

CASSIES 2011 Cases

Brand/Case: Activia Revolutionises the Canadian Yogurt Industry

Winner: Sustained Success—Gold

Client Credits: Danone

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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 CASSIES1997. The full set for CASSIES 2011 can be downloaded from the Case Library section at www.cassies.ca

- Crossover Note 1. What a Brand Stands For.
- Crossover Note 2. Brand Truths.
- Crossover Note 14. Refreshing a continuing campaign.
- Crossover Note 20. Emotional versus Rational.

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):	June 2004 – December 2009
Start of Advertising/Communication Effort:	June 2004
Base Period for Comparison:	Historical Trends

This is the story of Activia by Danone, a delicious yogurt with a unique probiotic culture called B.L. Regularis™, an ingredient that is proven to promote regularity and the healthy functioning of the digestive system.

Canadian legislation prevented Danone from claiming the specific health benefits of this probiotic culture, since the bacteria's effects had yet to be recognized by Health Canada. This was a sizeable challenge because we had to convince Canadians to buy Activia at a price 10% to 30% higher than regular yogurts, but we couldn't refer to the principal benefit.

Activia's outstanding taste helped the brand reach the top of its yogurt category, but a greater comprehension of its benefits would take it to unseen levels. The strategy consisted of communicating the emotional benefit of the product in order to suggest its functional benefit. **Crossover Note 20.** This took the form of the "dance" and "belly square" platforms.

Using the "dance" platform, Activia became the leading yogurt in Canada in 2007, with a market share of 14.9 points. In just three years since its 2004 launch it had overtaken prestigious brands such as Source by Yoplait and Silhouette by Danone—knocking them off their leadership positions.

From 2007 to this day, the creative platform "belly square" has replaced "dance" and this has enabled us to further clarify Activia's functional benefit. Comprehension increased by 25 points, market penetration by 10 points, market share by 6 points, and volume by 71%. These increases took the brand to unseen heights in the category.

Activia Canada is also going global. The campaign has been taken up by several other countries (Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Moldavia, Romania, Germany, etc) and we have every reason to be proud of the international reach of this campaign made in Quebec.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

A brand rich in possibilities...

Activia was the first Canadian yogurt to offer consumers a functional benefit. Scientific studies have shown that daily consumption of the probiotic culture B.L. Regularis™, unique to Activia, contributes to regularity in the digestive system. The brand therefore arrived on the market with an undeniable competitive advantage. This was an incredible opportunity, because half of all Canadians are known to experience digestive problems.¹

¹ CROP, usage and attitudes survey, May 2008

First challenge: Raise Awareness of Activia's USP while Respecting Legal Limitations

The *Food and Drugs Act* and *Regulations* place heavy restrictions on claims regarding the biological role of nutritional elements, limiting them to functions generally recognized as associated with nutritional elements. In no case must they refer directly or indirectly to the treatment, mitigation or prevention of any disease, disorder or abnormal physical state, or symptoms thereof, nor may they refer directly or indirectly to correcting, restoring or modifying organic functions. In other words, Health Canada does not allow us to clearly communicate the functional benefits of Activia to consumers.

Other Challenges

In 2003, a qualitative CROP² survey told us that 'probiotic' and 'functional foods' were not part of our target's vocabulary. Four years later, these words had become a part of that vocabulary, although the understanding of their benefits remained limited.

Then new players (Astro Biobest Vitalité and Pro Advantage by President's Choice), offering similar benefits, arrived on the market in January 2008. They have copied the Activia colour code and used similar icons to represent product benefits. Astro even named its brand after vitality—Activia's emotional benefit. Post-advertising studies have confirmed, however, that Astro's confusion strategy has been beneficial for Activia. In a way it has given Activia free advertising.

The need to consolidate Activia's market position and ensure its growth has nevertheless become a significant concern. With more products being offered, and increased advertising noise, we had to convince new users that they could benefit from Activia.

Marketing Objectives

- Increase market share with non-users (penetration)

Communication Objectives

- Increase awareness and understanding of the product's beneficial effects in spite of Health Canada restrictions.
- Increase perceived superiority of the product (due to its benefits and taste).

