



What happened when Honda started asking questions?
IPA Effectiveness Awards 2004
Stuart Smith, Wieden + Kennedy

EVER WONDERED WHAT THE MOST COMMONLY USED WORD IN THE WORLD IS?

OK OK?

MAN'S FAVOURITE WORD IS ONE THAT MEANS ALRIGHT, SATISFACTORY...
NOT BAD...

SO WHY INVENT THE LIGHTBULB, WHEN CANDLES ARE OK?

WHY MAKE LIFTS, IF STAIRS ARE OK?

EARTH'S OK, WHY GO TO THE MOON?

CLEARLY, NOT EVERYBODY BELIEVES OK IS OK.

WE CERTAINLY DON'T

AND WE WERE WONDERING.....WHAT WOULD THE WORLD BE LIKE IF ITS
FAVOURITE WORD WASN'T OK?

WHAT IF WE COULD CHANGE IT?

WHAT IF THE WORD WAS....

WHATIF?



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What's this paper about?

It's about belief in the power of dreams demonstrating belief in the commercial power of ideas.

What?

OK... it's a paper that shows how – and how much - Honda's communication has worked in the last 2 years. It answers a question about what happened to Honda when it started asking questions.

It chronicles the journey of an integrated campaign; from conception through to record sales. Via bananas, cogs and leopard-skin traffic cones.

Along the way, it states its case with a wealth of familiar measures, as well as introducing a few new ones.

So where does the journey start?

Was there a happy ending?

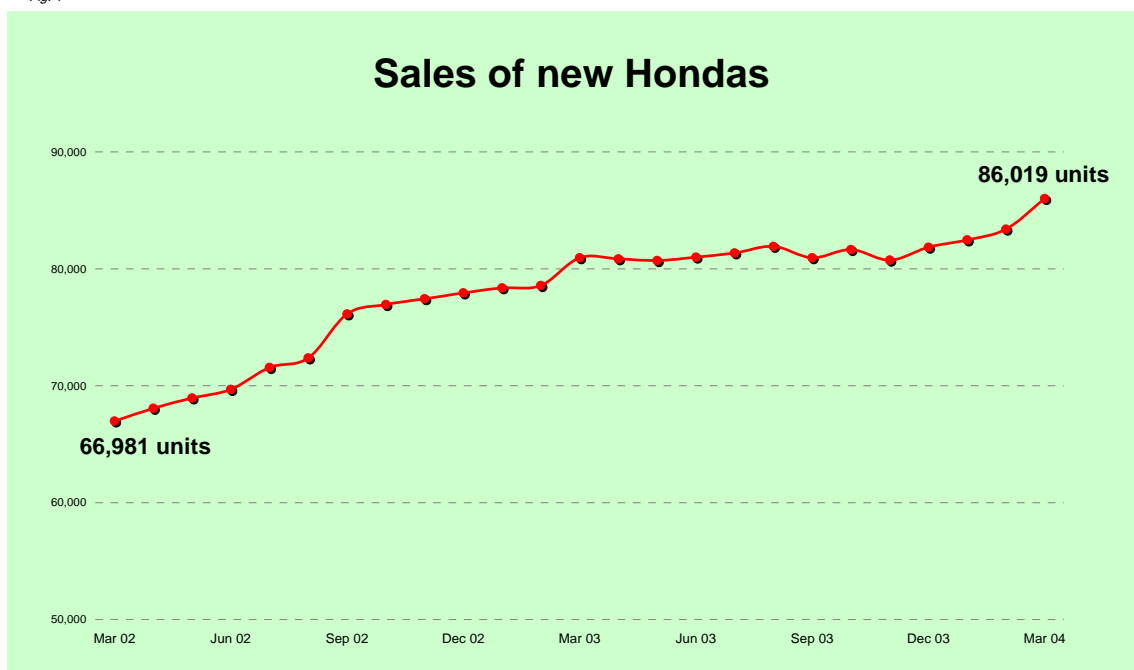
You know those films where they start at the end of the story, then they go back and show the events leading up to that end point? Well, this paper is going to be a bit like that. Our equivalent of the dead body at the end is this fact:

Communications generated £388m in revenue for Honda.

Which is a much happier ending than a dead body.

A new Honda campaign began in April 2002 (and is still going). Sales of new Honda cars, since then, have done this:

Fig. 1

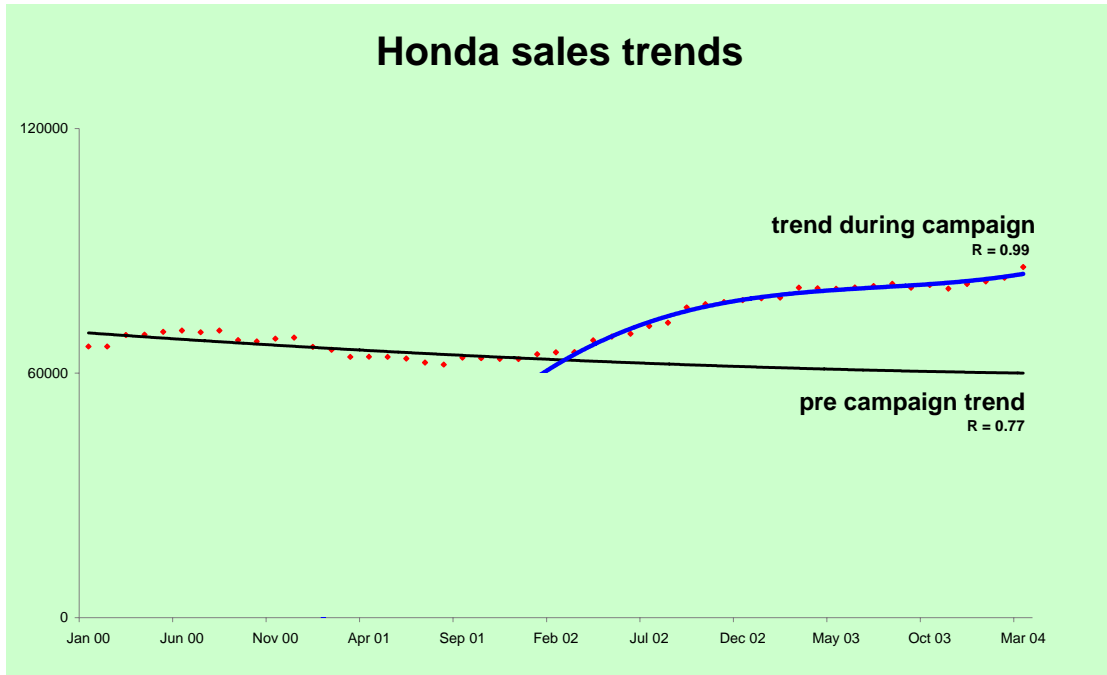


That's an increase of 28%

What would have happened to sales had the campaign not run?

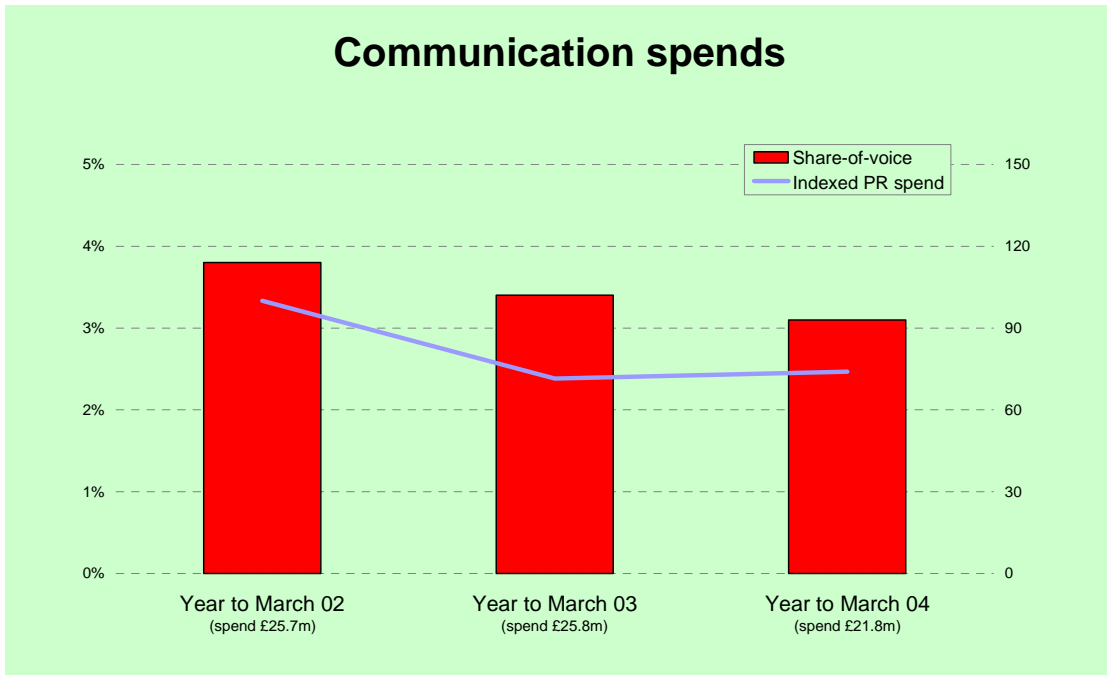
We can fit a trend to the sales pre-launch, project it forward, then compare that to what actually happened during the campaign:

Fig. 2



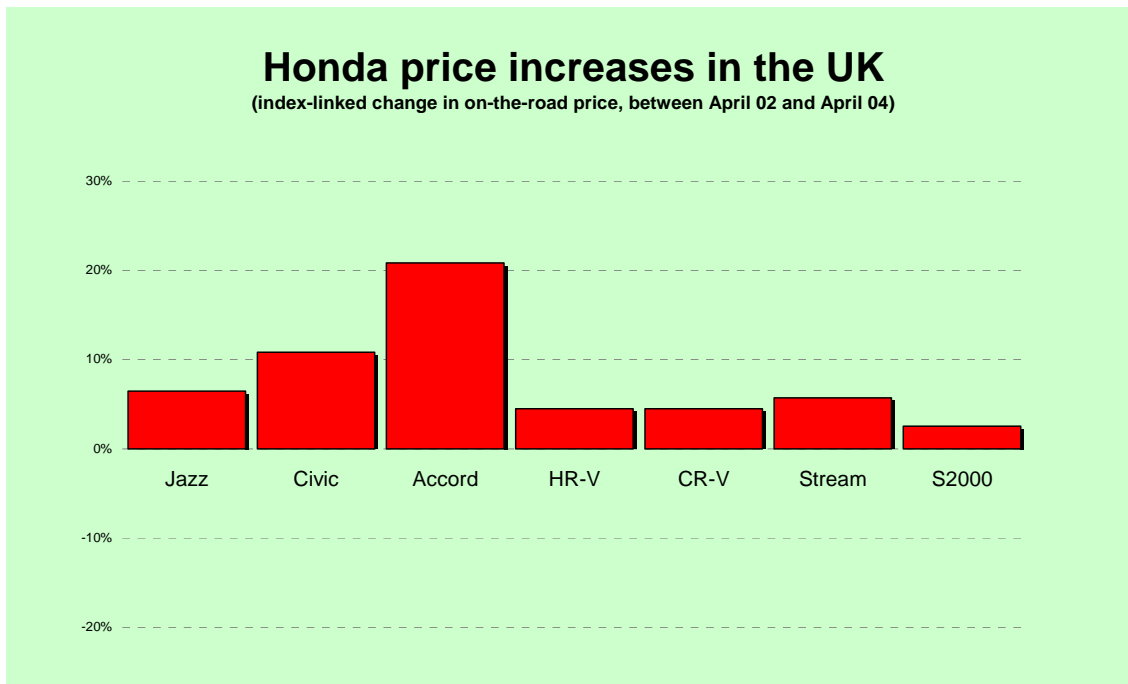
This uplift wasn't down to chucking more budget at the problem. Far from it. Media spend, share-of-voice and PR spend all went *down*:

Fig. 3



Nor was the sales increase a function of cheaper prices. On the contrary, prices went *up* across the range:

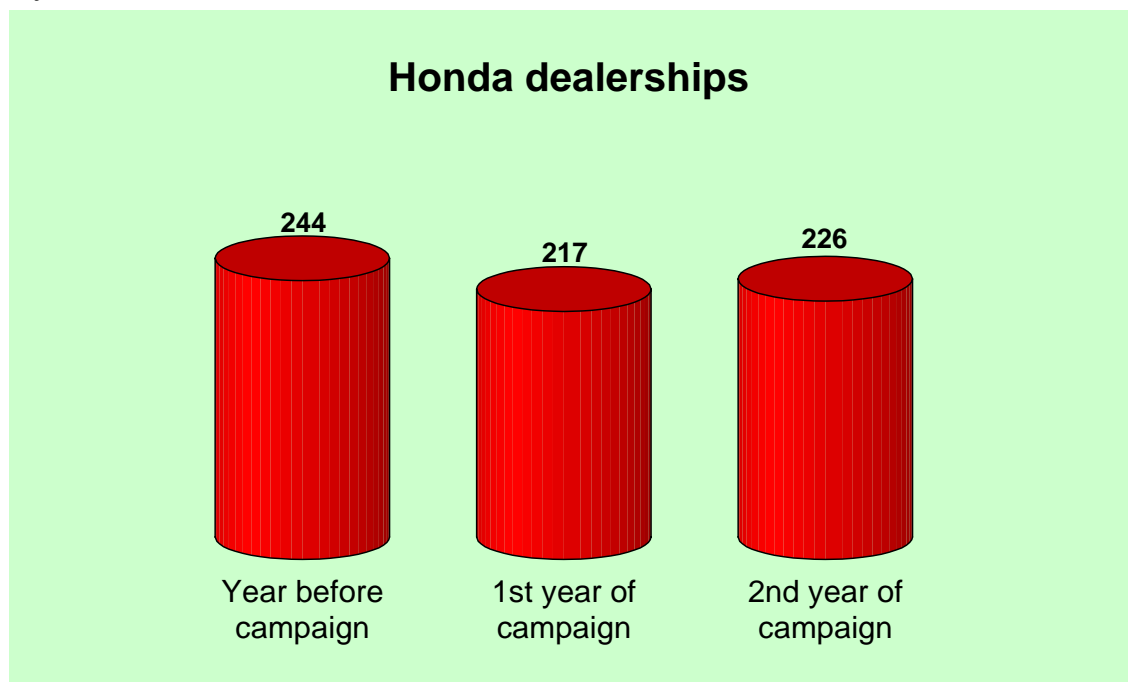
Fig. 4



Source: Honda UK

Improved distribution wasn't the reason either; throughout the campaign, the number of Honda dealerships was lower than before:

Fig. 5



Source: Honda UK

Was the increase down to promotions? Not guilty. Less money went to dealerships to support finance deals, offers, and so on:

Fig. 6



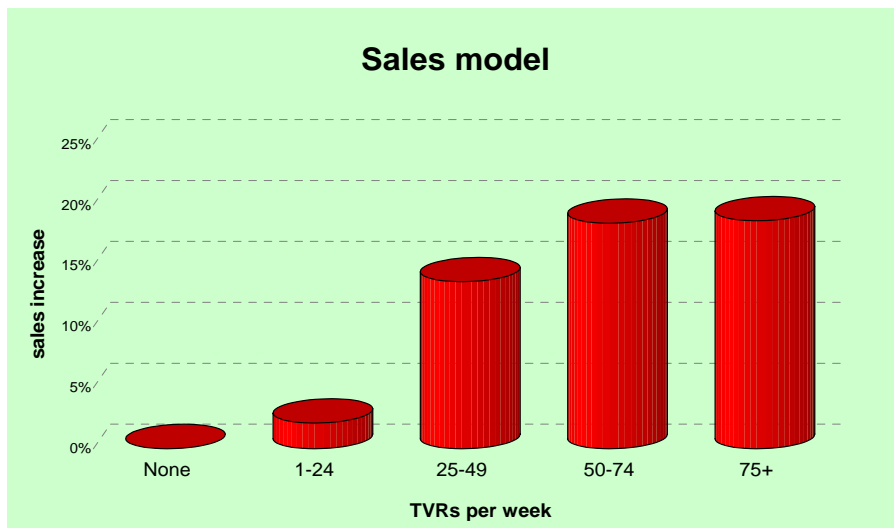
Source: Honda UK

But wait... this still leaves one possible non-campaign reason behind the sales increase. Cars. As in, new Honda models.

