

CASSIES 2011 Cases

Brand/Case: Nissan SE-R Project

Winner: Events, Seasonal & Short Term—Gold

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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 10. Conventional Wisdom—should it be challenged?
Crossover Note 17. Turning a liability into a strength.
Crossover Note 28. Media Learning.

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

Section I — BASIC INFORMATION

Business Results Period in Consecutive Months: April 5 2010 – June 30 2010

Start of Advertising/Communication Effort: April 5 2010

Base Period as a Benchmark: Year-Ago

Geographic Area Covered: Canada

Annual Budget Range: \$500K - \$1 million

Section II — SITUATION ANALYSIS

a) Overall Assessment

The small car segment in Canada is the largest and most competitive, with 22 entries. It is dominated by Honda Civic and Toyota Corolla, purchased more for their DQR (durability, quality, reliability) than for their driving dynamics or performance. Nissan Sentra is a small player with 4.6% of the market.

Sentra suffers an unwarranted image problem informed by perceptions of the previous Sentra generation, which was cheap and sold on price. The new Sentra model has been out since 2006, but with relatively little support familiarity is low and sales are below target.

The business strategy was to feature the Sentra SE-R which is Nissan's performance model, to create buzz and differentiation. To enhance the model offering Nissan offered a special discount on the SE-R package.

We targeted auto enthusiasts who knew and understood Sentra SE-R and are interested in small performance cars (pocket rockets). We also wanted to reach unfulfilled daily drivers who pick small cars for pragmatic reasons, but crave a little excitement and don't want to feel like they've settled for a boring car. With them we wanted to challenge the convention that small, inexpensive cars are unremarkable.

But here's the rub: the Canadian Advertising Standards Council had recently implemented a new code of conduct which prevented the portrayal of any driving deemed as extreme or unsafe or fast in TV or cinema car advertising. We needed a disruptive way to tell the story of speed and excitement in this constrictive environment. *In short, we had to sell a fast car without showing speed.* **Crossover Note 17.**

b) Resulting Business Objectives

- Double SE-R's contribution to the SE-R model mix, at the time at 5.8%.
- Increase Sentra sales overall.

Section III — STRATEGIC THINKING

a) Analysis and Insight

The passion for cars and exciting performance is alive and well with our audience. But beyond driving, these guys have a passion for playing. Deep down they're still boys. And while they're fascinated by "cool shit," they're equally fascinated with "how-did-they-make-that?" We wanted to appeal to that spirit, not with yet another car ad, but with branded entertainment. **Crossover Note 29.**

In this segment we have seen the VW Golf, for example, launched using only a video game. A "nation" of similar minds converged through Civic television ads. In our case, we knew that branded content, in the channels that our audience live in, could give us the credentials we were looking for.

b) Communication Strategy

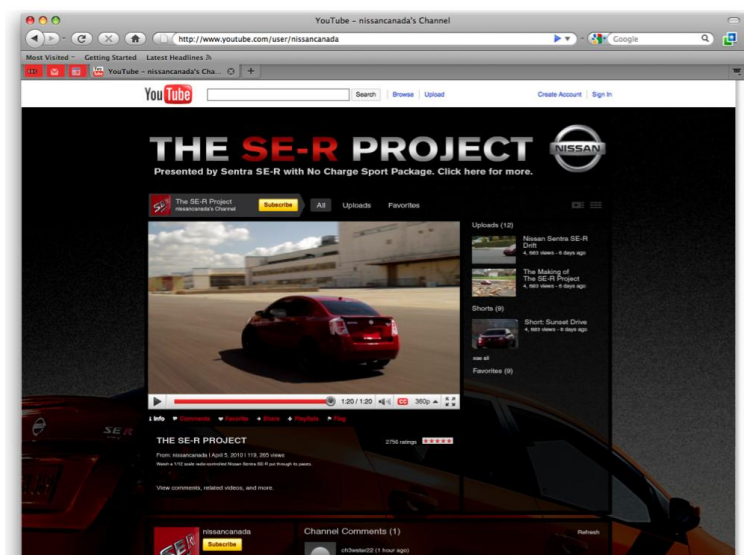
Our challenge was to create a sense of excitement and performance with a limited budget and the new regulations. Our target audience was young males. Given their affinity for video content and entertainment in general we selected YouTube as the primary channel.

