

Fudge

Roots matter – dare to be different



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A shampoo and set might not be to everyone's taste; when it comes to looking good individual style matters – which is where Fudge fits in.

As Sabre Group's leading brand – a company with a background in distributing salon accessories – Fudge was born down under and took Australia's surfing culture, on Sydney's northern beaches, as its starting point. Recognising that the range of conventional hair products on offer didn't cater for water-worshippers' sun-kissed locks, it set about devising a formula that could retain and recreate the unkempt look, favoured by the young surfing set.

With this in mind the first Fudge product, Hair Shaper – a sticky, styling clay launched in 1991 – was aimed specifically at teenage boys; who until that point had been completely off the 'hair care' radar. The timing of the launch (in the early 1990s) was pivotal, with fashion – led by music – turning against the tailored power look of the 1980s in favour of a more deconstructed 'just got outta bed' look. Shaper was an instant success, gaining cult status amongst the surfing fraternity – only sold, initially, in trendy surf shops and salons.

The explosion of Shaper onto the market led to the launch of seven further products for the Fudge line, backed up by its highly innovative first major marketing campaign – 'What the F'.

Consisting of fly-posting and strategically positioned billboards, designed to generate interest in the brand in a quirky way, the campaign used bold statements such as 'What the F is Fudge?' and 'Test it on hair not animals' to titillate and get

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consumers hooked; everyone wanted to know more about Fudge. The success of the campaign owed much to the concept – unique at that time in both the hair industry and billboard advertising – and created a high level of exposure in key markets.

Since then Fudge has become renowned for its creative campaigns, employing a range of tactics (including advertising on taxis), catchy slogans and edgy images to promote brand awareness. Its latest, 'Just add Hair', was developed to coincide with the re-launch of Fudge, using a new logo and packaging. The trade campaign took a teasing, phased approach that began with a focus on the new logo and the 'Things Don't Change. We Change' strapline. Reinforced throughout the campaign is that Fudge equals change: change your hair, change your attitude, change your life...

By remaining a salon only brand (sold only in hairdressers and beauty establishments), Fudge retains its credibility and kudos, while defying convention. It continues to break new ground through creating products that its competitors 'can't' or 'don't' want to offer, keeping the brand one step ahead of rivals. For instance, Paintbox – a semi-permanent colour, that allows its users to mix up any hair-shade. Fudge innovation spills over into product names, with each product doing exactly what the name suggests; 'Skyscraper', hairspray that lifts high and sets, while 'Putty' (with a china clay base) hardens when dry, the same as its namesake. This kind of tongue-in-cheek candour is part of the brand's appeal to the youth market.

Aggressive marketing and idiosyncratic advertising have succeeded in creating a brand that appeals to the tough, discerning teenage market. Terry Sierocki, chief executive of Sabre and the 'face of fudge', acknowledges that without the

contribution of the team that has worked with him (past and present) this would have not been possible. But as a youth culture Fudge goes beyond hair. Its controversial, anti-establishment stance allows the brand to remain fresh within the youth sector, existing for those who like to be... well, a little different.