We can't discount that factor, and we wouldn't want to. New models and upgrades *had* been successful, which was brilliant. To measure the contribution of *communications alone*, we can use either modelling or control region analysis. Or why not both? No harm in proving the same thing from two different directions.

Independent modelling work (non-linear regression, not full econometrics) found a strong link between advertising and sales:

Fig. 7



Source: Simpson Carpenter modelling

Building in decay rates, the modelling concluded that the sales contribution from communications was 13.6%. This works through to 22,708 extra units being down to the communications.

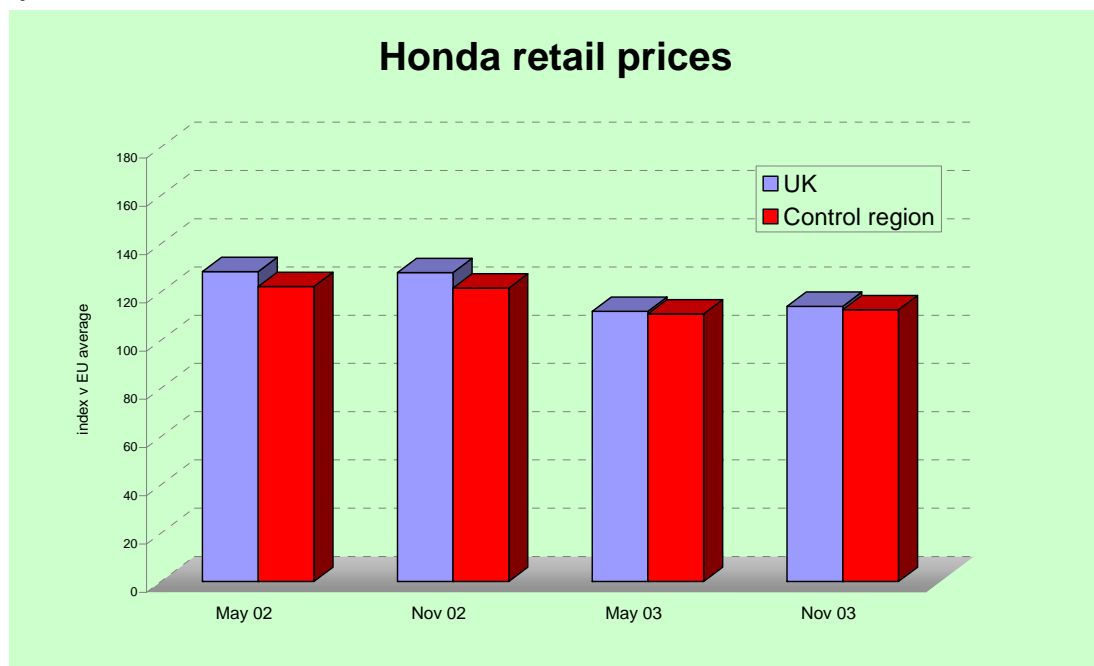
Now for a control region. We need somewhere where all the important variables were the same, except one... they didn't run the campaign.

For this, we can use other comparable European markets. Germany, France, Spain, Italy and the UK are by far the biggest car markets in Europe, as they are for Honda (totalling 79% of Honda's European sales).

Germany, France, Spain and Italy combined provide a robust control group for the UK. All had the same model launches and upgrades. Combined, their distribution changes were similar to the UK, as was spontaneous Honda awareness (18%) at the time of launch.

Finally, there was negligible Honda price difference between the UK and the control region:

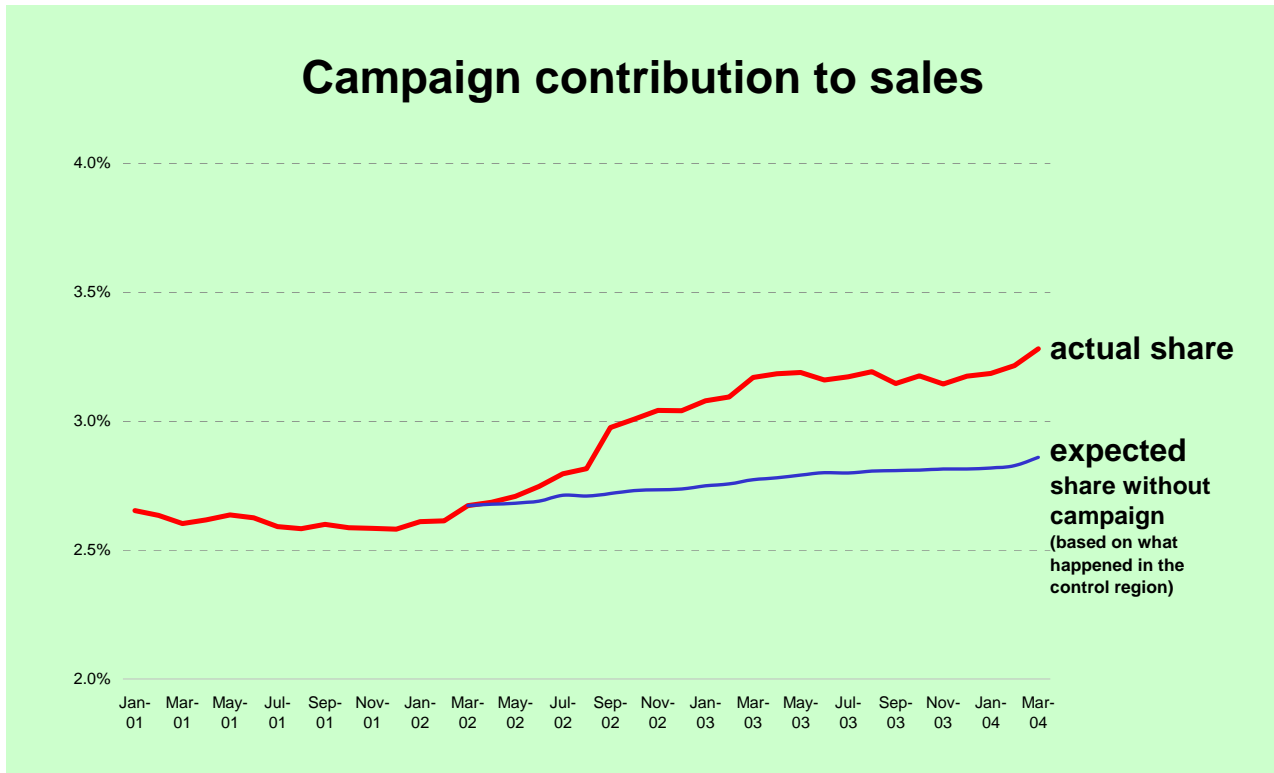
Fig. 8



Source: European Commission

By looking at the pattern of control region share, we can calculate what we would expect UK share to be, had the campaign not run:

Fig. 9



Source: Honda UK – 12 month rolling data

When you do the sums, this represents 23,570 extra units to Honda, down to the communications. Reassuringly, this is *very* close to the figure from modelling (22,708).

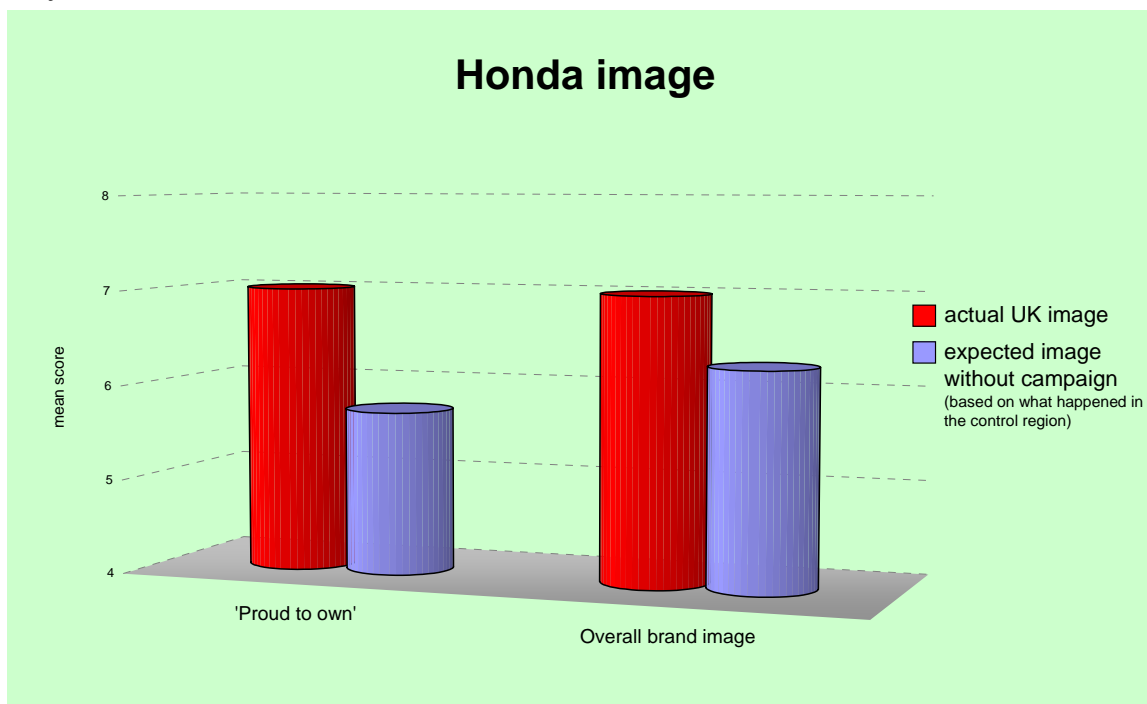
Figuring out how many of each model that splits into, then multiplying each by average price-per-model, you get £352m in extra revenue.

To this, we can add after-sales value. Of the 23,570 extra units, an estimated 11,785 would go through Honda for their parts and servicing, each yielding an average of £3,048 to Honda over the car’s lifetime. This increases the total revenue, from communications alone, to £388m.

Not a bad return on a £47m budget (over the 2 years).

We can apply the same principles to tracking data for the UK v the control region. This gives further evidence that the sales difference was down to communications shifting Honda's image:

Fig. 10



Source: Simpson Carpenter

So *revenue* far exceeded spend, but what about profit? Cost per-unit data isn't available, but we can calculate an (extremely conservative) estimate of the campaign's profit contribution.

The difference between retail and trade price represents *some* of the unit profit to Honda... a conservative estimate of margin. As before, we can take the 23,570 extra units sold from communications, and work out how many of each model that splits into. Multiplying those figures by our conservative margins-per-model, tells us that the campaign generated £84m of extra profit for Honda.

This underestimates the true figure, but serves to show that the campaign easily paid for itself.

So communications were a big part of Honda's success in the UK. As the UK is Honda's biggest market in Europe (42% of it), the UK achievements were a significant contributor to the financial success of Honda in Europe:

Fig. 11

	Year to March 02	Year to March 03	Year to March 04
Operating revenue (€m)	4538	6200	7132
Operating income (€m)	-266	107	194

Source: Honda Motor Co. Ltd

All of this till kerchinging shows *that* the campaign worked. We now want to explore *how* it worked. That's probably the more interesting bit, to be honest. Or at least the bit with some new stuff to think about.

So where does the story start?

What's the background?

"My Mum's friend drives a Civic... and raves about it. So much so that my Mum is thinking about buying one too. The other day she asked me if Civic did a Honda version."

...research quote, early 2002

This tells you something about that person's Mum (sorry that person's Mum), but also points to something deeper about the issue for Honda. The quality of the cars was no problem... it was the brand's image and familiarity.

For many, Honda has always meant 'quality motorbikes', which gave the brand a bit of vroom cred. In fact, Honda is really an *engine* company. They build engines then look for things to put them in. Everything from generators to jets:

Fig. 12



Honda has been selling cars in the UK for 29 years. Not many knew. Or cared.

Even Honda owners felt compelled to justify their choice, with “I drive a Honda *because...*” instead of the proudly simpler “I drive a Honda”. They were buying them for the perfectly rational reason that the cars are excellent. Trouble is, ‘rational’ is in the same neighbourhood as ‘sensible’, which is only a few doors away from ‘dull’. Although Jeremy Clarkson might disagree, it’s hard to buy a *bad* car these days, so emotional pull for them really matters. On that score, Hondas were a bit low-fat vanilla.

Also, Hondas were seen to be for drivers who didn’t want to use their free bus passes. Nothing against the more mature generation, you understand, but a brand with big ambition needed to have bigger appeal.

And just how big *was* Honda’s ambition?

What were the objectives?

The business goals were simple, but challenging. The plan was, and still is, to grow annual sales to 100,000 units by the end of 2005. Simple to understand, maybe, but not so simple to achieve; in March 2002 the figure stood at less than 67,000.

From a marketing objectives perspective, this meant growing Honda awareness and consideration enough to increase showroom visits, and ultimately conversion to dotted-line signing.

To make the brand a business asset, communications were needed to make people *feel* better about owning a Honda. This demanded making them *radically* revalue the brand. It called for long-term commitment.

The task was tough:

- Car customers are decreasingly loyal and increasingly discerning. This is escalating the cost of retaining owners and acquiring new ones.
- Car communications have to bellow through ever-growing noise, to be heard by audiences whose willingness to listen is ever-waning. Consequently, the quality of car communications has progressed greatly in recent years. In the old days it used to be rubbish. It's not now.
- All the objectives had to be achieved with a planned reduction each year in communications spend.

Blimey. What could Honda do to get itself spotted across the crowded room?

What was the strategy?

'The Power of Dreams'. Sounds like a cheesy self-help book. Or worse; a global corporation's empty slogan. In fact, this *was* a global corporation's slogan - for Honda. Yeucchh. Come on - let's put our fingers in our ears. If we ignored it for long enough, it might go away.

Guess what? It was never going to go away. And guess what else? That turned out to be a brilliant thing.

In rummaging around for insights down at Honda, a crucial breakthrough was made. At first you couldn't see it for looking. The breakthrough came with the realisation that something internal could be used as the external solution. The Power of Dreams was true to the spirit of how the corporation thought and acted. And how?

The values of the company's creator were still coursing through the veins of its culture. Soichiro Honda was relentlessly passionate about engines, optimistically imaginative, socially responsible... and just a little bit bonkers. In a nice way. This is him:



He bequeathed such attributes to the company in a legacy that still walks the Honda corridors today. Honda had never before thought to fashion this into a weapon for brand communications.