Plenty of attempts at "branded entertainment" have fizzled into the black abyss of the web. To ensure success we created entertaining content and pushed it out through a community seeding program, targeted pre-roll ad units before *Top Gear* episodes, pre-roll video during the Stanley Cup playoffs and :10 TV teasers to drive to web.

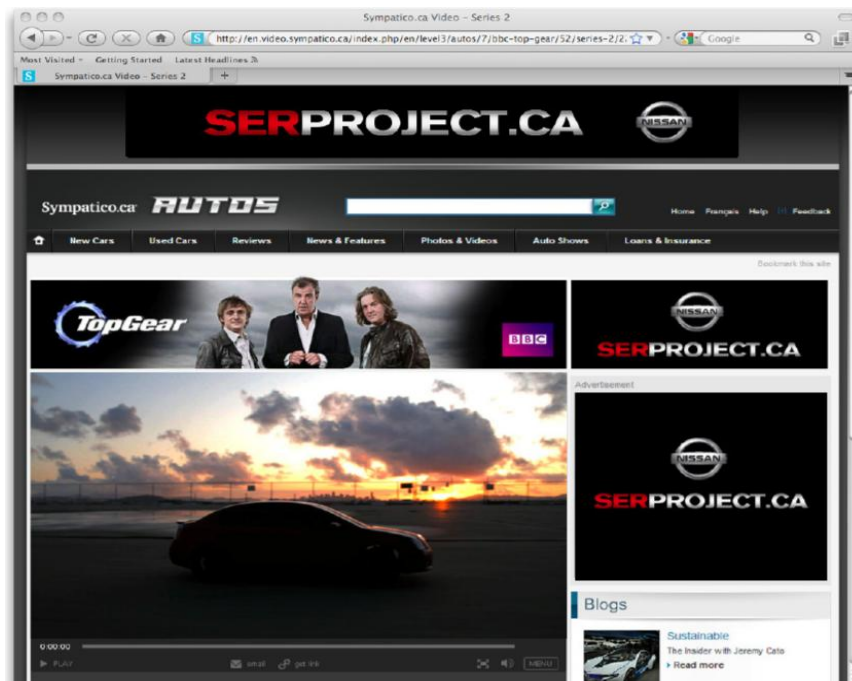
Section IV — KEY EXECUTIONAL ELEMENTS

a) Media Used

CAMPAIGN HUB = YouTube Brand Channel → www.serproject.ca

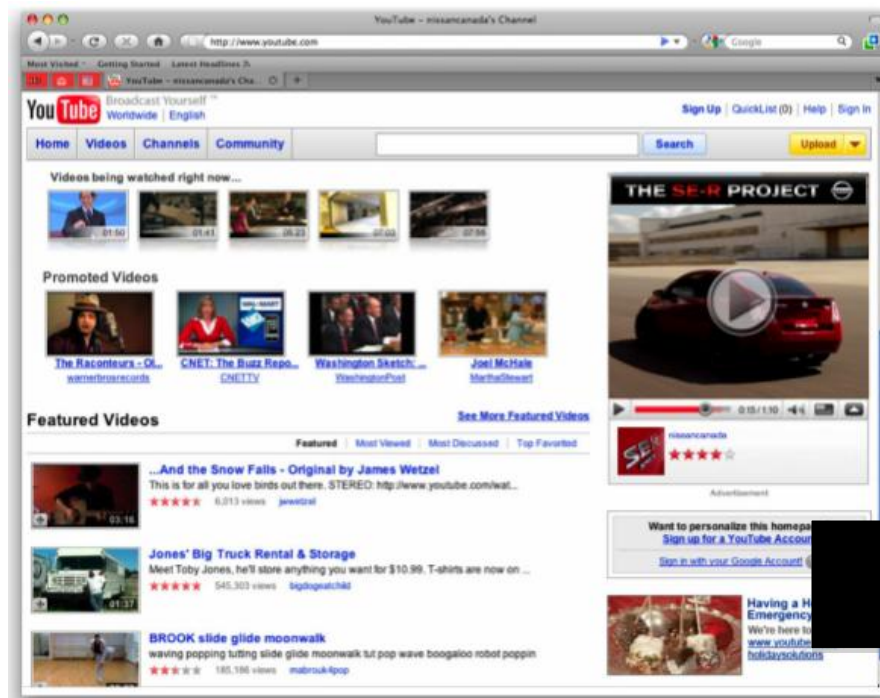


:15 Pre-roll + Page domination → Sympatico/Top Gear

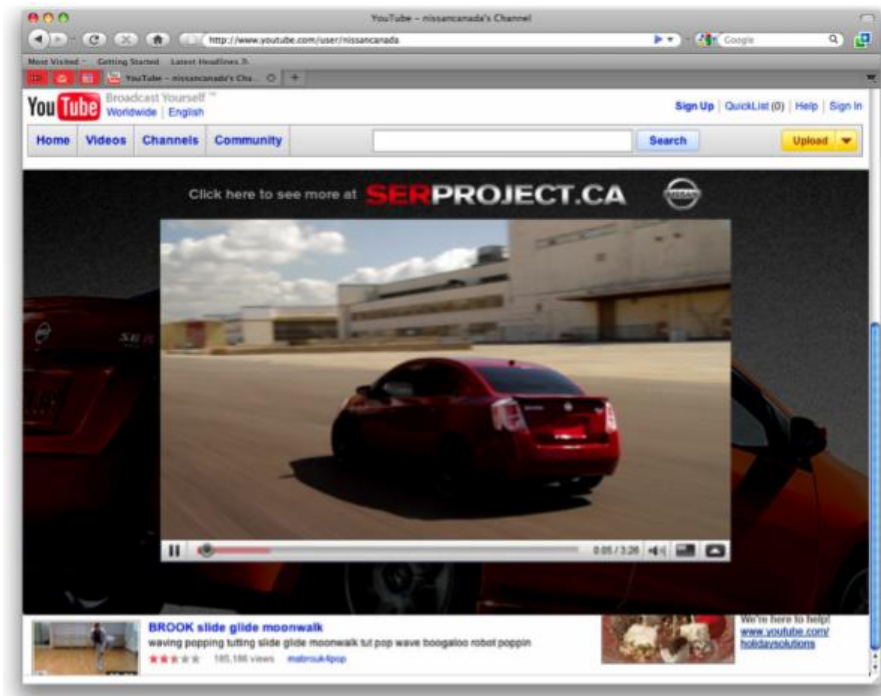


YouTube Takeover

Below: Click to Play Unit x 1 day



Below: Auto Expand Unit x 1 day



:10 TV Teasers Driving to URL

“Industrial”



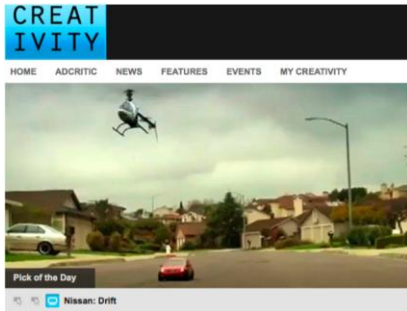
“Puddle”



“Sunset”



Blog Distribution



b) Creative Discussion

In an earlier time the conventions of automotive advertising called for a fast car on a winding road -- a mundane, predictable formula offering less and less opportunity for breakthrough. Perhaps it's a good thing, then, that new regulations prohibited this in mass broadcast media. It forced us to find something new. **Crossover Note 10.**

We created a radio-controlled 1/10 scale model of the Sentra SE-R and made it the hero of a 77-second web video. The video used traditional camera angles and techniques, but all at a 1/10 scale. A remote-control helicopter and 1/10 scale camera car were used for some shots and appear in the final video. The beginning of the spot is shot in a way that intentionally misdirects the audience into thinking they are watching the real Sentra SE-R. As the spot progresses they realize the car is a 1/10 scale model. The spot finishes with the scale model parked next to a full-size Sentra SE-R, revealing that you can have the life-size version at a "starting from" price.

c) Media Discussion

This "Drift" video was the focal point of all creative, and lived primarily on the Nissan Canada YouTube brand channel. Once users watched "Drift" they were also presented with opportunities to take a deeper look into how the entire spot was created, through a seven-minute "Making Of" video. From here banner ads on our own YouTube brand channel directed users to the Corporate website and the Sentra SE-R landing page.