² CROP, qualitative research, August 2003

INSIGHT & STRATEGY

Target

This has been women aged 30 to 54 in charge of grocery shopping. They must reconcile family and professional life and they are interested in health, but they do not always have the time to do what is best for them. They occasionally suffer from digestive problems (bloating, irregularity, constipation, etc.) caused by stress or poor diet.

Key Consumer Insight

Research showed that women with digestive problems adopt a "cave mentality." They lose all desire to socialize or take part in activities. They want to be alone, dress comfortably, stay on the sofa and wait until the symptoms disappear. [Crossover Note 2](#).

A qualitative survey³ revealed that women know digestive health is important for physical and mental well-being and that its main benefit is *vitality*. [Crossover Note 1](#). When their digestive health improves, they feel free, better about themselves and are ready to open up and face people. In other words, they want to celebrate their renewed vitality. This inspired the development of the "dance" platform.

Strategy

We decided to apply a building blocks strategy whereby each medium would contain a specific message designed to attain a precise objective. We used television for awareness, magazines and the Internet to educate consumers on the benefit, and POS to stimulate purchase intent.

Evolution over Time

After 18 months, we came to the conclusion that our target loves Activia, but does not consume it in the optimal manner. The culture's full beneficial effect can be felt when it is consumed over a period of approximately 14 days. To get people into this habit, we created the Activia 14-Day Challenge. [Crossover Note 14](#).

We then learned that only half of women were aware of Activia's beneficial effect⁴ and that 26% of them were not Activia consumers. If we wanted the lion's share, we would have to emphasize the product's very specific value. We therefore moved from body vitality to belly vitality. [Crossover Note 14, again](#).

The "belly square" was how we met this challenge. It is superimposed over the bellies of people who have tasted the product, conveying the message that consuming Activia makes the belly happy. This enabled us to achieve our penetration objectives, and we are now seeking to increase purchase frequency with the Activia Dessert line which was launched in 2010.

³ CROP, qualitative research, August 2003

⁴ CROP, usage and attitudes survey, May 2007

EXECUTION

THE "DANCE" PLATFORM – 2004 to 2007

In order to maximize brand registration, all our communications have tapped into the “Activia green” brand colour from the beginning. We also developed a key visual to illustrate the product's benefits. This is a yellow arrow pointing downward on a woman’s abdomen, and it has been used throughout.

TV is the medium most heavily regulated by law. An entertaining metaphor for the benefit was found in “dancing.” with vitality creating a strong emotional connection with consumers. All television visuals and promotional messages during this phase have been based on this creative platform. Here are a few executions to illustrate.

First Activia Equity campaign

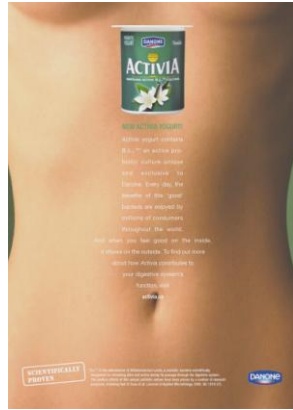


First Activia Challenge campaign

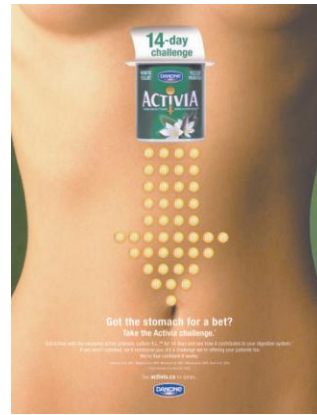


Recognizing that consumers would have questions, we created magazine ads and the Activia.ca Website, as these two media enabled us to provide much more information on Activia’s beneficial effects.

Equity magazine ad



Challenge magazine ad



Homepage - Equity campaign



Homepage – Challenge campaign



In-store displays and sampling got the public to experience Activia while sharing the health facts relating to the product with banners, kiosks, Activia specialists, leaflets and more.

In-store display - Equity campaign



In-store display - Challenge campaign



THE "BELLY SQUARE" PLATFORM – 2008 to this day

In spring 2008, we developed the first 360° campaign based on the "belly square."

All disciplines worked together to make sure the whole communication was fully integrated. The communication mix of Equity and Challenge campaigns was never in question. We were not about to change a winning recipe.