And so the marketing strategy was born; to expose the inner truth about Honda.

No need to invent or exaggerate – just build familiarity with previously unknown aspects of the brand. It was about having the bravery to believe that telling people the truth about ‘Hondaness’ would do the job; the job being, to make them feel better about owning one. In other words, to make them *want* a Honda. Actually, not in other words... those are the *exact* words.

That’s all fine and dandy, but *how* would this Hondaness be expressed?

What was the idea?

Sounds simple. Just tell people the truth about Honda. Only, it wasn't. It was very unsimple.

Honda's culture is one of rich diversity and nuance. It would be doing it a disservice to boil it down to a couple of adjectives in the centre of a brand onion. The multidimensionality of Honda is what makes it what it is. It would have been wrong to ignore some of those shades, just for the sake of marketing simplicity. Honda needed to adopt an unconventional approach. To build a brand with scale and emotional depth required embracing and then communicating the whole king-sized onion.

A new tool was needed to paint a full portrait of Honda. Traditional tools would only allow for the capture of some of the parts, rather than the sum of the parts. This tool was The Book of Dreams.

The Book of Dreams merged creative strategy with execution. The integration of 'what we say' and 'how we say it', early in the process, was fundamental to its value. It was fashioned around Honda reality, and defined a unique voice for the brand. It illuminated Honda's philosophy and way of behaving, whilst creating a distinctive look, feel and even vocabulary. Handy. Here's a flavour:

Fig. 14



Much of the uniqueness of this voice came from its absence of complacency or boastfulness. Instead, it was crafted as a voice that asks plain-speaking *questions*, with imagination and optimism.

Crucially, it was much much more than just a tone-of-voice to shove at the end of communications briefs. The book **was the brief itself**, and getting the voice of the book out there **was the idea**.

So what did the 'out there' look like?

What was the campaign?

Smaller budget, more competitive noise than ever, yada yada yada. A familiar complaint, but true in this case, so everything had to collaborate to maximise the idea's power.

Appreciating the importance of this, the 'The Dream Factory' was created. Nothing to do with Willy Wonka, but instead a collective of Honda representatives and its agencies (they had chocolate biscuits though). This ensemble worked together to ensure every piece of marketing collateral conveyed the same voice of Hondaness.

The diversity of Honda demanded a diversity of creative approaches. There were a number of integrated mini-campaigns, each of which was glued together with the same inquisitive voice.

The work went right through-the-line; TV, direct mail, radio, posters, press, interactive television, cinema, magazines, motorshows, press launches, dealerships, postcards and beer mats. Oh, and traffic cones. Here's a selection, starting with some of the print work:

Fig. 17

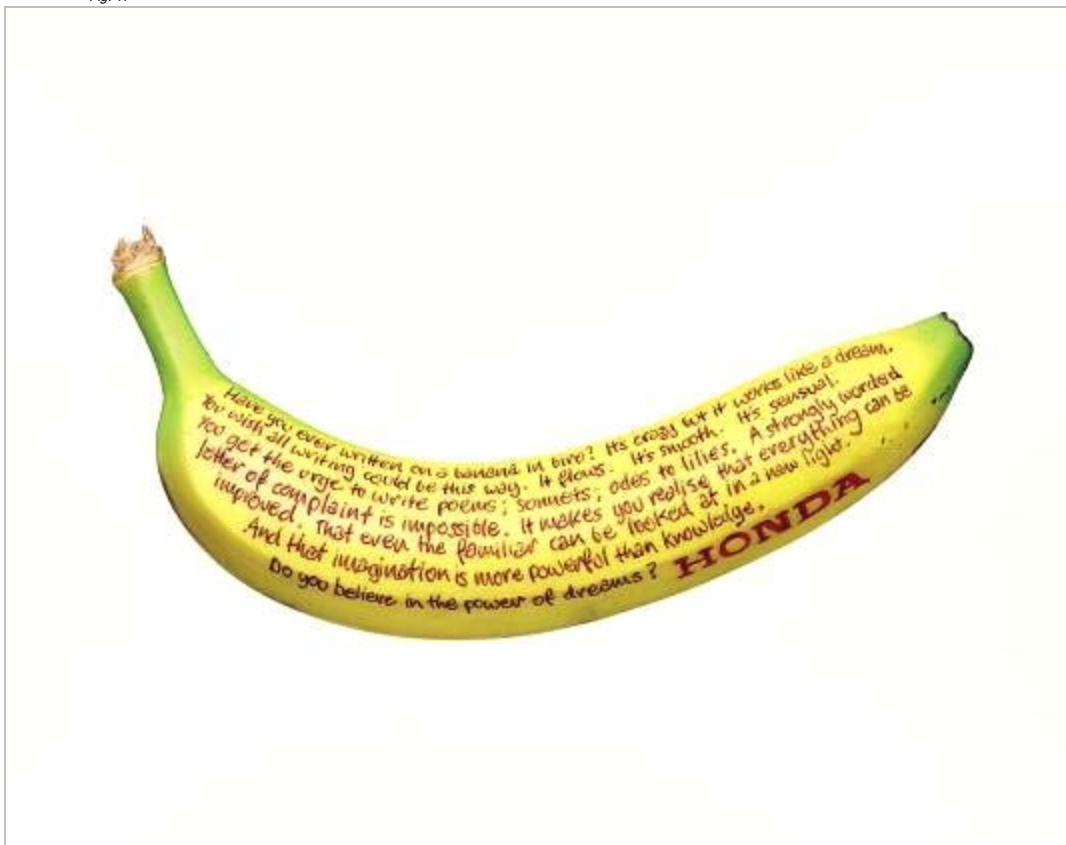


Fig. 18



Do you believe in the power of dreams? When Soichiro Honda was 8 years old he saw his first motor car. It was an early edition Model T Ford. Soichiro couldn't help running after the car. "It leaked oil," he recalled fondly, "and I got down on my hands and knees to smell it. It was like perfume."

Fig. 19



To engineers who ever had an idea named down; who went back to the drawing board after being told that it will never work; who could not easily have given up, but kept persevering; who knew that failure was just a part of the journey to success. A word of encouragement. Keep going. Keep going, for there's only one thing greater than an idea and that's a great idea. Do you believe in the power of dreams?

Fig. 20



There is a place where dreams go. Where crazy flights of fancy are valued above all else. Where the only good idea is an idea that's never been had before. Where dreams can become real. It's called The Power Office. Concept House, Inc. 1000 - 1st Avenue, New York, NY 10022. Do you believe in the power of dreams?

Fig. 21

Concept cars. Aren't they fantastic?
Cars that look like dreams. Cars that never
But are they only waiting because they never got made?
What if one actually made it onto the production line?
Like the Honda PDX. A car that lives on tomorrow.
Where only pressure is pure water.
Maybe then we'd get these "dream" cars.
Do you believe in the power of dreams?



Fig. 22

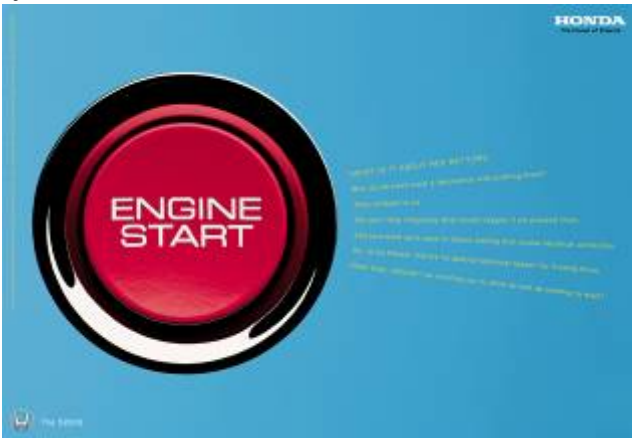


Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36



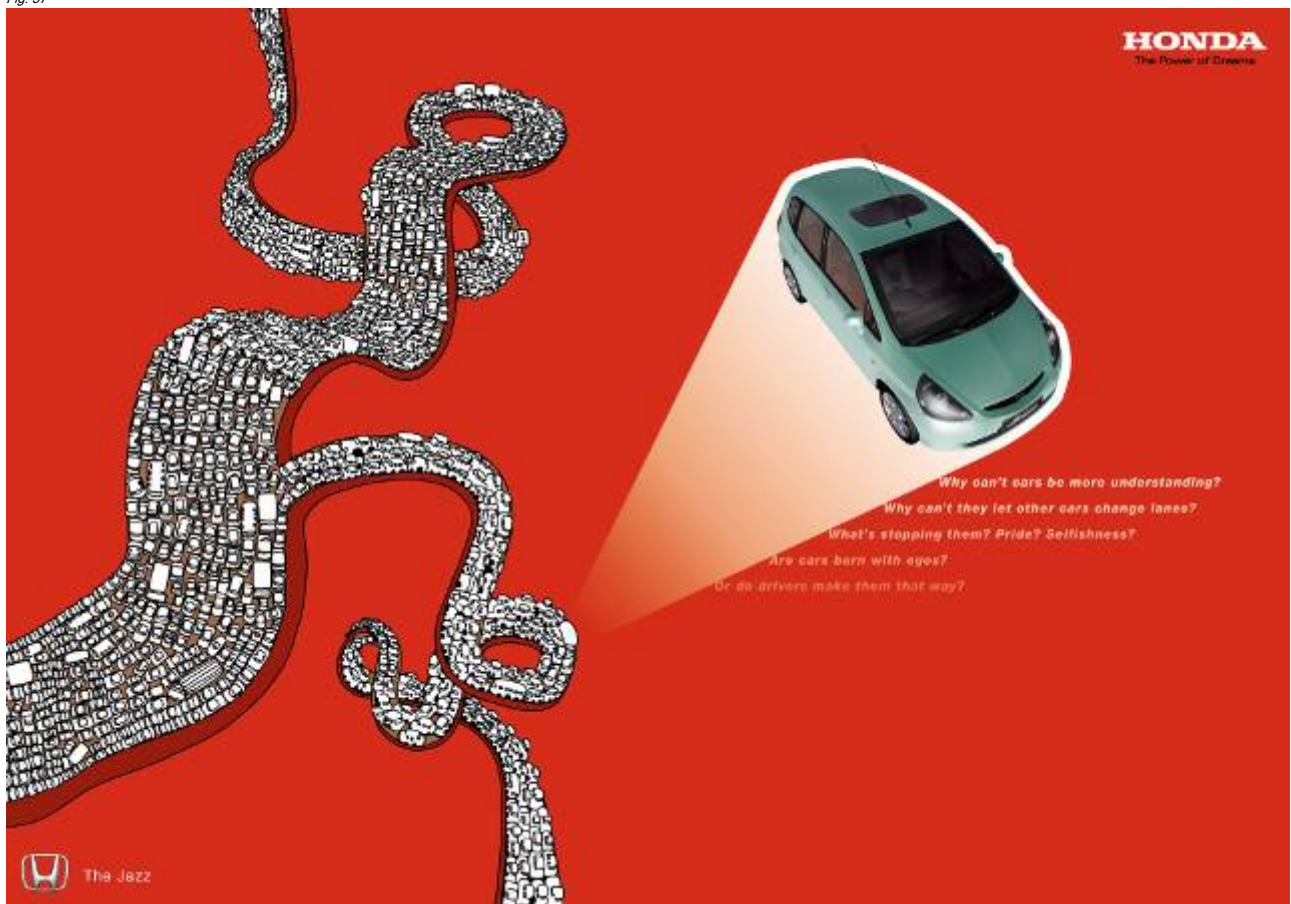
HONDA
The Power of Dreams

*Do impatient cars reach their destinations faster?
Sure they do: 28 seconds to be precise.
...but do they have
just enough time to do what exactly?
Tomorrow, be one of the reasonable cars.
Set your alarm 28 seconds earlier.*




 The Jazz


Fig. 37



HONDA
The Power of Dreams



*Why don't cars be more understanding?
Why can't they let other cars change lanes?
What's stopping them? Pride? Selfishness?
Are cars born with eyes?
Or do drivers make them that way?*

 The Jazz

Television:

Fig. 38



Fig. 39



Fig. 40



Fig. 41

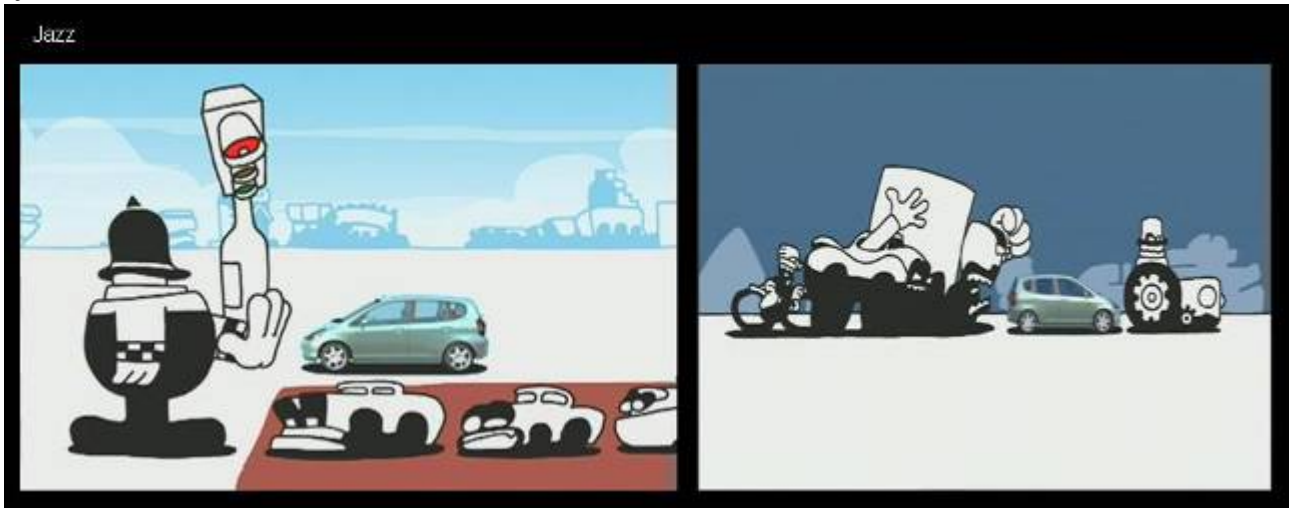


Fig. 42

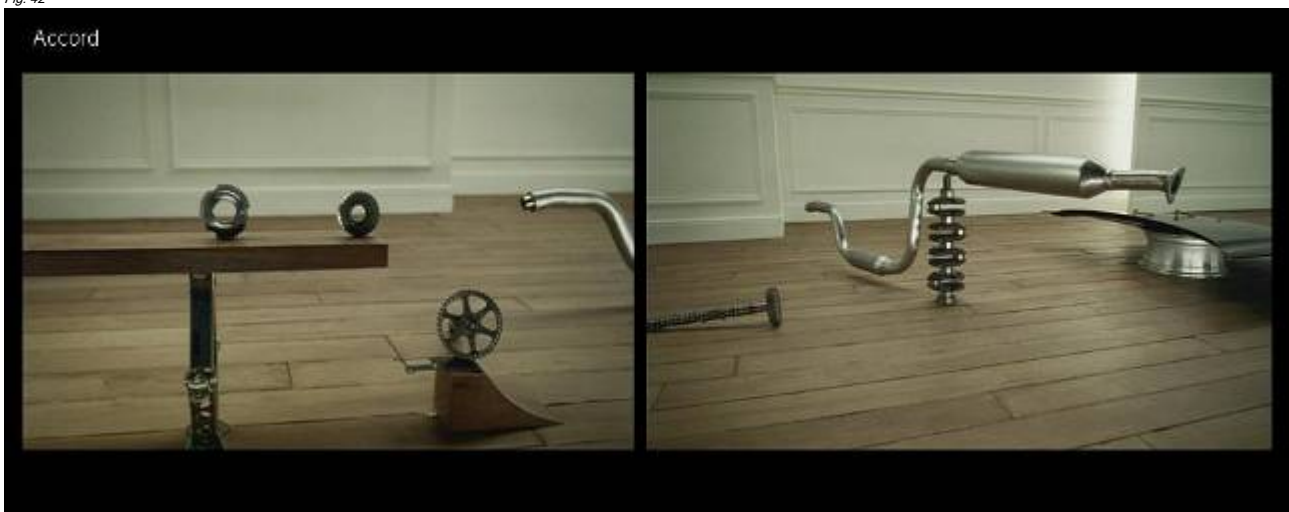
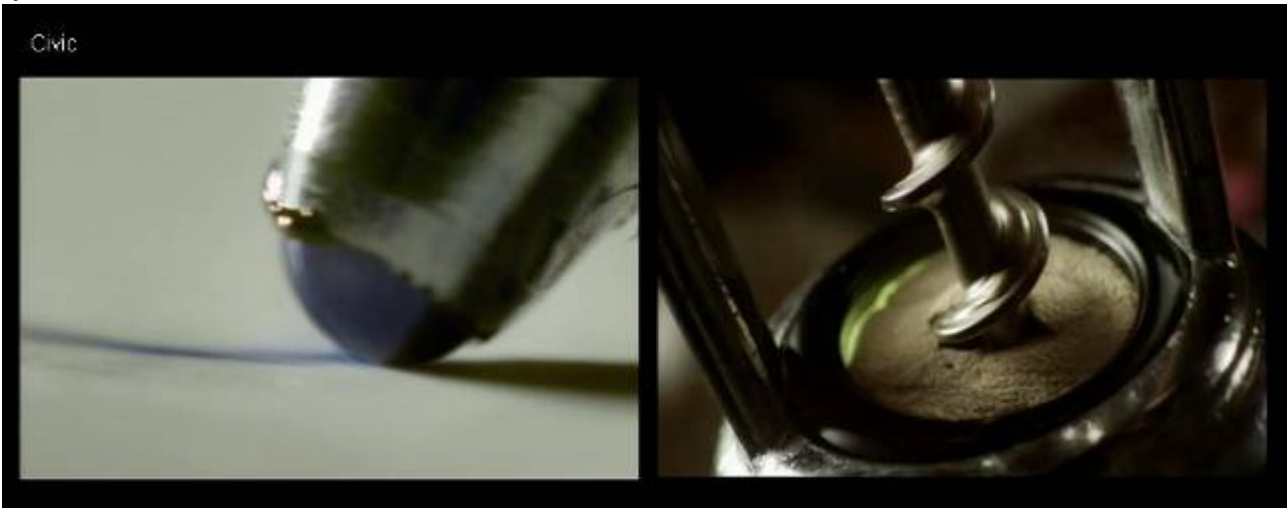


Fig. 43



Fig. 44



Above-the-line communications were augmented with online campaigns and microsites. For Honda IMA, as just one example, people got to appreciate the technology by having a little play with it. Virtually.

Fig. 45

The figure displays four screenshots of Honda's online marketing efforts:

- Top-left:** A screenshot of the Honda Civic website. It features a navigation bar with links for 'cars', 'motorcycles', 'power equipment', 'store', 'corporate', 'racing', and 'multimedia'. Below the navigation is a large image of a silver Honda Civic. A sidebar on the left lists various features and options for the car.
- Top-right:** A screenshot of a Honda website featuring a campaign titled 'the corkscrew 6th place'. The headline reads 'It gets wine out of bottles, so surely it ranks up there with the light bulb?'. Below the headline, there is a call to action: 'Learn more about the wine taster's best friend... click here'. A small image of a corkscrew is shown on the right. At the bottom, it states '8% of women 55 or over voted for the corkscrew'.
- Bottom-left:** A screenshot of a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the 'Honda (UK) - IMA & BEYOND' microsite. The page has a dark blue background with a large, colorful digital clock in the center. The text on the page reads: 'WHEN IT CAME TO ANSWERING THE PERFORMANCE AND EFFICIENCY ISSUE, WE DID WELL. BUT, AS USUAL, WE WERE LOOKING AHEAD. TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF IMA TECHNOLOGY LAUNCHED IN 2003. OF COURSE, NOW WE'RE THINKING FURTHER AHEAD STILL.' Below this, it says '2000' and 'THE IMA HYBRID POWER OF HONDA'S BRIGHT CAPSULES: THE INFORMATIONAL ENGINE OF THE YEAR AWARD.' The browser window title is 'Honda (UK) - Microsoft Internet Explorer'.
- Bottom-right:** A screenshot of a Honda website featuring a campaign with the headline 'What lengths would you go to for perfection?'. Below the headline, there is a call to action: 'Click here for the free event (watch minutes of TV you will ever see)'. Below this, there is a sub-headline: 'Find out exactly how far we went with the car design'. At the bottom, there is an image of various mechanical parts and tools.

Direct mail:

Fig. 46



Ambient:

Fig. 47



Dealership materials:

Fig. 48



Motorshow:

Fig. 49



Waiting in receptions often means reading the only bit of the newspaper that hasn't been nicked. Not down at Honda HQ. Reception was given a makeover into a new 'World of Honda'. Displays showcased Power of Dreams stories and screens showed films about the campaign:

Fig. 50



Innovative media-neutral planning was required. One example of this was the strategic thinking behind 'Cog'. It was not a TV ad, in the conventional sense, but instead was planned and created as a piece of film to be used in a new integrated way.

In its entirety, it only ran a handful of times on TV. The hope was that this would generate enough cultural interest to create *demand* for it through other channels in the mix. Not just the film, but even the *making* of the film. It was hoped that people would come to honda.co.uk to download it, learn about it, and pass it on virally to their friends.

Part of the media solution was to make Honda the first advertiser to run their TV campaign in the press. Sort of. A DVD was created containing the ad, plus a whole bunch of other stuff.

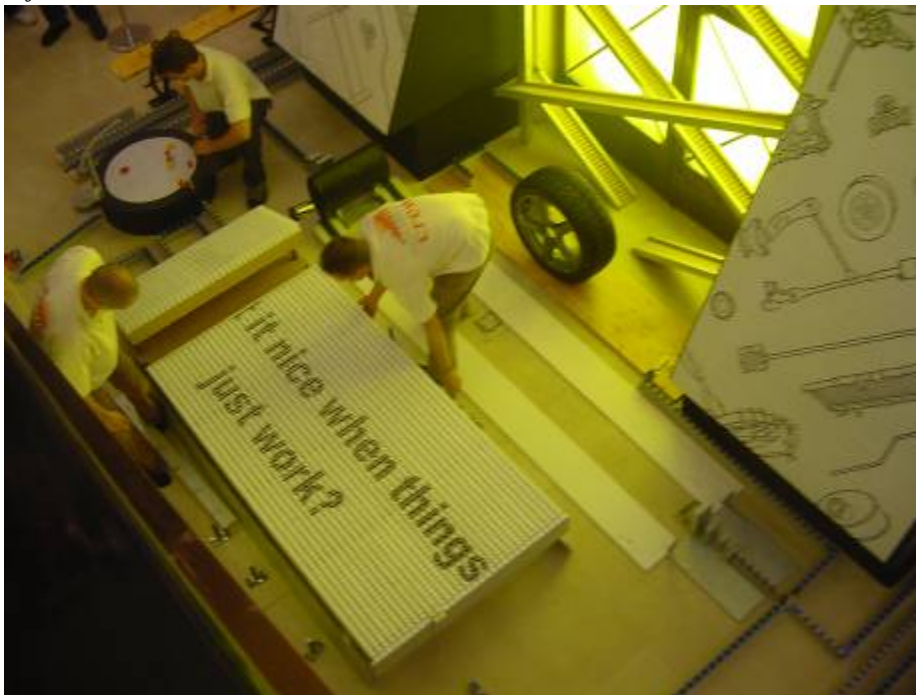
Fig. 51



Nothing had ever been done like it on that scale – 1.3 million DVDs were distributed with magazines and papers.

The integration even included live events. In Selfridges, a Cog-themed domino-toppling-athon was held for a week – precision, reliability, chain reactions and all that. A bit barking, but loads of people went to see it.

Fig. 52

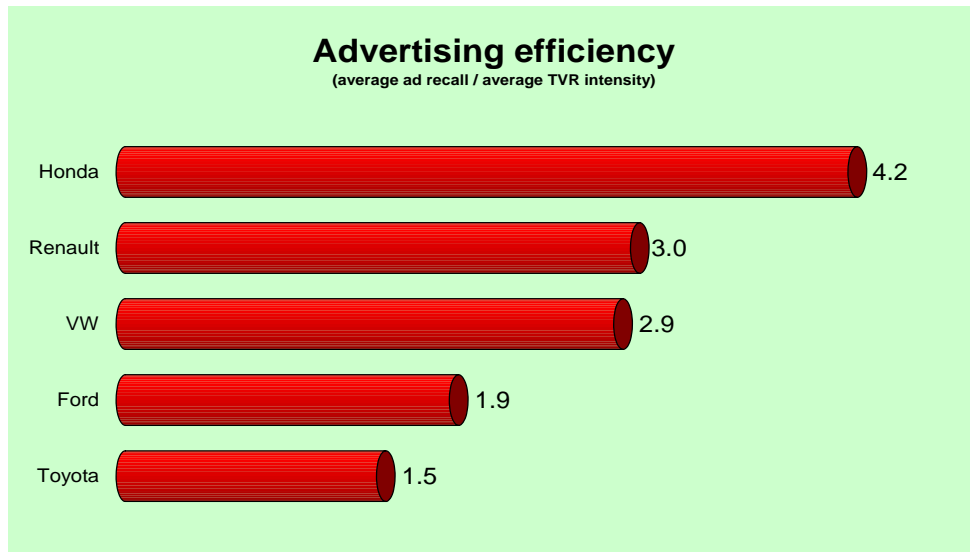


Anyway, enough of the fluffy stuff and pretty pictures. Did any of it actually *do* anything for Honda?

Did people notice it?

Yes. Unprompted recall of Honda communications averaged 35% in 2003 (reaching 48% during the IMA campaign). Pound-for-pound, it was pretty efficient:

Fig. 53



Base: All adults
Source: Simpson Carpenter Ad Tracker

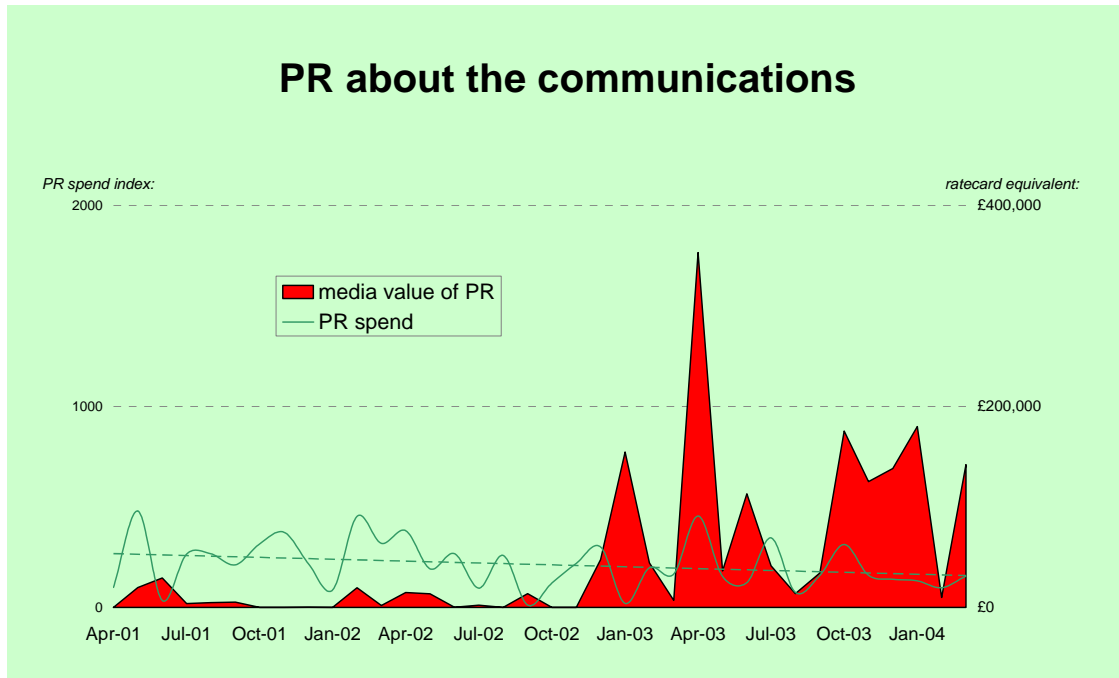
Tremendous media momentum was generated:

Fig. 54



National print coverage *alone* represented £1.74 million-worth of free media value:

Fig. 55

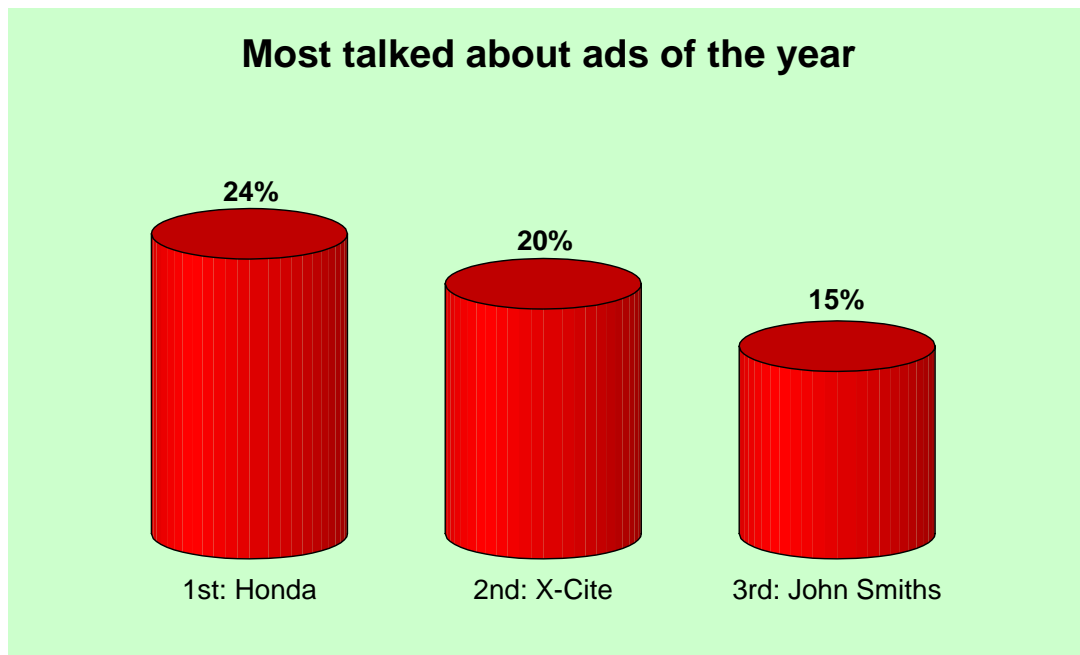


Source: Millward Brown Precis

CNN ran two features on the campaign (totalling 13 minutes) and Discovery ran a documentary on it. It featured in Channel 4's '100 Greatest TV Moments 2003' and Channel 5's 'The Ads That Changed the World'. That's a healthy old slug of unpaid for exposure.