Prior to the launch of purchased media, we launched the film virally through Blog Seeding. This was a client and agency first and proved to be one of the most successful methodologies to promote and distribute branded entertainment to a tech savvy/gear-head audience. **Crossover Note 28.** In carefully isolating our target, we were able to deliver our content in an honest and believable fashion – resulting in hundreds of thousands of views. Along with our primary 77-second film, we purchased YouTube takeovers to a massive number of views during a 24-hour period. We followed the home page take-over 25 days later with a half-screen take-over which automatically played the entire "Drift" film.

We paired with Sympatico video to take over their entire Top Gear channel with branded banners and a 15 second pre-roll video playing before each episode. We also created 3 x 10 second teaser spots to drive to the www.serproject.ca URL.

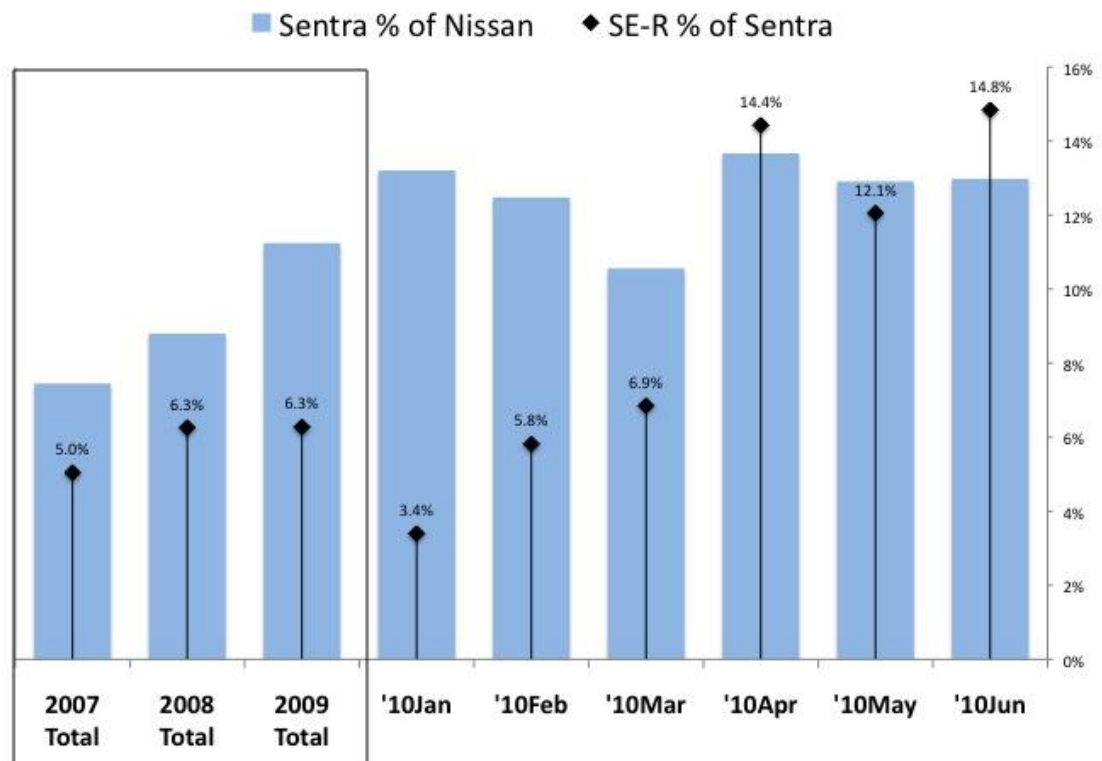
Section V — BUSINESS RESULTS

Despite not having paid media at launch, the first week delivered over 360,000 views of the “Drift” film, shattering the initial target of 75,000.

