

## **Feel the Difference**

The communication for the new Ford Fiesta demonstrates the potential of the internet to divvy up and make quick work of the otherwise tedious task of building buzz.

User opinion is on every marketer's mind. But only as part of a digital campaign. What you and I have to say about the product is restricted to social networks on the internet. Very few have used user-generated content in mainstream advertising. Following the footsteps of its parent in the US, Ford India is one of those handful of companies.

Flagging off the communication for the new Fiesta with a digital campaign, Ford launched its mass media campaign with user-generated bytes in its TV commercial and print ads. Four young people, fitting Ford's prototype of the new Fiesta user, were accompanied on their test drive of the car from Delhi to Diu (1,310 km) over 10 days. Their impressions were captured and presented on film for viewers — unscripted and impromptu.

But that is just the tip of the iceberg. The new Fiesta ad marks Ford's new communication strategy for India. A clear profiling of consumers of its different models, which began with the launch of the Figo in March 2010, has been extended to the Fiesta as well. More importantly, the campaign marks the global mandate of a unified communication strategy.

A common global theme for communication evolved with the coming together of Ford's creative, media and digital agencies such as JWT, Mindshare, Ogilvy & Mather and Wunderman in various regions. Team Detroit was created in the US in 2006, Blue Hive in Europe in 2009 and this year, Asia-Pacific (including India) saw the formation of Global Team Ford. Each group is in touch with the other. The Indian arm of Global Team Ford comprises JWT, Mindshare and Wunderman (for digital).

Not just cost-saving, these outfits are geared for more effective communication to take on niftier competition for the young, sophisticated consumers. The ads have been designed with a predominant theme of user testimonials rather than models acting out a script. Such campaigns include the Drive One, Feel the Difference campaign which had owners of Ford models such as the Fiesta being invited to dealerships on the pretext of participating in a focus group. Instead, they found themselves in a room full of actors in the role of reporters who asked them about their experience with Ford.

### **Feel the difference**

Ford India has embraced the unified stand of 'Feel the Difference' — the global brand promise that Ford CEO Alan Mulally is said to have encouraged. Starting with the Fiesta, Ford India will introduce the theme of real people for its ads to bring out what different consumers can look forward to in Ford cars.

Anurag Mehrotra, vice-president (marketing), Ford India, explains, "In the US, we have had real people in our ads. That is the language we will now speak in our communication globally. In the automobile industry, co-creation with users had been restricted to inputs when making the car. After that it was back to traditional advertising where marketers control the medium and the

message to depict how a consumer should react to the brand. We are letting the product go and allow users to express their impressions of the car.”

Hari Krishnan, India head of Global Team Ford, says, “Crowd-sourcing is the new credo for us. Consumers will experience and then relate the experience to others. It is the best way to bring out the difference in our cars. And, let’s admit it, when making a car purchase, we always turn to reviews and word of mouth of experts rather than just depend on mass media ads.”

The new Fiesta, priced at Rs 8.23 lakh on, will be differentiated on the basis of its technology. Mehrotra says it offers best-in-class cabin technology such as voice activated controls for music, air-conditioning, cruise control and electric power assist steering. Under the hood, there is a new engine for both petrol and diesel, a new 5-speed manual gearbox. A torque sensor for the steering motor automatically adjusts the camber tilt for better steering.

The Fiesta TV ad features Archit Rakheja (an adventure consultant), Monica Joon (a sportsperson), Shruti Sharma (a travel writer) and Vikram Aditya Singh (a video journalist). Their Facebook pages can be accessed much the same way as we do with friends, establishing their credibility as real users. While the TVC consists of vignettes of the trip with each of the four users, Ford Fiesta’s Facebook page has posted each of their impressions of the car separately. They highlight the car’s features — from voice controls, automatic boot unlocking, adjustable seat-belts, extra lighting... you name it. The TVC is a change from what Taproot founder Agnello Dias calls the catalogue automobile ads in India. Dias explains that filmcraft has improved in India but not the gaze. Most car advertisement narratives are for men what ads for skincare brands are for women.

### **Making it happen**

Krishnan says, “The production was more like a documentary, with unobtrusive cameras placed in the cars so as not to fluster the four. We had moderators and not directors to put them at ease and there was no casting. We recruited the four participants based on our online search.”

Ford India had anonymously called for nominations of four people. It was put out on third party Facebook pages. There were two selection criteria. The people chosen should have a sizeable fan following on the social media to reach out to a large audience with their testimonials and perhaps even invite a few of their friends to dealers bearing the Blue Oval badge.

They also had to fit the profile Ford had drawn up for the Fiesta customer. While Figo has its Sandeep, Fiesta has Ajay. It mapped a day in Ajay’s life, from his usual haunts (to set up Ford cafés at malls), media habits and even what his life so far has been like. Explains Mehrotra, “Ajay, at 28-32 years, is more grounded than Sandeep who is raring to go. He has seen success but peppered with one or two disappointments. So he is not naive. Yet, there is no dearth in ambition in him. He may be understated but wants to achieve a lot. The age of course is just an indicator; what is the deciding factor is the personality that we have drawn up.”

It was Ajay’s ‘characterisation’ that helped sharpen Fiesta’s media mix. Ford India began its digital campaign in April while the car was launched in July this year. But it was only on August

26 that consumers got to see it in mainstream media — TV and print. The digital leg included reaching out to auto bloggers and video capsules on features recounted by the four test drivers.

Ford India's research said that the Ajays of the world consumed more video content on the internet than on the TV screen. It was a "bold decision" to eschew TV at the start, says Mehrotra, because dealers were concerned about the lack of fanfare around the launch. Ford India also had a precedent in the US campaign. The company had invited as many as 100 test drivers to drive around a Fiesta for six months and upload their adventures online. More than 60 per cent of sales enquiry has come from the digital medium in India. Mehrotra says that 80 per cent of the media mix, that is, the digital leg, hardly involved big spends.

Going digital was also in sync with the Fiesta's positioning. The Fiesta had earlier roped in Hindi film actor Abhishek Bachchan to endorse the product with the 'Go Fida' catch-word. There was a more recent but brief campaign about the Fiesta arriving in style at a driveway.

The task for Ford's marketing team and the 'real four' will be to sweeten the deal for the new Fiesta which is now playing in the premium B-segment of sedans as opposed to its earlier lower-priced entry-level variant.

***Answer each of the following questions ( approx. 300 to 400 words )***

1. How far do you think Ford will be successful in achieving the desired result by focusing on 'Feel the Difference' advertising campaign.
2. Give your view about using the social networking sites as the promotional medium.
3. Being the competitor of Ford, what strategy you will adopt to combat this new move of Ford.