We used television to extend reach at the national level, and establish the new icon. We also relied on new music that would soon become one of the brand's signatures.

First Activia Equity campaign with the "belly square"



The results were so conclusive that we were able to use the "belly square" as a simple suggestion or signature in subsequent executions.

First Activia Challenge campaigns with the "belly square"



With the launch of the "belly dance" platform in 2008, the records set in 2007 were soon beaten. Since 2007, Activia volume (in tons) has increased by 71% and market share by 6 points, exceeding the 20% level in June 2009. With all of these gains, Activia sales nearly doubled, from \$150 million to \$252 million.

Moreover, Activia sales did not cannibalize Danone's former leading brand, Silhouette, which experienced little loss in market share following Activia's arrival. Not only did Activia create an "Active Health" segment, it also made a significant contribution to overall growth in the yogurt category in Canada.

Activia's market penetration also went from 3.7% in Q4 2004 to 29.2% in Q4 2007, an increase of 25 points. Since the introduction of the "belly square" this has increased by 13 more points to reach 41.9% in Q3 2009. Even more impressively, in 2009 Canada became the country where Activia has the highest market penetration, overtaking countries where the brand has been established for much longer.

CAUSE & EFFECT BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND RESULTS

Both the Equity and Challenge Campaigns have contributed to Activia's success.

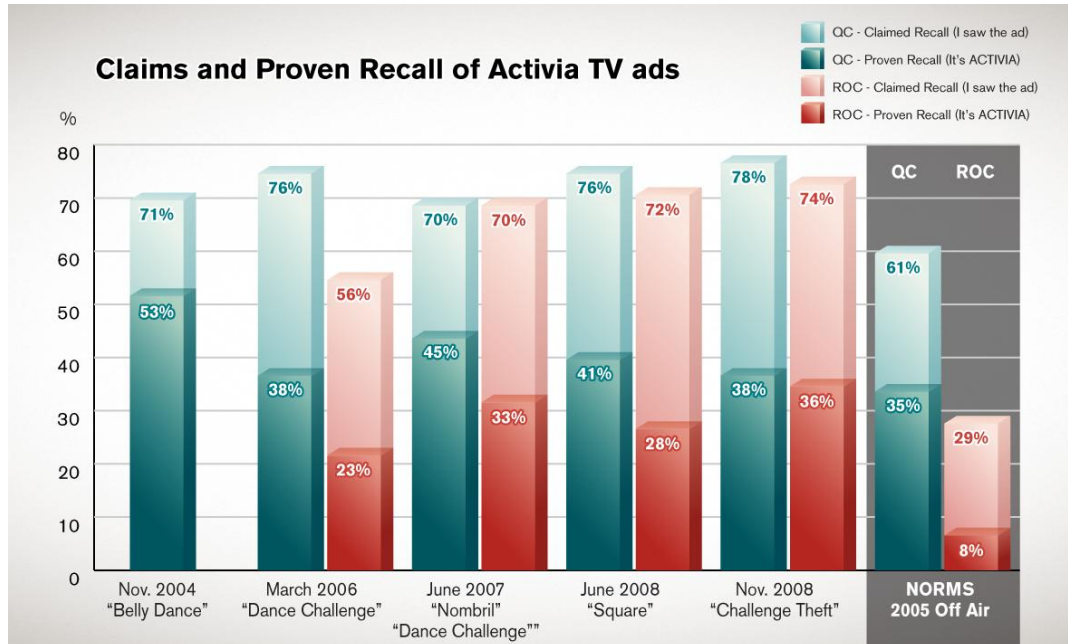
Each time an Equity commercial has been broadcast, the brand has increased share by 0.4 to 1.9 points. The table below shows the impact of the various ads on market share:

TV spot	Broadcast	Market Share \$ increase by period
Belly Dance 1	June to October 2004	June to September: +1.9 points
	February to March 2005	January to March: +1.6 points
Belly Dance 2	August to September 2005	July to September: +0.4 points
	May to July 2006	April to June: +0.6 points
Belly Dance 3	May to June 2007	April to June: + 0.8 points
Square	April to June 2008	April to June: +0.8 points
Challenge Theft 1	September to December 2008	September to December: +1.4 points
	August to October 2009	August to October: +0.9 points
Challenge Theft 2	March to April 2009	March to April: +1.6 points
Crutch	May to August 2009	May to August: +1.5 points

Source: AC Nielsen Market Share from June 2004 to December 2009

Communication that gets noticed

Since Activia's launch, many advertising post-test studies have been conducted. The graphic below clearly demonstrates that the various television ads increased brand recognition.