Sales

The objective was to double SE-R’s contribution to Sentra sales, and increase Sentra sales overall. Against this, from April to June 2010:

- SE-R’s contribution more than doubled, jumping into the 12 – 14% range (see chart)
- SE-R sales increased 138% versus the same period in 2009
- Sentra sales increased 11.8%, giving Sentra its highest compact share in five years
- Total Nissan sales increased 1.7%



source: R.L. Polk Canada

In addition to these sales results we have the following to share:

YouTube

642,000 video views (72% Canadian)

1.4 million full-time video views during homepage take-over auto-play

4.9 out of 5 average video rating

#21 Most Viewed Video (May 2010) – Canada

#1 Most Viewed Video (May 2010) – Autos & Vehicles - Canada

#4 Most Viewed Video (May 2010) – Autos & Vehicle

Other Social Media

#3 on Motor Trend Viral Video Chart (May 2010)
400 + blog postings covering the video
4000 + shares on Facebook

Nissan.ca Traffic

752% increase in traffic to Nissan Canada SE-R page
→ based on pre-campaign traffic/average
18% increase in traffic to Nissan.ca
→ 2nd week total

Web Traffic: Nissan.ca, SER page

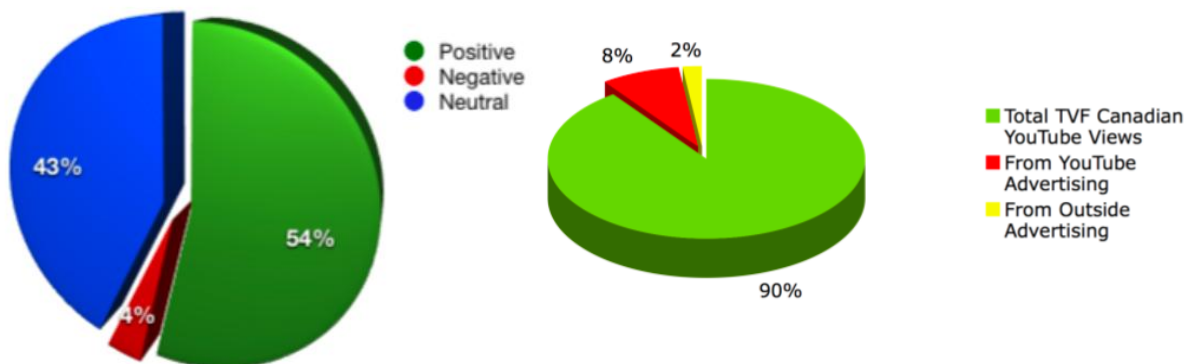
	Nissan.ca	Total SER page	YouTube referrals
7-days pre-campaign	96,160	694	N/A
Highest week	113,449 (w2)	6,185 (w3)	4,851 (w3)
Weekly Average (Apr 5 – May 2)	109,267	5,639	3,409
Weekly Average (May 3 – Jun 8)	101,410	3,540	938
Total Visits (Apr 5 – Jun 8)	973,091	41,264	18,595

Section VI — CAUSE & EFFECT BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND RESULTS

a) General Discussion

Through extensive tracking it's clear that the SE-R effort was building positive awareness for Sentra and SE-R:

Nissan Drift - YouTube Sentiment



Sources: Google Analytics, YouTube Insight

b) Excluding Other Factors

- **Spending Levels** – As an experiment in social media, these were *lower* than norm
- **Pricing** – while a special discount package was offered on the SE-R model, sales of the package exceeded business plans by 50%
- **Distribution Changes** – Distribution of the SE-R specific model has not been affected by supply chain, new stores, or growth into new markets.
- **Unusual Promotional Activity** – none
- **Other Potential Causes** – during an economic downturn, there were no convincing “other factors” to account for the success of SE-R project.

END