second Versa ad in July («Coup de foudre»):



- Sales and lease ad in September («Achat location»):



- A Rogue ad in November:



- Outdoor billboards in June:



- Web banners in September:



The campaign continued into early 2009, with new material produced with very small budgets but big impact: Nissan created its own *2009 Guide du gros bon sens*, a response to the many car-buying guides in Québec. Again, here are a few examples:

TV message («GBS 2010 Versa»):



POS material and newspaper ad:



## MEDIA EXECUTION

This was totally new, and included:

- Foundation media of television (reach/connection) and full page four-colour newspapers (convincing)
- Significant increase in newspapers (like Mazda, Toyota and Honda)
- Withdrawal of radio to allow for more concentration in TV (recall)
- Increased web presence as well as search engine key words
- Secondary media such as magazines and outdoor billboards
- Maximized investments in spring and fall (main months for sales)

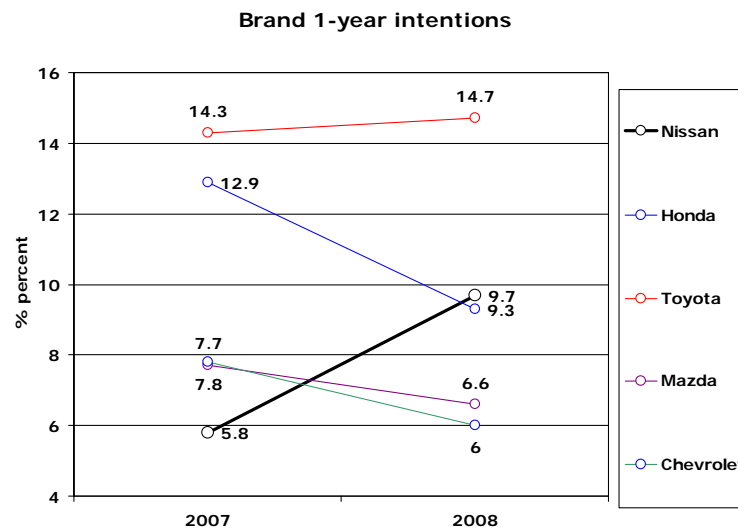
## BUSINESS RESULTS

- Nissan recorded the largest percentage sales growth in its history in Québec at 23.4% with a total of 28,286 vehicles sold in 2008, placing the company in the top ranks among all automobile manufacturers in the province. The result was exceptional compared with the 4% increase for all manufacturers in Quebec.
- This was equivalent to a 19% increase in market share (from 5.52% to 6.57%), another outstanding result. Nissan soared to the Number 2 rank in Québec for the first time.
- Despite the especially difficult economic context, the results continued into 2009, with sales exceeding monthly targets three months out of four.

## CAUSE & EFFECT BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND RESULTS

Sales of Nissan vehicles in Québec were up by 23.4% in 2008. This compared favourably with Nissan's situation in the ROC during the same period: sales were up by 8.7% in 2008, with a different media strategy and creative campaign. Other brand indicators confirmed (reports from GFK - end of 2008 vs end of 2007):

- Opinion of Nissan more than doubled from 16 points to 35, this being the reference point for a healthy brand. It is the highest level reached in Nissan history.
- Nissan saw 1-year purchase intentions increase from 5.8% to 9.7% – by far the biggest increase vs. the competition (only one other manufacturer seeing a slight increase).



## RESULTS - COMPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

The second year of the *Gros bon sens* campaign started a few months ago and is going well. We are seeing continuing positive results – an important point, without getting into all the details, since the context is different (difficult economy, declining media investment, evolution of the campaign for the second season).

Two new *Gros bon sens* television ads were produced and aired in the spring, and an OMNIBUS Survey conducted by Ipsos Descarie (June 2009) confirmed these results:

- **The ads obtained consistent and very positive results** in Montréal and the rest of Québec. Recall levels were 66% and 75% in Montréal, and 75% and 83% in the rest of Québec. In both cases, the results were above the norms of 61% for Montréal and 67% for the rest of Québec.
- **Respondents not only recalled the ads, but appeared to do so fondly, with appreciation levels that exceeded the norms in each market.** In total, 71% in Montréal appreciated the advertisements “somewhat” or “very much” while 74% in the rest of Québec felt the same way. These were both above the 66% norm.
- **55% of respondents were able to correctly identify Nissan as the sponsor of the advertisements.** This was superior to the 50% norm.

A second survey during the same period confirmed the results. The “Dominance” column in *Infopresse* magazine (see next page) quoted the following:

- For the first time, Nissan was ranked #1 for the most-noticed advertising – all media, all advertisers
- Nissan also was ranked #1 for most-noticed advertising in television
- Nissan was ranked #2 for appreciation of messages, just behind Honda. It was the first time that Nissan was a contender in the competition, dominated for several years by Honda.

## Dominance

Maxime Duchesne  
dominance@infopresse.com

Sondage Infopresse / Impact Recherche sur la notoriété des campagnes publicitaires

# Ça roule pour Nissan

Les résultats de notre sondage mené en mai révèlent la popularité de la récente campagne de Nissan, axée sur « le gros bon sens ». L'annonceur apparaît au classement de notoriété générale ainsi qu'à la télévision et dans les pubs les plus appréciées. En plus, cette opération a été honorée d'un prix au concours Strat, qui récompense les meilleures stratégies de communication au Québec.

Avec ces résultats, Nissan devient un fort concurrent à Honda, qui dominait la catégorie automobile lors des derniers sondages. Honda apparaît dans quatre catégories (tous médias, télé, journaux et parmi les publicités les plus appréciées). Reste à voir si la plateforme créative de Nissan « performera » aussi bien, sinon mieux, que celle de Honda sur une longue période.

Brault & Martineau est le seul annonceur avec Honda dans quatre catégories et le seul dans trois médias (télé, radio et journaux, en plus d'être parmi les publicités les moins aimées).

Les publicités télé d'Industrielle Alliance, qui misent sur l'humour décalé de Jean-Thomas Jobin, s'inscrivent en notoriété générale et dans les pubs télévisées, mais déplaisent plus que le contraire, comme en témoigne leur présence parmi les pubs les moins aimées.

À noter que pour fêter ses 10 ans, Sloche (de Couche-Tard) et son jus de clown apparaissent parmi les publicités les moins appréciées. Avant son entrée en ondes, la campagne avait déjà son lot de détracteurs. À ce sujet, la présence d'un annonceur au sondage Dominance publicité est parfois attribuable en partie aux retombées de presse générées par la publicité et/ou la marque.

Il est intéressant de constater qu'aucun annonceur dans la catégorie internet n'a obtenu les 2 % nécessaires pour apparaître dans les classements.

La télévision demeure le média pour lequel le taux de rappel est le plus élevé. Au total, 83 % des participants peuvent y nommer un annonceur, alors que la proportion est de 56 % ou moins pour les autres médias (journaux, magazines, affichage, radio et même internet, où le sondage a été réalisé).

MAXIME DUCHESNE EST DIRECTEUR DE COMPTES D'IMPACT RECHERCHE.

**Méthodologie :** Dominance est un sondage exclusif présenté par Infopresse et Impact Recherche. Cueillette réalisée par internet du 14 au 20 mai 2009, 392 participants. Marge d'erreur statistique maximale 5%. Homme: 48%, femme: 52%; 18-34 ans: 26%, 35 ans et plus: 74%.

### Les publicités les plus remarquées

COLLECTE DE DONNÉES: DU 14 AU 20 MAI 2009 / QUÉBEC (392 PARTICIPANTS)