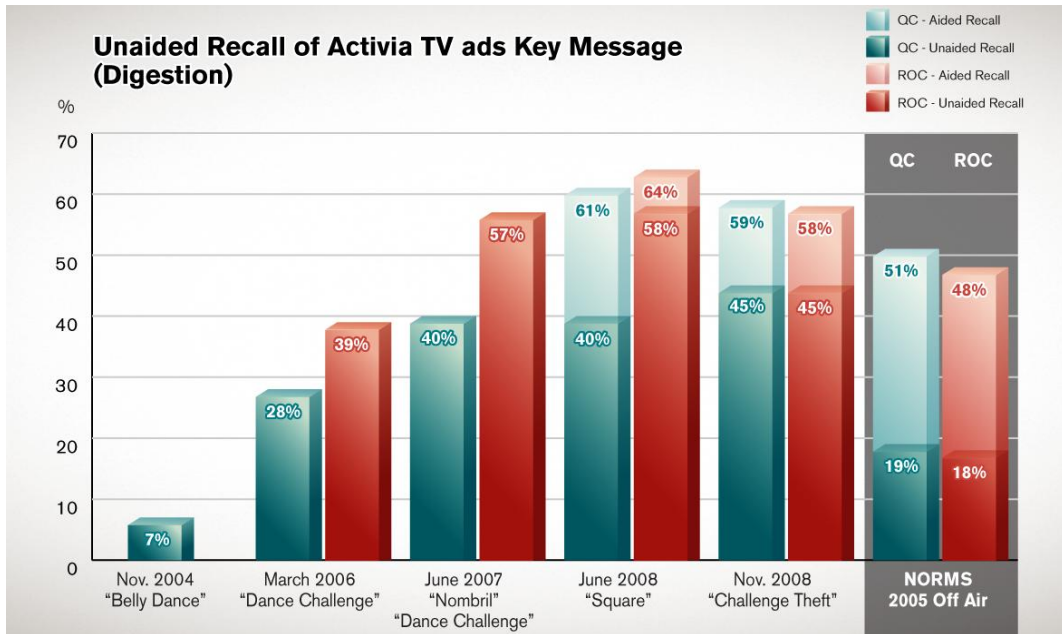
Source: Ad Graph by IPSOS-ASI, November 2004, March 2006, June 2007, June 2008, November 2008

Effective Communication

Even more importantly, these ads were not just seen and noticed, they were understood as well. Their metaphors and icons led to increased understanding of Activia's benefit and successfully met the challenge set by Canadian advertising regulations.

Key visuals were able to open up consumers' imaginations. In 2004, when we asked consumers to describe the Activia message, 17% of respondents mentioned vitality, 13% referred to the B.L. probiotic culture and finally 7% told us that Activia is good for digestion. Two years later, the same items had made dazzling progress, with a minimum increase of at least 29% for each one.

Over time, there has been a constant increase in the number of consumers who recognize that digestion is the primary focus of Activia television communications. The graphic below shows that all expectations were exceeded.



Source: Ad Graph by IPSOS-ASI, November 2004, March 2006, June 2007, June 2008, November 2008

The brand communications were noticed, remembered and understood, and there is no doubt that they made a significant contribution to understanding of the brand's benefit.

The "dance" platform ensured that in 2007, 61% of Canadians were aware of Activia's beneficial effect. The dance metaphor had therefore succeeded in subtly conveying our message. The "belly square" further clarified the benefit by focusing attention directly on the belly. In December 2009, 74% of Quebecers and 71% of English Canadians understood Activia's benefits. This was an increase of 25 points since the creation of the "belly square."

Activia Canada going global

As noted, the "belly square" is now being used in several countries. Some of these have adapted our messages into their respective languages, while others have created concepts that are more appropriate for their markets but which incorporate the "belly square."