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The Story Behind the Cannes Silver Lion-Winning Nagai Sakeru Gummy Commercial



The Cannes Silver Film Lion-winning *Nagai (Long) Sakeru Gummy* commercial serial tells the story of the romantic comedy between Chi-chan, Tooru-kun, and LOOONG Man. We asked Creative Director Mitsuaki Imura of Hakuhodo about what went on behind the scenes.

The *Nagai Sakeru Gummy* commercial, as an 11-part serial. [Version with English Subtitles here.](#)



—Congratulations on winning Silver in the Film Division at the Cannes Lions.

Thank you so much. I've been heading this project ever since the Sakeru Gummy when on sale three years ago (the short Sakeru Gummy). As a gummy candy that you rip apart and then eat, the product has a clear feature that makes it easy to make commercials for, but if the ripping itself is the punchline then it becomes a product with a very narrow target demographic, something that only children will buy. That's why the Sakeru Gummy commercial is set in a workplace and targeted to adults.

After that came the introduction of the 40 centimeter-long Nagai (*long*) Sakeru Gummy, and when that was confirmed the CEO of UHA Mikakuto said, "I want to show it as something mainstream, not a niche product." Again, I thought that to have children in it and make the candy's length itself the punchline of the commercial would not be right for this project.

An ordinary tagline for the commercial would be "Now there's a new, LONG Sakeru

Gummy,” but if we were to do that, it would look like what was already a niche product was going further into niche territory. Instead of that, we thought of a concept like “Sakeru Gummy vs. LONG Sakeru Gummy” that would command a bolder presence without much need for explanation. From there, we moved into the commercial itself.



—The product itself is quite unusual, but what did you think when you first saw it?

This is how the UHA Sales team prefaced the product: “Sakeru Gummy is going to introduce a new Long Sakeru Gummy. Anyway, it’s really long. I’ll send you some so take a look.” When the producer and I first saw it, without even thinking about it the first thing out of our mouths was, “It really is long, I mean, it’s so long.” At the meeting, for a while all anyone could say was it’s so long, it’s so long, over and over and over, everyone snickering about it. But humans always react instinctively this way without any particular reason, people tend to like when something is so big or so fast – and of course, when it’s so long. So that went into the project plan.



—What was the process behind deciding on the final idea for the commercial?

There were four of us on the Sakeru Gummy team: sales, producer, production manager, and myself handling creative. I always told them, “Lay into this, do your worst” when I had them look at the content. “Imura, do you seriously think this is good?” they would say, and we’d remake it, and then in turn when I would go to throw something out they would take my content and tell me it was great, so it was back and forth.

We started working this way around 1999 with the [Sensei series of commercials for Fanta](#). Our client Coca Cola Japan really stressed the advance research, and at the time they did focus group interviews with middle and high school students. I also participated in all of these group interviews, explaining the content of the commercial to them, and they would always say such hurtful things! But I fixed what they pointed out, showed them again, and then through repeated trial and error I finally got to a point where I could sense it was connecting with them. The commercial was a hit.

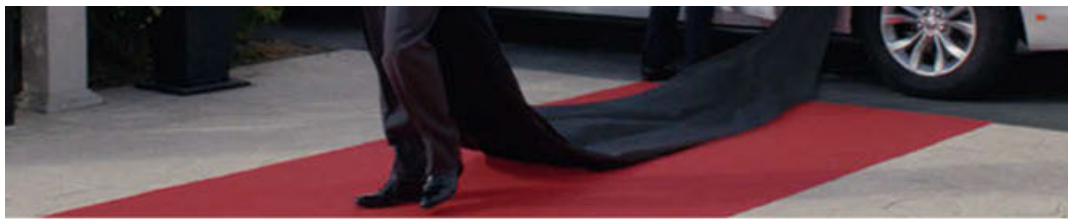
That’s why even now it’s not about making decisions just within the creative team – people in other positions or departments will give a more frank and honest opinion. Still though, it hurts when they find fault in the work!



—What traits characterize you as a commercial planner (an occupation particular to the Japanese advertising industry)?

I design a lot of content. I'm indecisive and can't just take such selective choices. For the Sakeru Gummy series I drew almost 400 content ideas, I went through 7 different presentation directions, and then after discussing with the client, again fleshed out the ideas. That process went on for almost half a year, and when the budget and schedule all came together, it turned into an 11-part series.





—The final punch line is a big surprise. I heard that at Cannes, the jury lauded the commercial, saying that it illustrates perfect diversity, but in reality was that the intention of the work?

In the world of commercials, in general the number one concern is drawing to show a product as different as possible from its competitors, showing a new product as being totally unique with nothing else like it – so I thought I would take a leap with stressing endings that say “Either one is good” or “Both of them are good.” At the end of the day, whether long or short, a gummy candy is a gummy candy. Candidly speaking, it doesn’t matter which, and it would be fine to have other lengths. Looking at the world in this way, the reality is that even though it might be a

miniscule variation, I do feel that it's common to try to deliberately treat these differences very seriously. With that in mind, changing the commonplace "versus" idea of differentiating products into the inclusive "and" that we see in the last scene was a very natural thing to do.

Translated by Alexander Michaelson

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   1 year ago

