

FEATURE **MARKETING DESIGN**

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Hondamentalism – a visually arresting multimedia advertising campaign that is exploring new ground.

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For those in the know, the name Honda is synonymous with good and reliable engines. Honda has always kept its pulse on innovation: at the height of the energy crisis in 1973 it managed to produce the stratified charge engine, similar to the diesel system but using petrol. It was also the first to produce a four wheel steering passenger car with rear wheel steering in the opposite direction. Even though as a manufacturer it is nowhere near as large as other car companies, Honda is still allegedly the largest engine maker in the world producing over 14 millions internal

combustion engines every year. In fact, the company's strategy is studied in business schools as a *sui generis*.

Honda started exporting to the US in the 1960s as a small concern, it opened offices in California and managed to establish itself in a short period of time as a strong competitor. Whether that was due to its marketing, the hard work of its staff, or both, is still an open question. At any rate, 'The power of dreams' has, aptly enough, long been its official slogan, having assumed various incarnations up until its latest award-winning 'Hondamentalism'

campaign, the brainchild of Wieden & Kennedy London.

TESTING GROUND

The UK market seems to be the privileged testing ground of Honda's advertising experiments, and the company has adopted so many different ways to publicise its products

extending the reach of the Honda Civic marketing campaign. It is enabling people to experience what a Honda feels like from one of their most personal and closest touch points - their iPod.' comments John Goodbody, the web manager at Honda.

But wasn't Honda's Civic a huge success amongst drivers because of its comfort, safety

Soichiro Honda was the original hondamentalist, a man who loved racing and extreme engineering. Pushing bikes, cars, and boats to their limit. Eking the most potential out of everything. Down to the smallest nut or bolt. This is Hondamentalism. [Official website]



that as much effort and resources must have been put in that department as have been invested in engineering these vehicles.

However, 'the power of dreams' in its latest guise has begun to look something more like a dream of power: it is not enough that we passively consume the advertising bombardment, now marketing campaigns are geared to be engaging enough to recruit you into more than simply a nod at the right moments and a signature in the right place at the car showroom.

This was clear in the first of their digital campaigns, when in 2006 they ventured deeply into multimedia territory with short, targeted internet based films about its products. 'By engaging in videocasting, Honda is not only strengthening its commitment to reach new markets, it's

and decent consumption rates, rather than the visual spectacle that announced its arrival?

The media have been interested in Hondamentalism partly because it has received much in the way of praise and prizes, yet however innovative, the car manufacturer's marketing strategy is so multimedia that you need to have at least two pieces of equipment to be on message and grasp their concept: only committed customers are welcome to savour it.

To advertise one of their latest SUVs they expected people to tune into a radio station to hear the answer to questions posted on billboards such as 'What does this SUV and this animal have in common?' (no, greenie, the answer is not the driver!), using a form of discriminative marketing that aptly singles out and targets the potential SUV buyers'