

Radio takes retailer beyond promotions to reposition its brand and influence consumer attitudes

This case study relates how Black's Photo Corporation, a 60-year-old photography retail chain, used Radio advertising to battle big-box competitors and reposition in readiness for a major category shift. It shows that Radio does more than drive retail promotions: it also successfully delivers brand messages and influences consumer attitudes and perceptions.

BACKGROUND

Photography retailing consists of two key categories: photofinishing and hardware sales (cameras and accessories). Black 's Photo Corporation had established itself as the leading photo specialty chain in Canada, carving out a comfortable position with a 6% share of the photofinishing market and a similar share for hardware sales.

In 2002, the writing was on the wall for the traditional photography category. The digital revolution was underway and digital photography was projected to go mainstream (30% household penetration) by Christmas 2004.

Prior to digital, Black's primary competition for hardware was other specialty camera retailers. Because the digital camera was introduced as a computer peripheral, Black's also found itself up against big-box electronic retailers such as Future Shop.

Black's had also been under attack on the photofinishing side of the business. The market had become segmented between specialty photofinishers such as Black's, and mass merchants such as Wal-Mart who compete solely on price.

Black's challenge was to prepare for the digital shift and position itself against the new market of photography both in terms of hardware and photofinishing.

MARKETING OBJECTIVES

By Christmas of 2002, Black's recognized it needed to differentiate itself from new competitors in digital hardware. The objective was to create an advertising concept that could sell digital hardware and processing in addition to positioning Black's as the digital photography expert.

The strategy also had to dispel consumer misconceptions about digital photofinishing. Because most digital cameras are bought at electronics stores, consumers were not always aware they could get prints at a photo retailer rather than the electronics store where the camera was purchased. Black's needed to address this issue and set itself apart as the authority on photography, especially digital photography.

RADIO'S ROLE WITHIN THE MEDIA STRATEGY

Black's had traditionally used Radio to drive retail promotions. Offer-based campaigns had always pulled well for hardware sales, but could Radio also be used to position Black's for the upcoming digital revolution?

For the Christmas campaign of 2002, Black's embarked on a new approach to Radio with the launch of a branding campaign - "I Know Black's Knows." Black's took the high road relaying the message that, as a camera retailer, it knew more about digital cameras than big-box electronic stores, and was therefore the place to turn for information about photography and to buy a camera.

The creative focuses on a single character "Tommy" who poses questions specific to photography and then draws the conclusion that what he really knows is that "Black's Knows." The spots use light humour to poke fun at consumer misconceptions but always drive the listener to the conclusion, "I Know Black's Knows."

Radio gives Black's the flexibility to create multiple spots that address consumer barriers to purchase while branding Black's as the digital photography expert. In total, over 16 spots have been produced with the creative selling everything from film cameras to digital cameras to photofinishing services.

The flexibility of Radio enables Black's to target by market and demographic utilizing dominant weight levels. This has proven to be particularly valuable during the Christmas promotion period. In addition, Black's has used traffic, weather, and program sponsor tags to extend and increase awareness of the campaign.

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RESULTS

Now entering the third year of the "I Know Black's Knows" campaign, the creative theme has been extended in-store with POP and collateral material that leverages the "Black's Knows" positioning. Flyers take the "Black's Knows" concept one step further and act as an educational medium to provide more detailed information about digital photography and reinforce Black's as the digital photography expert.

Since its introduction in Christmas 2002, the "Black's Knows" campaign has performed very well to position Black's as the authority for digital photography - and to drive sales. During the 2002 and 2003 Christmas campaigns, market share for digital cameras increased over 1%. Additionally, Black's reported an 11.4% increase in sales from November to December 2003 versus the previous year.

"After airing the first wave of the creative, we found a remarkable thing happened. We got reports from store associates that customers were walking into the stores reciting back to the staff, "I Know Black's Knows." I've been in this business a long time and I've never seen that happen before.

One of the unexpected benefits of such a strong campaign is the effect on the staff. "I Know Black's Knows" has become the rallying cry for the store associates. We have been consistently getting better customer satisfaction scores and the morale of the troops has risen noticeably."

Roy Bower, Director of Marketing