

Car giant Land Rover decided an online push would suit its new model of Range Rover. The firm's global e-marketing manager Nina Larsen tells Ben Bold how the web has been key in its launch

The launch of car models online is a growing phenomenon. In March 2001, the new Volvo S60 coupé was advertised exclusively on the web. BMW and Vauxhall have also embraced the internet as a marketing medium, adding to the online presence of car brands. Now Land Rover has decided to join the ranks and is investing heavily in online marketing.

The king of the off-road vehicle unveiled its new Range Rover model – only the third in such launch 31 years – in a three-pronged online campaign over the last quarter of 2001. The campaign will continue until the vehicle goes on sale in Europe this month. It aims both to promote the vehicle's launch and to highlight the company's increased commitment to using the internet as a marketing medium.

The first phase of Land Rover's marketing push consisted of an unbranded teaser campaign, which kept users in the dark and yet incorporated stylistic elements consistent with the new Range Rover brand. A site called perfectlymade.com was created, which focused on premium design – a concept the company felt its target audience would relate to. Land Rover gradually posted more and more content on the site, before finally revealing the brand behind it and redirecting users to the Range Rover site (www.landover.rangerover.com).

The launch of the new Range Rover not only marks the company's first online launch, but also signifies a seismic shift in Land Rover's overall online marketing strategy. Nina Larsen, Land Rover's global e-marketing manager, says: "This is the first time this brand has launched a vehicle and used the internet as a primary mechanism to reach consumers."

Land Rover's target market varies as considerably as its models, which range from rugged pick-ups used by farmers to the Discovery, which is typically driven by users at the higher end of the market and is commonly seen doing the school run. The new Range Rover has its own niche market.

"The typical Range Rover customer is an affluent person who has more than one vehicle in the household," Larsen explains. "They are predominantly male and middle aged. They could be anyone from a royal in Saudi Arabia to a businessperson in the UK with several Land Rovers in their vehicle stable."

Prior to the campaign, Land Rover and Range Rover's online presence lacked uniformity across its international markets. National web sites exist in most of the big markets around the world, but in 2002, the company plans to invest more in online development and to centralise its web strategy.

"Certain markets don't have a national portal, which is another project that we are looking at," says Larsen. "We will be coming out with a global web site framework."



off the
beate



Land Rover used skyscrapers in its perfectlymade.com campaign

The development of this global framework will be driven from the UK. Wunderman Interactive, the agency which created the perfectlymade.com site, is overseeing its design.

Land Rover's most recent foray into new media, aside from the Range Rover launch, was its sponsorship of last year's movie blockbuster *Tomb Raider*. It used a co-branded web site, designed by Framfab UK, to complement the deal and promoted a special edition of its Defender model via the site. This brought the brand in front of a younger audience, moving its branding beyond the promotion of a particular product to the building of brand awareness in tomorrow's potential customer.

So why use the web to launch a vehicle? Land Rover believes that around 40 per cent of vehicle buyers go online to search for information before they make a purchase. It also feels that its target demographic group is even more likely to be online regularly. Research firm Forrester Research predicts that eight million US new car purchases will have been influenced by the internet by 2003, and almost half of those will have been purchased online.

Media planning and buying agency Optimedia has found that the process of researching, testing and purchasing a car is changing dramatically in the UK. Through its InTouch project, which combined qualitative and quantitative research, it found that nearly-new and used cars are selling much faster than new cars, and are readily available online. The implications of this are that manufacturers need to work even harder to convince consumers of the benefit of owning a new car – something which the Range Rover campaign strives to do.

Optimedia's research also found that while a test drive is a crucial part of buying a new car, customers feel happier if they can turn up to a showroom armed with trustworthy information. Manufacturers must therefore provide this, even if it has historically been supplied by the dealerships.

There are multiple objectives behind Land Rover's campaign. "The primary objective is data capture – to get our databases filled up with names and addresses," explains Larsen. "We are trying to reach those that are in the market to buy a luxury vehicle

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THE VEHICLE GALLERY

DESIGN INNOVATION

Range Rover has always been a design pioneer. With its smoother lines and distinctive detailing - like the eye-catching power vents and light clusters - New Range Rover takes the legend confidently into the 21st Century.