Encouragingly, Honda advertising was getting noticed by younger audiences:

Fig. 56



Base: 18-30 year-olds
 Source: Research International

Potential new buyers were the broad target, which varied from project to project (Jazz was younger, Accord was upmarket, etc.). Across it all, from a media buying point-of-view, the TV advertising certainly delivered against the intended audiences:

Fig. 57

	Index of achieved media v planned media
TVRs	99
1+ cover	100
2+ cover	103

Base: DDS BARB

That's just TV. As we'll soon see, this was just one of the places doing the job.

So far so good. The activity did the "hey... look at me" thing very well. But did people care about the 'me' that they were looking at?

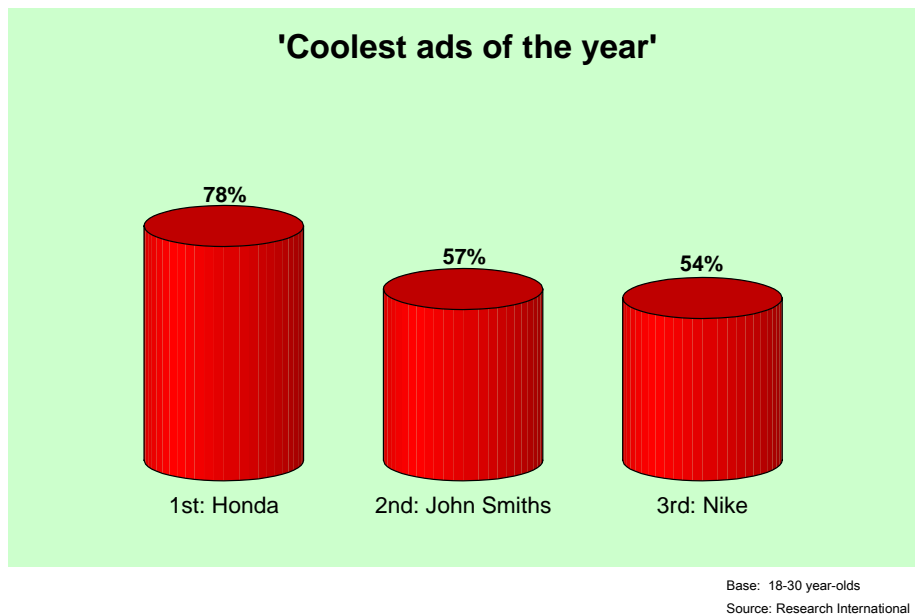
Did they engage with it?

In fact, they *went out of their way* to engage with it. 500,000 DVDs went to people who contacted Honda requesting one. Tens of thousands pressed to find out more on interactive TV ads. Cog was downloaded 2.3 million times from honda.co.uk (that's a media equivalent value of £1.2m, though this was much higher quality 'airtime' than normal, as people had come to Honda's world to view it).

The Civic 'Everyday' campaign integrated an online element, in which people were invited to vote for the best everyday object. 94,070 took part. The light-bulb won, by the way, narrowly beating the toilet.

People found the ads cool, which was cool:

Fig. 58

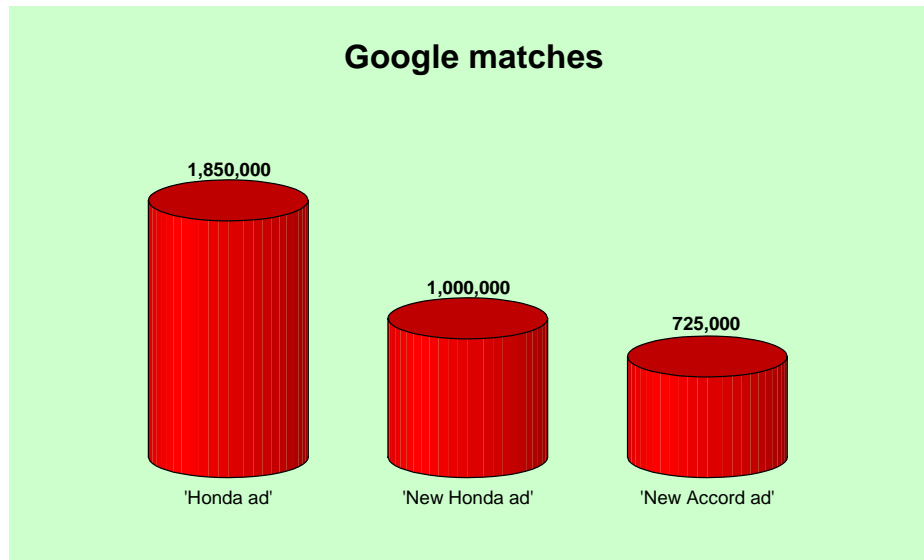


But a much more interesting demonstration of their power to engage comes in looking at a *new* measurement approach. Or at the least the first thoughts on an approach that, with time and sophistication, could become an established weapon in the armoury of advertising effectiveness evaluators. And it's *free*. Well, at least for now.

That weapon is Google.

Where the *intent* is to create noise about the communication, search engines could become barometers of cultural interest. For starters, just typing in 'new Honda ad' (and date-fixing the search to the year since Cog launched), returns a million website matches.

Fig. 59



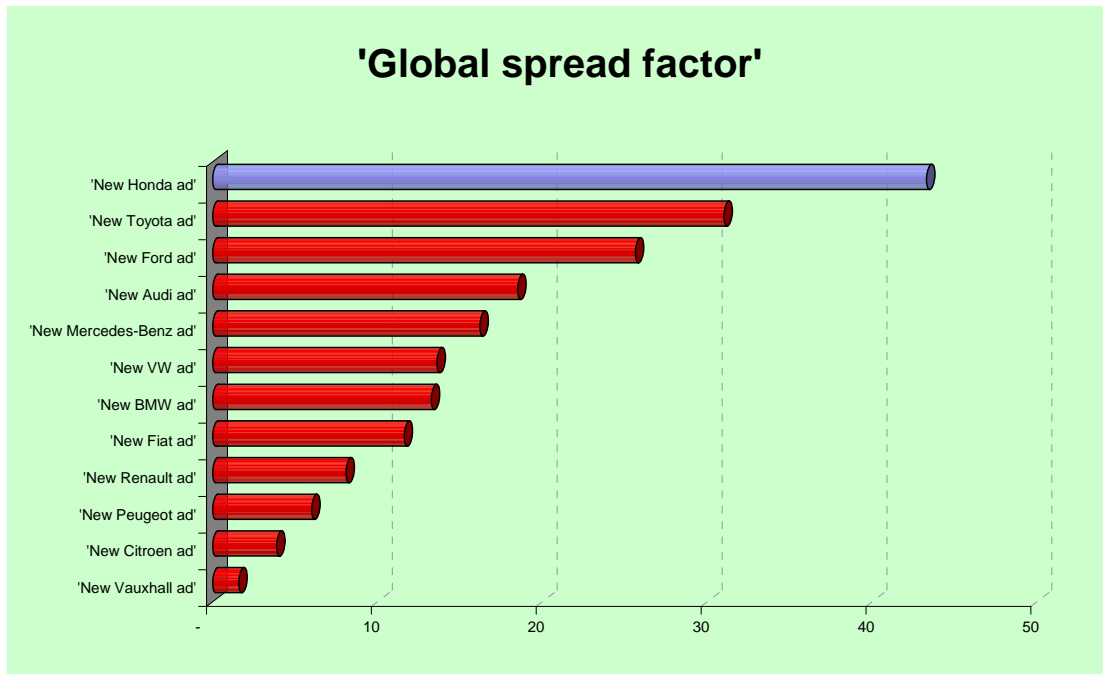
Source: Google. Year from March 2003

OK, fair cop, at the moment this method has flaws. For instance, not all matches necessarily reference *exactly* what you're searching for (though in this case almost all seemed to be), but that's just a question of developing more accurate search software. With more time and more cases, benchmarks could be established.

What about search engines measuring the *international* appeal of communications? You could look at Google hits by country. Or, if it only appeared in one market (as in Honda's case), you could measure how far communications have *spread* beyond their official borders, giving a gauge of viral effectiveness.

What we've called the 'global spread factor' (which sounds a bit scary) looks at the ratio of worldwide matches to UK matches. The bigger the number, the further the spread in relation to its UK popularity:

Fig. 60



Source: Google. World matches / UK matches, year from March 2003

There's another use of search engines to measure cultural interest you've generated. Since the whole Honda campaign began, 3110 Google newsgroups have discussed the "new Honda ad". That's impressive enough, but it's even more interesting to look at the composition of a random sample of those newsgroups:

Fig. 61



Source: Google Groups

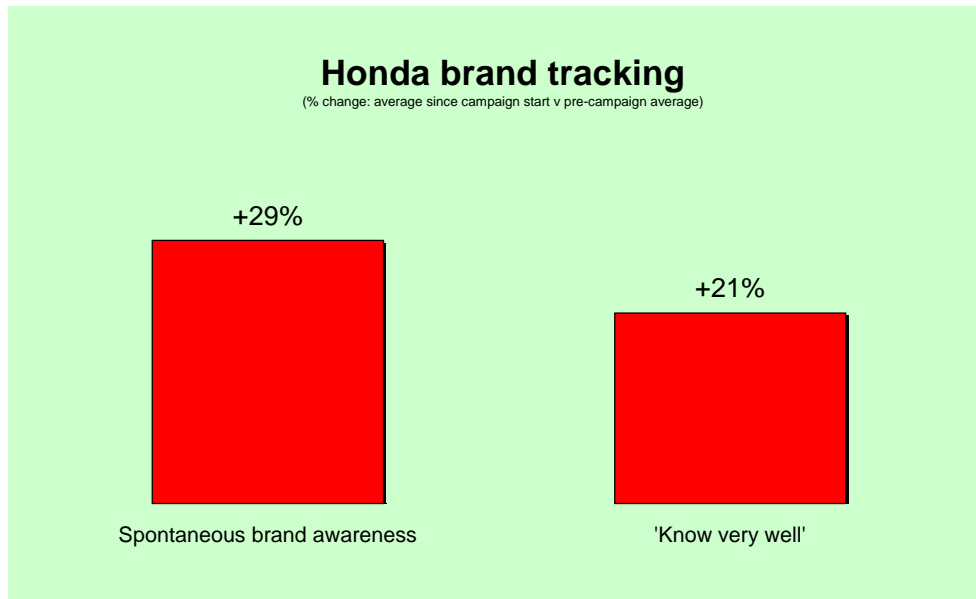
This is a clear (if vaguely weird) demonstration of the variety of cultures that Honda communications touched. We'll leave the reader to discover the campaign's relevance to bondage subculture.

People certainly engaged with the communications. Someone even sent Honda their CV... written on a banana. The campaign created a dialogue between Honda and its audience, but what was Honda *saying* about itself in that dialogue?

Did it say the right things to them?

Well, they remembered that it was for Honda, which was a start. It also increased *familiarity*, which was vital, given the strategy of exposing them to the truth about Honda:

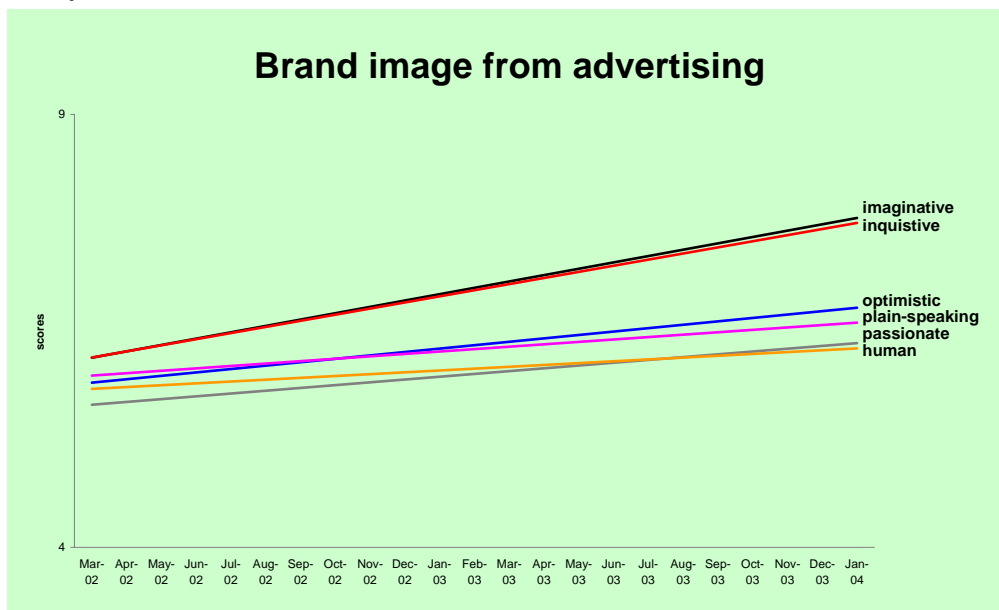
Fig. 62



Base: All adults
Source: Simpson Carpenter Ad Tracker

The campaign increased familiarity with key dimensions of 'Hondaness':

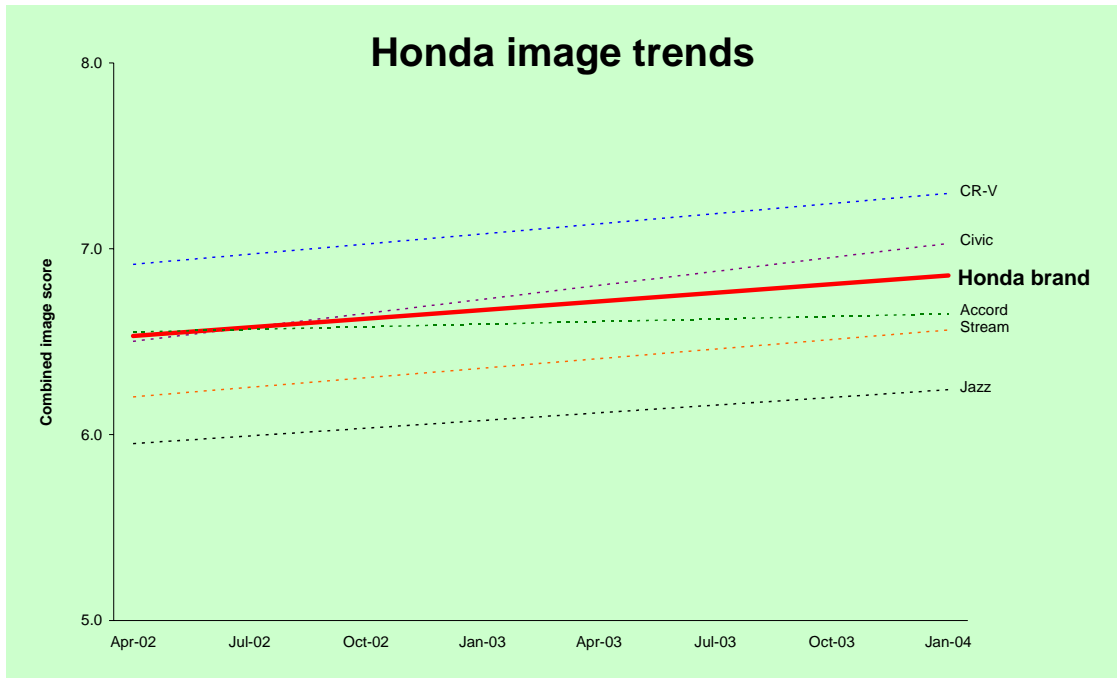
Fig. 63



Base: All adults
Source: Simpson Carpenter Ad Tracker

Which led to improved perceptions of brand and models:

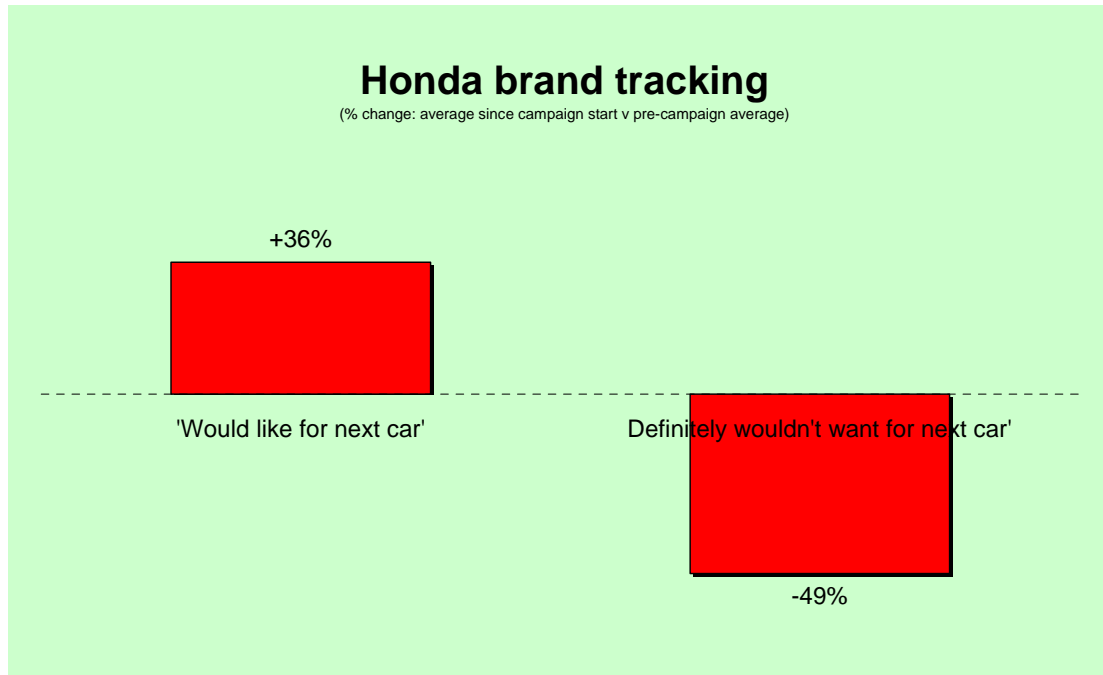
Fig. 64



Base: All adults
Source: Simpson Carpenter Brand Monitor

People knew more about Honda, knew the *right things* about Honda, which increased desire to own one:

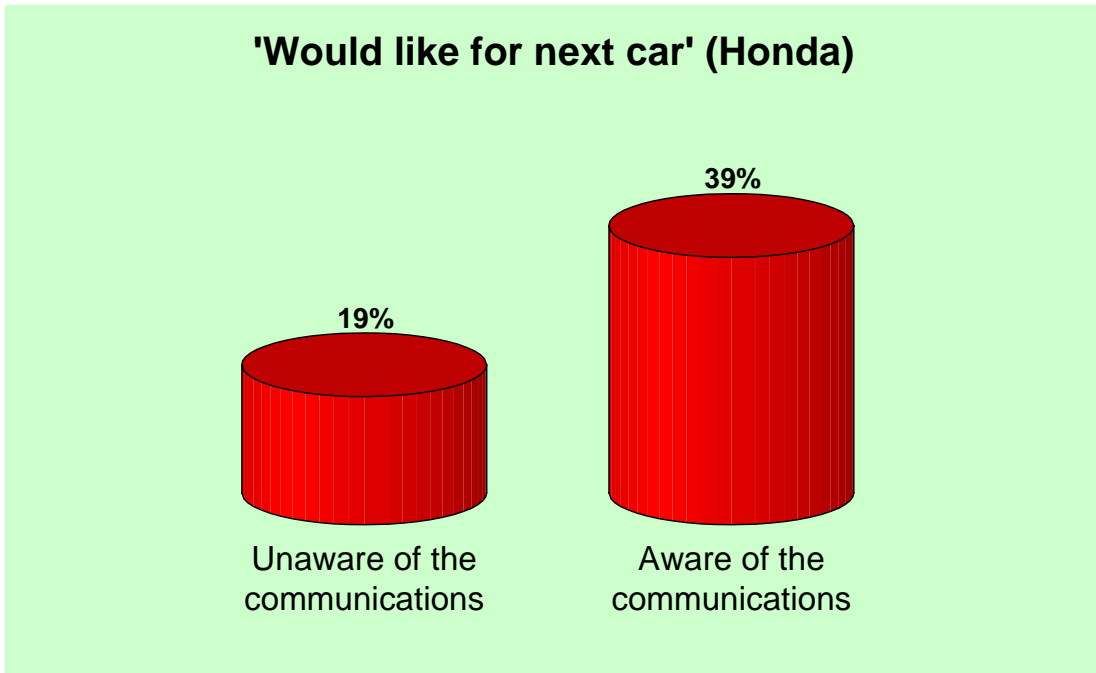
Fig. 65



Base: All adults
Source: Simpson Carpenter Ad Tracker

These pre and post campaign shifts compellingly evidenced that the *communications* should take a bow for improved brand desire. There was more proof that pushed it beyond doubt:

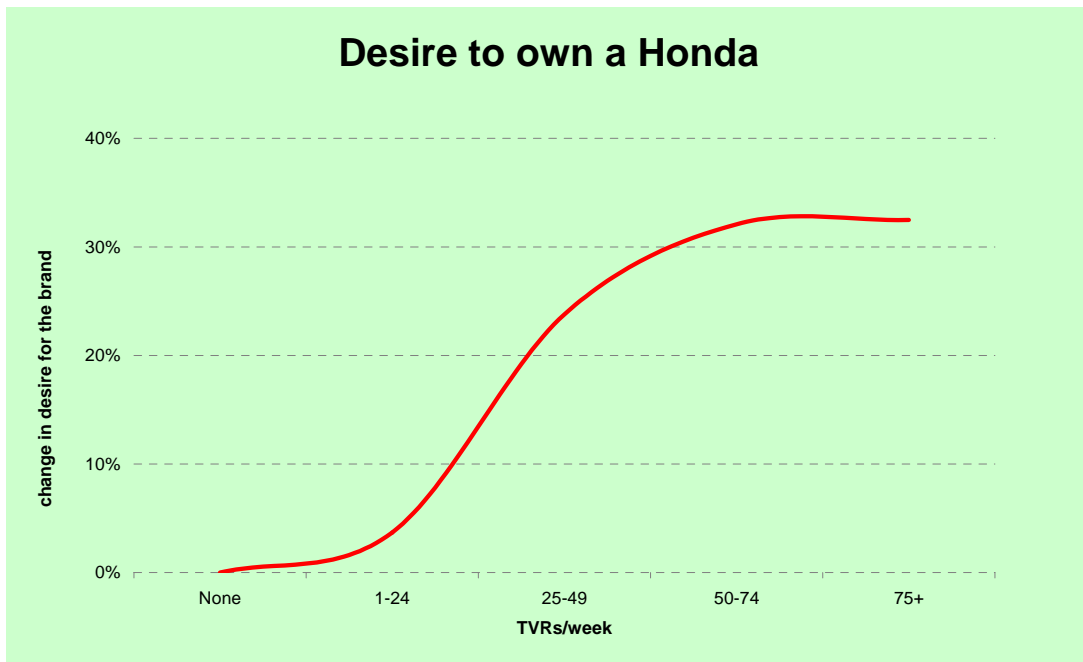
Fig. 66



Base: All adults
Source: Simpson Carpenter Ad Tracker

The modelling work showed that TV advertising played a key role:

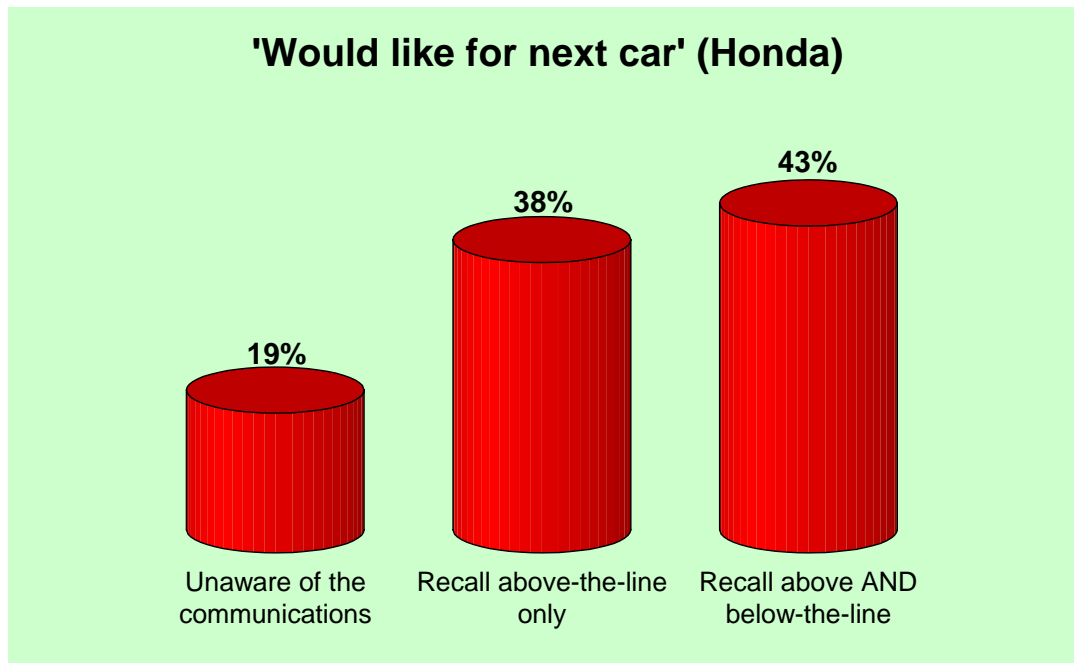
Fig. 67



Source: Simpson Carpenter modelling

But it was by no means just the stuff on the box that was doing the business. The integrated approach was working. A cumulative benefit was recorded, amongst people familiar with both above and below-the-line activity:

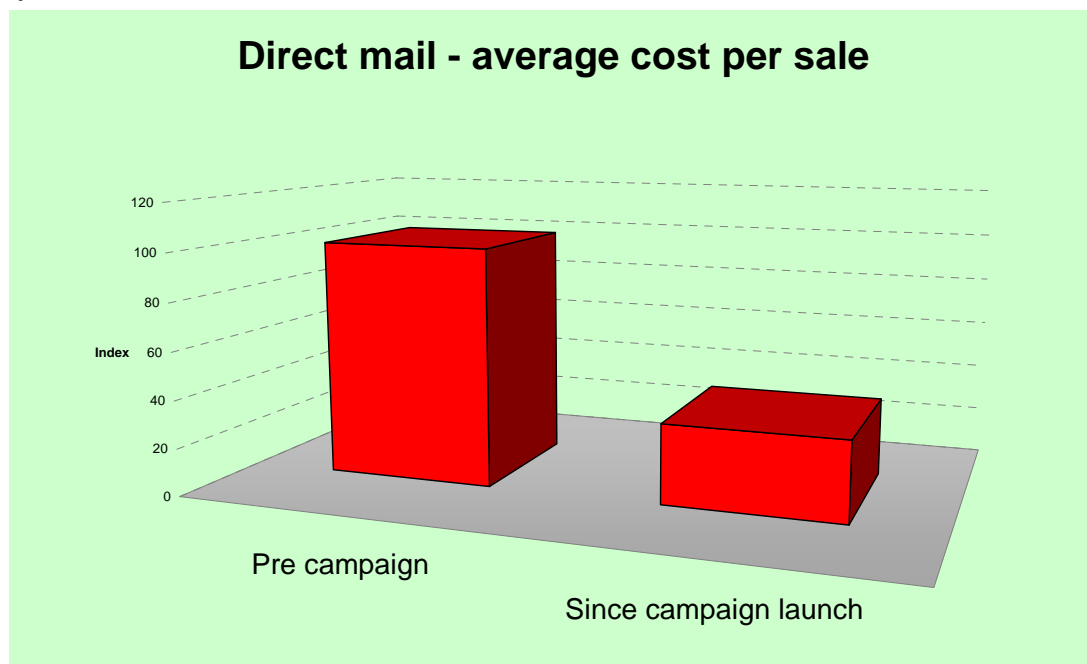
Fig. 68



Base: All adults
Source: Simpson Carpenter Ad Tracker

Direct mail, in particular, was successful. It must have been saying something right to its audience:

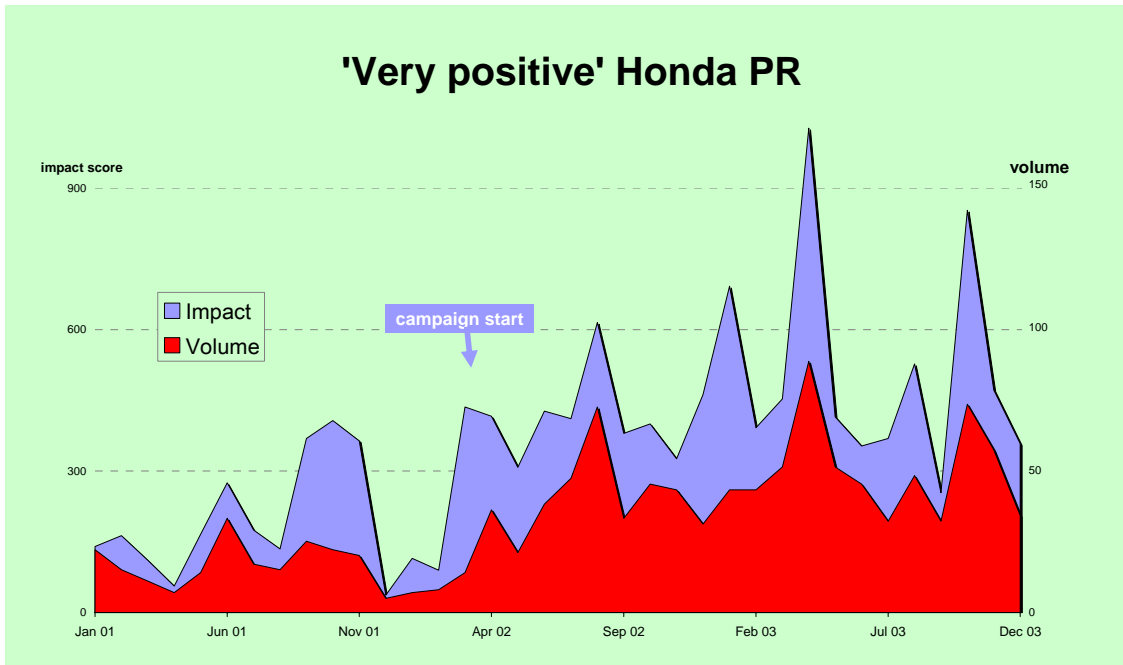
Fig. 69



Source: Hicklin Slade & Partners

PR was another important part of the whole communications mix. During the campaign, there was considerable improvement in PR results for Honda as a whole (beyond the communications PR). There was a very positive impact on 'very positive impact' scores (a calculation which factors in everything from circulation to page location):

