

TOYOTA SCION'S INNOVATIVE ADVERTISING STRATEGIES

Toyota is becoming the number one car manufacturer while locked in aggressive competition with GM, Honda, and other car manufacturers. Toyota has been known for decades for its manufacturing innovations. Now it is becoming an innovative leader on the Web. Here we look at one of its newest brands, the Scion, which is geared toward Generation Y (consumers 35 years of age and younger).

Scion is using segmented advertising as its major strategy. The company also uses mass advertising and one-to-one targeted advertising, all of which are aimed at increasing brand recognition. Its efforts have been successful; according to MarketingVox News (2007a), Scion has 80-percent brand recognition. As of April 2007, Scion was the number one click-and-mortar e-tailer among consumers 35 and younger. Scion did not even make the top 27 sites in 2006; the jump to its number one ranking has been due to the interactive and community-oriented nature of the Scion online experience. The Scion Web site is highly personalized. Consumers can use sophisticated customization tools to build their own cars on the site and save their work. This online information is then integrated offline—a local dealership locates the desired vehicle (or a similar vehicle) and prepares it for a test drive. Other frills, such as a social network for Scion car owners and a

Web site that plays music and lists concert information, make for a brand experience that tries to match its target audience. Let's look at some of Scion's specific advertising activities:

- According to a Clickz report (2007), Scion uses display ads and more on sites such as Blastro (*blastro.com*) and HipHopDX (*hiphopdx.com*) that reach urban audiences. It also works with these sites to make the ads attractive to their site readership.
- In August 2007, Scion launched Club Scion, a three-story virtual nightclub with dance floors, music, and hot tubs in a virtual world site. Each level reflects a different Scion model, which include xA, xB, and tC.
- Scion also has a presence in other large virtual worlds, including Second Life (*secondlife.com*), Whyville (*whyville.com*), There (*there.com*), and Gaia (*Gaia.com*). Scion tracks virtual return on investment (ROI) through online chatter. The brand's Scion City in Second Life generated 10,000 blog posts between April and June of 2007 and is the third most recognized brand behind Reuters in Second Life awareness. Each virtual world lends itself to a different marketing strategy. In Whyville, where users tend to fall between ages 8 and 15, the company launched a kind of virtual driver's education. And because There

is populated by older teens, Scion made sure to create a more provocative social environment.

- ▶ Another strategy is the use of live chats. Toyota made effective use of the Internet by using live chat to attract the 18-to-24-year-old audience. Also, part of the campaign is the use of microapplication ads

that allow consumers to stencil designs over the picture of the Scion.

The onsite chat gets hundreds of conversations per week. Prior to the chat, users are asked a few questions, one of which is where they live. Interestingly, Toyota found that many of the

Real-World Case: Scion



Source: scion.com/#tCPhotoGallery_modified

chatters reside in areas where Scion is not even available, providing valuable information for dealer expansion plans.

- ▶ In the wireless area, in 2004 Toyota launched a mobile advergaming called "Scion Road Trip." Players accrued virtual miles by sending e-cards to friends and getting back responses. The campaign lasted for several months.
- ▶ For the 2008 xB car, Scion created a special Web site, want2bsquare.com. The site allows users to earn points by playing games, watching videos, and e-mailing others about the site. The site features eight microsites, including user community features. Each microsite has a unique theme, with one focusing on music. Each microsite also has its own design. One resembles a Monty Python set, another a haunted house. Other microsites include a town square and an urban zoo.
- ▶ Toyota targets children to influence their parents. In April 2007, Toyota began paying to place its Scion on Whyville, an online interactive community populated almost entirely by children and young teens. Toyota hopes Whyvillians will do two things: influence their parents' car purchases and that the

children grow up to buy a Toyota themselves. Ten days into the campaign, the *New York Times* reported that visitors to the site had used the word "Scion" in online chats more than 78,000 times; hundreds of virtual Scions were purchased using "clams," the currency of Whyville; and the community meeting place, "Club Scion" was visited 33,741 times. The power of younger consumers has grown stronger in recent years. According to *MediaBuyerPlanner.com* (2007) a study by Packaged Facts showed that 39 percent of parents of 10- and 11-year-olds say their children have a significant impact on brand purchases.

- ▶ Finally, like several other automakers, Scion is creating its own broadband channel. These channels are viewed as a way to make the move from push to pull marketing where the consumer decides what materials to view and when. A content-rich, broadband-friendly site is seen as an always-on marketing channel to which people will return.

Sources: Compiled from scion.com (accessed February 2008), Bosman (2006), MediaBuyerPlanner.com (2007), and MarketingVox.com (2007a, 2007b, and 2007c).