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Banners for perfectlymade.com appeared on FT.com and AltaVista's UK site

like the Range Rover. But we also have an underlying longer-term wish to build the brand."

Users who accessed perfectlymade.com could either opt in to the 'Inside Circle' - which gave them access to exclusive content, and enabled them to be sent brochures about the new vehicle and to receive emails as the site was updated - or they could opt in on a secondary level, which gave Land Rover permission to use their names and addresses for general marketing purposes.

A teaser campaign kicked off on 19 October across eight markets in seven languages. Media agency Mindshare and its online division m digital Europe planned and placed the ads, which prompted users to visit perfectlymade.com. Ads were placed on financial news and business sites, sports sites and portals, including FT.com, Economist.com, Yahoo! and Bloomberg. These were the areas of the web that the target market was thought to visit regularly. Mindshare negotiated deals with the media owners in which a cost-per-click element was introduced.

The Range Rover campaign was not m digital's first online car launch. The agency also worked with Volvo on the online launch of its S60 model, which involved 50 interactive pop-ups, rich-media, transitional and Superstitial banners, as well as WAP, PDA and email versions of the campaign.

The perfectlymade.com site celebrated classic design across premium product types, and included brands such as Rolex - brands that Range Rover felt would be attractive to its typical customers. Initially, the site omitted any reference to the Range Rover brand, but it progressively linked the idea of premium product design to automotive design and finally to Range Rover.

"The design theme was important both as a fundamental factor in how the vehicle looks but also in our brand communications," says Larsen. "You have to look at the whole communications strategy around this vehicle. The vehicle has moved on slightly from the past and the designers have taken inspiration from various objects."

The teaser concept was designed to build anticipation for the unveiling of the new car.

"The intrigue that can be created by a teaser campaign can be very powerful," Larsen says. "We decided to leave out the company name because we wanted people to engage with us without being biased. We didn't want people to avoid visiting the site because they were not interested in talking to an automotive company. We wanted to avoid any barriers that might prevent people going to the site."

The campaign entered its second phase on 7 November, as the new Range Rover site went live. Users who had submitted profile information on the perfectlymade.com site were notified by email of this next phase of the campaign, and anyone who tried to access perfectlymade.com was automatically rerouted to rangerover.landrover.com. This date coincided with the start of a direct mail drive.

The new vehicle was unveiled to VIPs and the world's media at the London Design Museum on 21 November. The rangerover.landrover.com site's content mirrored the event and included video footage of the vehicle. Sponsorship deals came into effect with email and PDA activity.

On 3 December, from a global perspective, the site was complete. Visitors can now create a personalised Range Rover with a customised interior trim, exterior colours and alloys. They can also request a brochure or information, depending on the country, find their nearest dealer by postcode or country, and send an e-card to a friend.

But in January, a third phase of the campaign launched and data specific to individual markets was posted.

"The centralised campaign was designed to have global reach, with content that is relevant internationally, such as pictures of the vehicle and details of its specifications," Larsen explains. "But we now have a site that is built by a central team, with the goal of allowing the markets to localise."

Extensive online advertising started at the beginning of 2002, to coincide with the market launch of the vehicle. At that stage, when the user entered the web site, they could select a specific country, such as the UK, rather than just a language, such as English. Much of the content remained global, but information relevant to particular markets was tailored accordingly.

"Local information, such as prices and product specifications, are where the individual markets come in," Larsen explains. This includes information on dealers in the region.

Countries that are without their own Land Rover web site will still be able to access information that applies to their market. "So if, for example, you come from a country like Norway, which doesn't have a localised site, you will see a contact page for the Norwegian market," Larsen explains.

As for its next move, Land Rover is preparing to invest more in a UK-driven, centrally co-ordinated new-media strategy. Larsen

Toyota: two-day intensive online push for new car model



The overall strategy was to create high impact across all media, particularly in the week of launch

**Paul Philpott
Toyota**

Car manufacturer Toyota (GB) wanted to create a media frenzy to accompany the launch of its new Corolla model.