Fig. 70



Source: Millward Brown Precis

So people were hearing more about Honda and hearing the right things. Honda was becoming:

Fig. 71

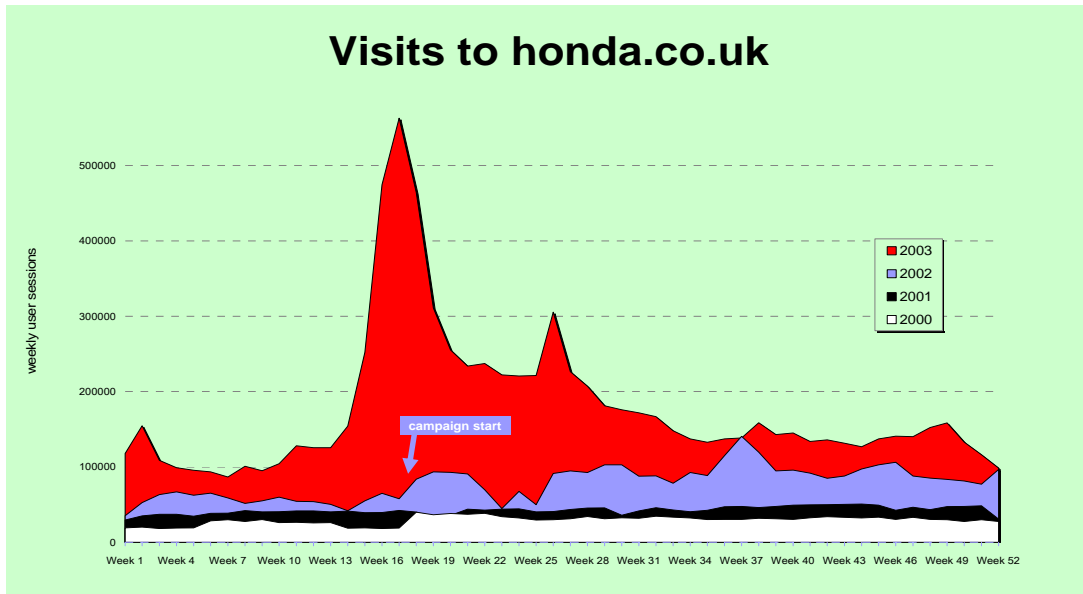


Lovely. They fancied Honda a bit more. But did they want to go out with it?

Did it make them do anything?

Knowing more about Honda led to people wanting to know more about Honda. First port-of-call... the website:

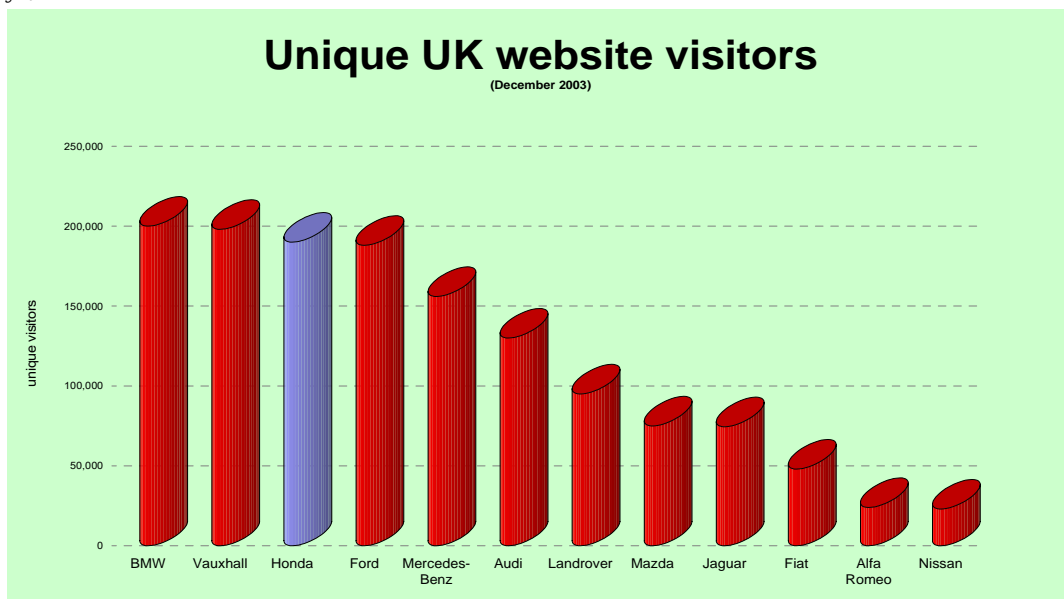
Fig. 72



Source: Honda UK

Honda was achieving thought leadership well beyond its share-of-voice. By December 2003, honda.co.uk was welcoming more visitors than most of the bigger boys:

Fig. 73



Source: Honda UK

They weren't just going there for a laugh either; searches for Honda dealer information increased by 302%:

Fig. 74

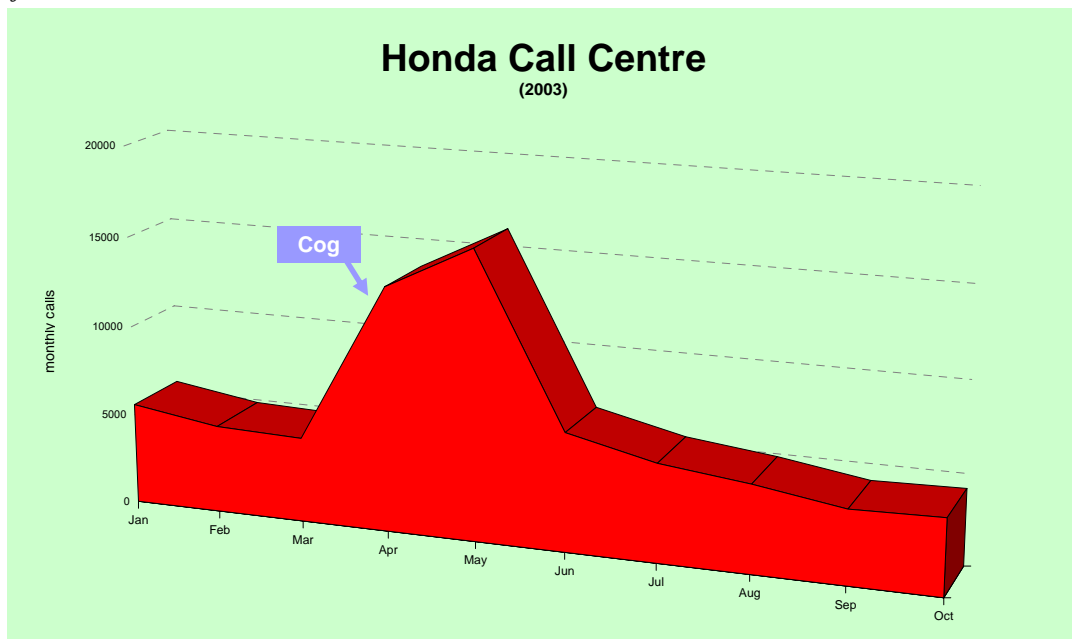


Source: Honda UK

Nor was it just the web. From interactive TV, 10368 people requested a test drive, ordered a DVD or viewed the full commercial.

Plus, Cog generated a trebling of calls to Honda – mainly for brochure requests:

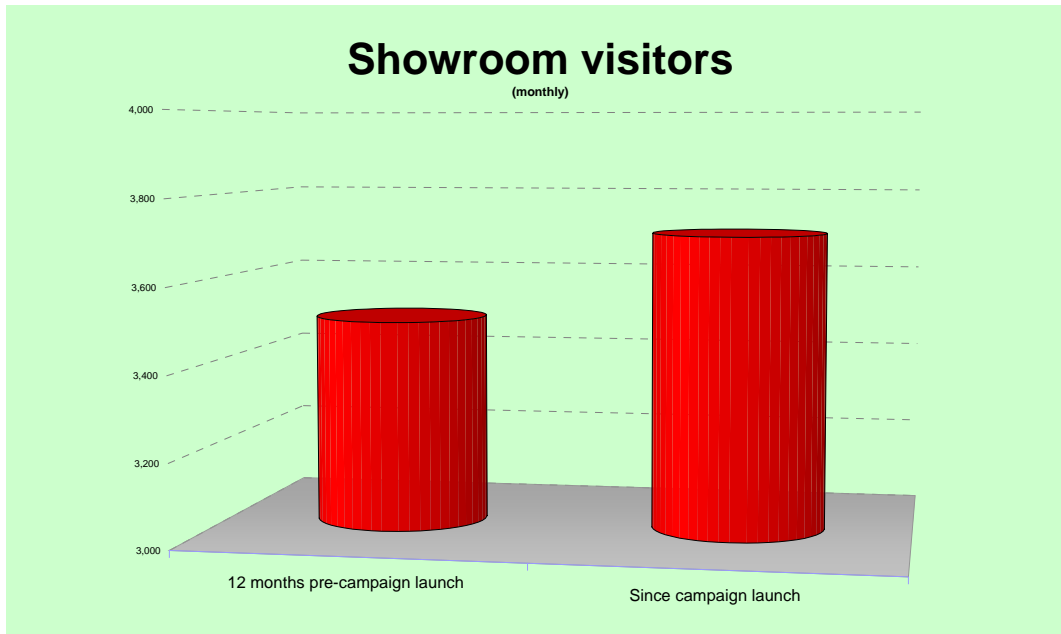
Fig. 75



Source: Honda Call Centre

Getting people to visit your website or call you is tough enough, but getting them to cart themselves to your showrooms is another thing. The campaign persuaded more people to do just that:

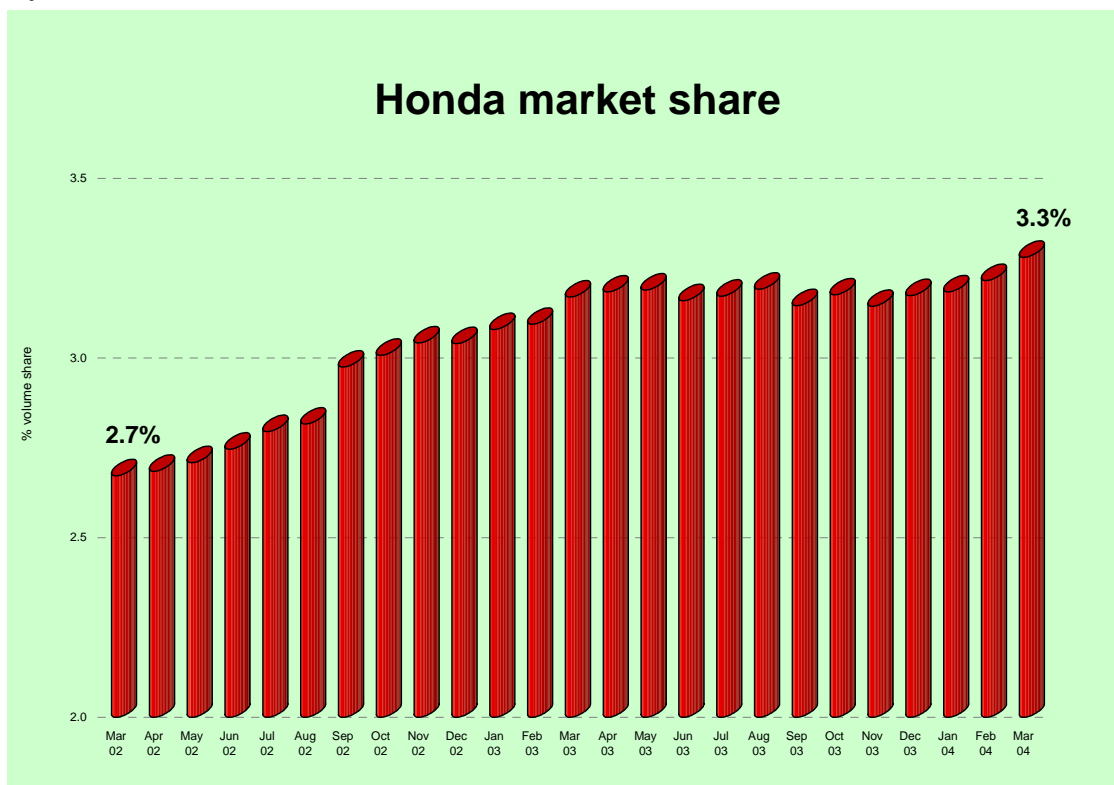
Fig. 76



Source: Honda UK

What happened when there were more people in showrooms, and those people thought more of Honda? More people bought Hondas:

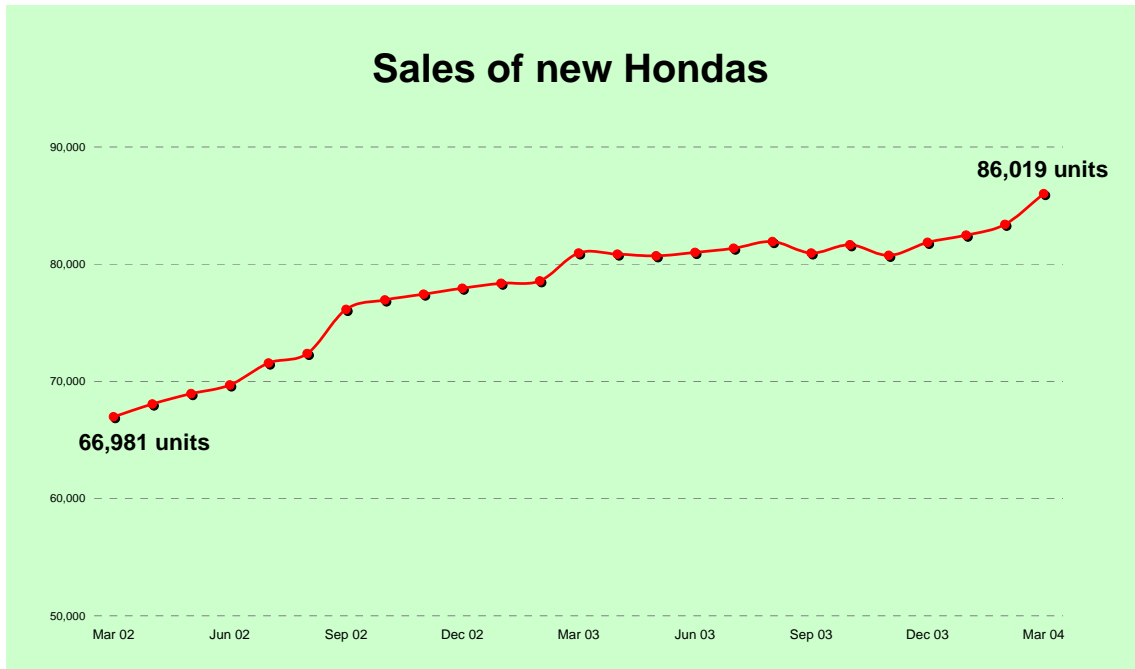
Fig. 77



Source: Honda UK

So from researching Honda, right through to handing over their cash, people were demonstrably acting on what they'd seen. In volume terms, the picture was like this:

Fig. 78



Source: Honda UK – 12 month rolling data

Which is where we started the story, lots of pages ago.

