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## 'Talking' Volkswagen Vento print advertisement becomes talk of the town

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NEW DELHI | MUMBAI: Volkswagen's advertisement for its Vento sedan has become the talk of the town, literally and figuratively. On Tuesday, readers of The Times of India in Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Pune and Chennai woke up to the surprise of their newspaper 'speaking' to them about the Vento, the first ever advertising campaign of this type in the world. On social networking sites and among media professionals, the starkly different advertisement has drawn excited comment for its innovativeness and potential to become a trendsetter.

The 'talking' advertisement — an audio rendering of the print commercial — was made possible by a light-sensitive device weighing just a few grams and pasted on the final page of the paper's special 10-page section. It was carried in some 2.2 million copies.

"Now a new concept has entered the portfolio of ideas and companies will copy it. Companies will say, 'Rs what worked for them will work for me' and try and create their own messages," said Jessie Paul, CEO of marketing consultancy Paul Writer and the former marketing head of Wipro.

Volkswagen, no stranger to unconventional advertising, said the aim was to do something innovative to help raise awareness of the brand and drive traffic to showrooms. In November last year, the German ran its 'Roadblocked' campaign in The Times of India, filling up all advertising space in the paper with its own ads and blocking out all others.

Lutz Kothe, head of marketing at Volkswagen India, credited his 14-year-old niece Beatrix Madersbacher for giving him the idea of a 'talking' advertisement when he was on a business trip to Munich.

"My niece sketched the idea on paper, sealed it and asked me to open it in Mumbai, where I stay," he said.

Back in Mumbai, Mr Kothe shared the idea with his creative and media team to convert the teenager's idea into an iPod-sized device embedded with a chip, a speaker and batteries to last for 140 minutes. Made at a Volkswagen plant in China, about 2.5 million of these devices were distributed with The Times of India and The Hindu.

"Was wondering if the walls were speaking, when I opened the TOI today.. really unique audio ad by VW!! Das cool!", Vanessa from Chennai wrote on Twitter.

Bhaskar Das, executive president of The Times of India Group, described the advertisement as an innovation in co-creation that makes a statement for not just Times of India, but the entire print media.

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Times of India worked together to source the chips, paste them on 2.2 million copies, create the edition and distribute the copies on time. Volkswagen and The Times of India group declined to provide financial details.

Media communications group Mudra's chief creative officer Bobby Pawar was of the view that the fact that there was a chip in the paper was not the only innovation. "We wanted to give voice to the passion of the people who create the car in a media that has no voice."

MediaCom MD Divya Gururaj said Volkswagen is a modest spender compared to competition and unconventional methods help it stand out.

"When we launched the brand, awareness was very low. Competition like Maruti, Tata, Hyundai outshouted us by far. In such a scenario, we had the option of following the norm and doing regular full-page/half-page ads or doing something completely radical. Our strategy to be innovative has worked," she said.

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