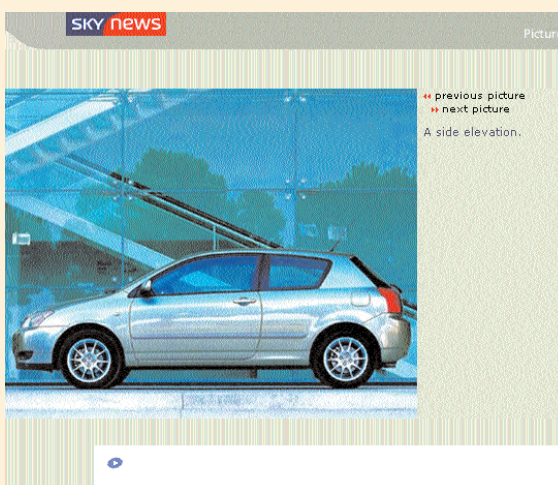
To support the firm's offline TV and outdoor advertising executions, agency Zenith Interactive Solutions advised on a 24-hour blitz of new-media activity using innovative and creative executions.

For two days from 4 January, executions ran on shopping portal beeb.com, Channel 4's motoring web site 4car.co.uk and the Sky News site. In an advertising first for beeb.com, Toyota purchased every available advertising slot and format within the portal (a strategy known as roadblocking).

The 4car.co.uk execution, which was also a first, involved the use of a Corolla-branded false home page, which lasted for five seconds.

On the Sky web site, a spoof story ran in the news section about a consumer who builds a shrine in readiness for the launch of the new car.

"The overall strategy was to create high impact across all media, particularly in the week of launch," said Paul Philpott, marketing director at Toyota (GB). "The 24-hour time frame,



Sky News ran a spoof story about the launch of the new car

coupled with the fact that the executions had never been used in the UK before – roadblocking has been but not on the scale we did it with beeb.com – created the impact that reflected the brand personality of the new Corolla."

All traffic was directed to Toyota's Corolla micro site (www.toyota.co.uk/corolla).

The media planning and buying was handled by Zenith Interactive Solutions, while agency Saatchi Vision developed the creative for the online campaign.

By Mark Sweney

claims that the campaign created a buzz in the company and paved the way for further investment. "People's thoughts about how the internet can be harnessed and what you can do with it have widened tremendously inside the company because of this campaign," she comments.

"I think the internet is a prerequisite for any automotive firm," she adds. "It is hugely important to Land Rover to have an online presence, because we know that up to 40 per cent of vehicle buyers, whether they are looking for this or another brand, will go online to search for information."

But she admits that the branding of Land Rover's web sites is very inconsistent from market to market. "You get a very different brand perception depending on which market you go into. From a central perspective, we can only advise our markets what to do in their individual countries. The success of our online presence and how much effect it will eventually have is down to a combination of what we do centrally and what we do locally."

At the very least, local sites will provide information on local dealers. Beyond that, each market decides what information to provide on its local site, such as local news and branded events.

Larsen denies that the company eventually intends to sell vehicles online, but admits that the web can facilitate the sales process. "We will build a channel to support e-commerce, but there is no desire from Land Rover at the moment to move away from dealers as the main point of transaction. From a sales perspective, the dealer is always the key destination to which you will have to drive the customer, so that they can do test drives."

As for the new Range Rover campaign, Larsen concludes: "We know that most people go into dealerships up to 90 days before they purchase. People using the internet can be at any stage of the purchase cycle so we have to look at this channel slightly differently. But it should fit into the business as a supporting channel to our key strategic objective – to sell more vehicles."

It is too early to judge the success of the perfectlymade.com campaign. Larsen would not divulge figures about data capture, other than to confirm that 6.7 million page impressions were generated between the launch of the campaign and 12 December across 10 sites. But it represents a new direction for Land Rover as it refocuses its internet marketing strategy, and makes its presence known online. □