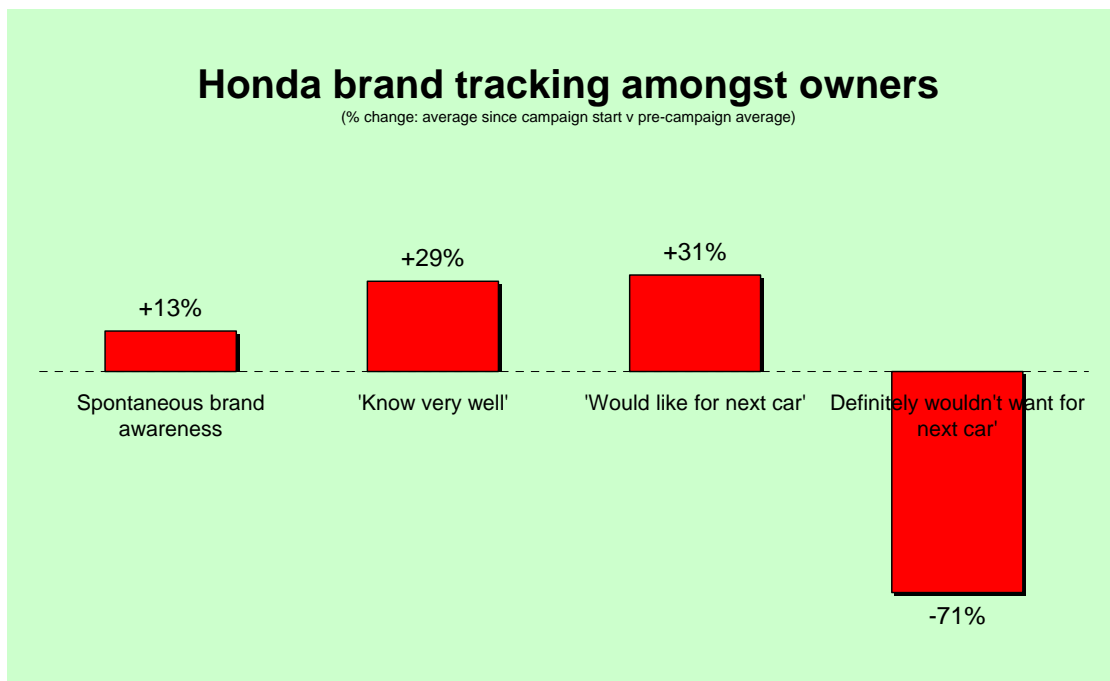
And was there a subplot to the story?

Did it have broader benefits?

The campaign had put lots of new bums in Honda driving seats, but what had it done for existing stakeholders in the business?

First up, Honda owners. They'd always been a relatively loyal bunch, but the communications made them feel even more likely to choose Honda next time around:

Fig. 79

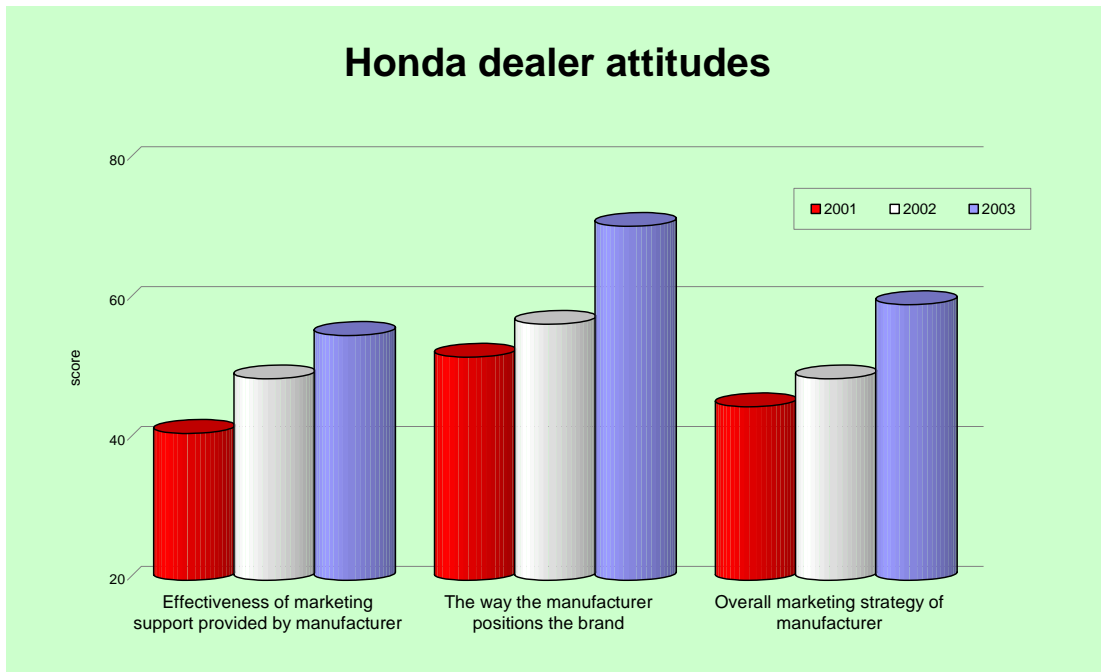


Base: Honda Owners
Source: Simpson Carpenter Ad Tracker

What about the dealers? It's not *completely* unheard of for car dealers to be a tad cynical about big and glossy brand advertising.

Not so in the case of the Honda campaign. Category-wide dealer surveys showed that the Honda guys were getting it, and getting behind it:

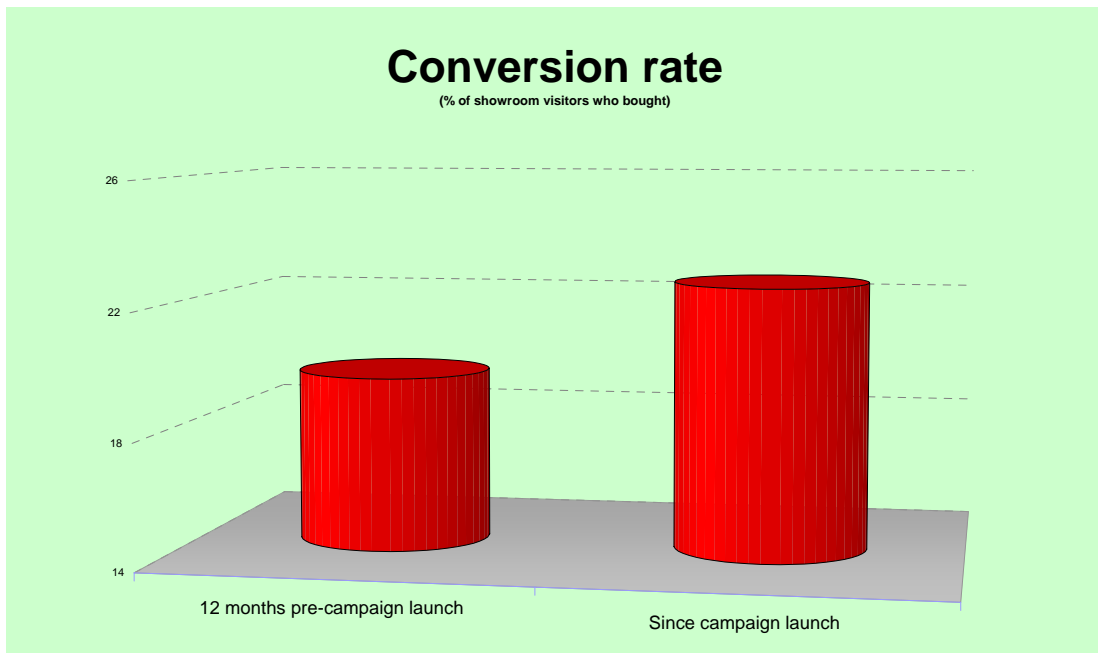
Fig. 80



Source: Sewells Dealer Attitude Survey

No wonder the dealers started to welcome what Honda were up to. We showed earlier that people visited showrooms with more regard for Honda, so it was easier to get them to leave with the keys to one:

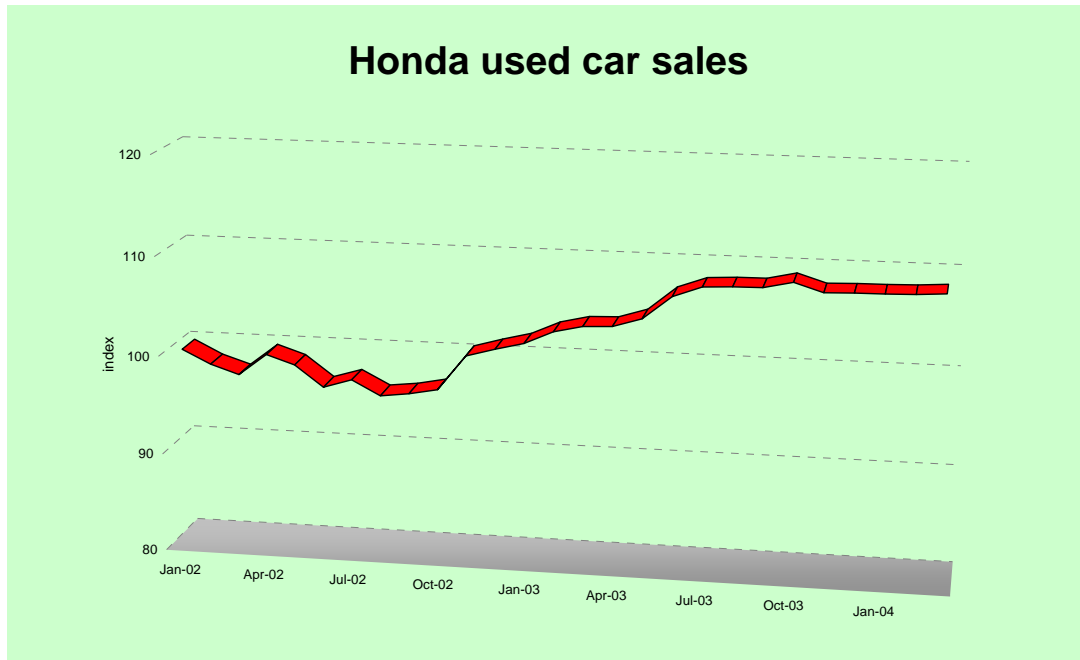
Fig. 81



Source: Honda UK

It wasn't just motivating dealers to sell more *new* Hondas, either:

Fig. 82



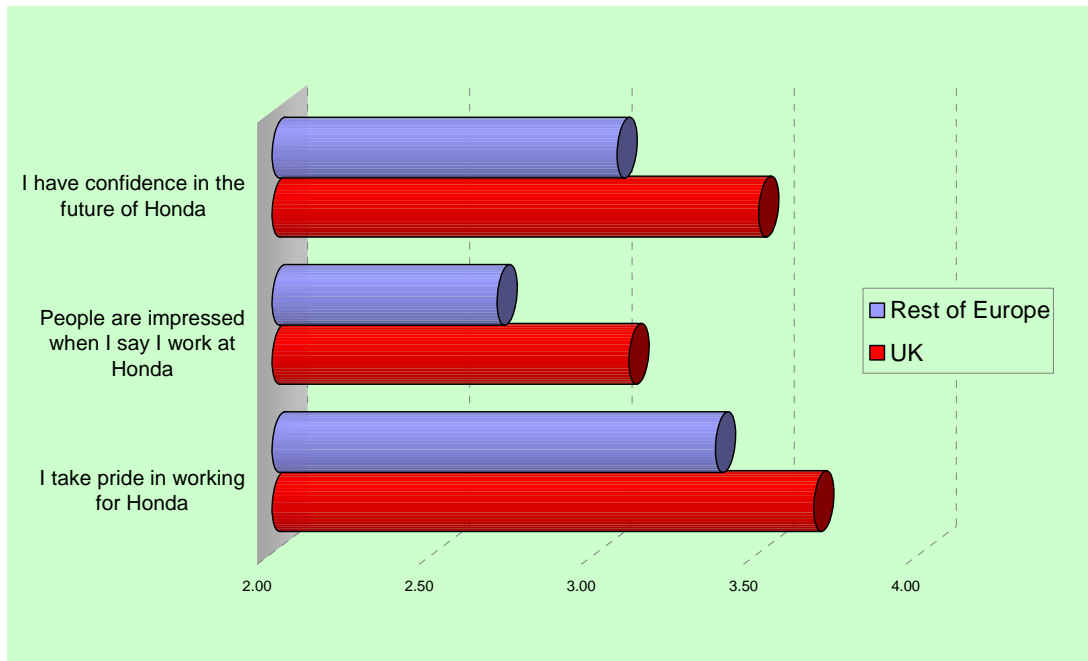
Source: Honda UK

Then there were the Honda staff. For the first time, in 2003, Honda made it into 'The Sunday Times Best Companies to Work For List'. Entry is based on surveys measuring staff satisfaction and pride in working for the company. Honda made number 18. In 2004, they climbed the charts to 16, when 89% of the staff said they were proud to work for Honda.

Staff turnover was down to 11% by early 2003, and then just 7% by early 2004.

Comparisons can also be made between Honda UK staff and their European counterparts (based on the control region from before):

Fig. 83



Source: Spirited Independence 2003, Honda Europe

OK, the communications can't take the credit for all of that, but it must have helped.

The activity seemed to be marshalling all kinds of troops. Not all the benefits of this will have trickled their way down to the balance sheet yet, but they will. Perhaps there were other, unknown beneficiaries from the campaign. Banana sellers, perhaps?

How would we sum it all up?

'Less is more'. Isn't that what they say? But is that always true? Rather than simplifying their brand, Honda wondered what would happen if they *embraced* its diversity. What if they simply told the truth about Honda? Nothing but the whole truth? They did... by crafting a consistent voice to communicate the brand's many beliefs and shades. Less wasn't more for Honda.

Ah, but what about 'more for less'? Surely that's a different matter? Isn't that something we all want, whether we're buying Brillo pads or building a business? It's what Honda wanted. It's what Honda achieved. Less media spend, less PR spend and less promotional spend. More effective integrated communications and more types of measurements to judge them. More motivated stakeholders. More brand preference, more sales and more profit.

28% more sales, in fact, and £388m more revenue. £388m, just by telling the truth. Makes you think.

The most commonly used word in the world is 'OK'. A word that means alright. Satisfactory. Not bad. Not everybody believes that OK is OK. Honda certainly don't, as this story has shown. And what if it's not the end of the story?



Word count 3949, excluding the figures. Oh, and also excluding these words talking about the word count.