

### Ford Motors Successful Use of Internet Marketing

Technology is improving daily, and businesses have to maximize the available technology to market to consumers. Innovated methods of marketing are replacing traditional marketing methods. People are engaging more in digital media causing the world to go viral. The viral effect has opened multiple opportunities for businesses and consumers. “Marketing is now about conversations. And media, specifically digital media, make those conversations possible” (Landry, Ude, & Vollmer, 2010). Ford Motor Company, an American based automaker, noticed that its consumers and competitors were all engaging more in digital media regularly. Ford Motors intrigued with the countless business opportunities available in the digital market, decided to use the Internet as a platform to address its marketing problems. Ford Motors expanded its marketing from tradition print and television into the mediums of digital, mobile and Internet marketing. The expansion into the digital, mobile and Internet marketing allows Ford Motors to produce and provide tools for engagement and better communication between the company, Fords’ local dealers, potential and current consumers. Ford Motors wants to integrate its advertisement strategy into the different viral markets while also not forcing consumers to make purchases. The message a company delivers to potential consumers is as important as the method in which they present the method. “Marketing message distribution—timing, context, and relevance—is becoming as important as creative execution” (Landry et al, 2010). Ford Motors marketing plan pitches its products in such a subtle way that consumers' do not feel pressure into purchasing an automobile. Not pressuring consumers to make a purchase allows the consumer to feel more comfortable. To make consumers feel more comfortable about making a purchase, Ford Motors advertised or promoted to its target demographic where they are most comfortable at, which is social networking websites.

Social networks provide the platform for the more personal relationships between Ford and potential consumers. A personal relationship between Fords and its potential consumers, provides Ford with the current demand of its consumers. Ford Motors created blog pages and websites on social networking websites to provide a platform for engagement between the company, Fords' local dealers, and potential and current consumers.

“Social Networking is the most popular online activity worldwide...“It’s where you’ll find consumers most of the time. It’s where we will learn more and more about what they are interested in, what catches their attention, what compels them to share. This real-time medium not only creates an expectation of instant information and content, but it generates a vast amount of data about what interest and engages consumers right now” (Chahal 2012).

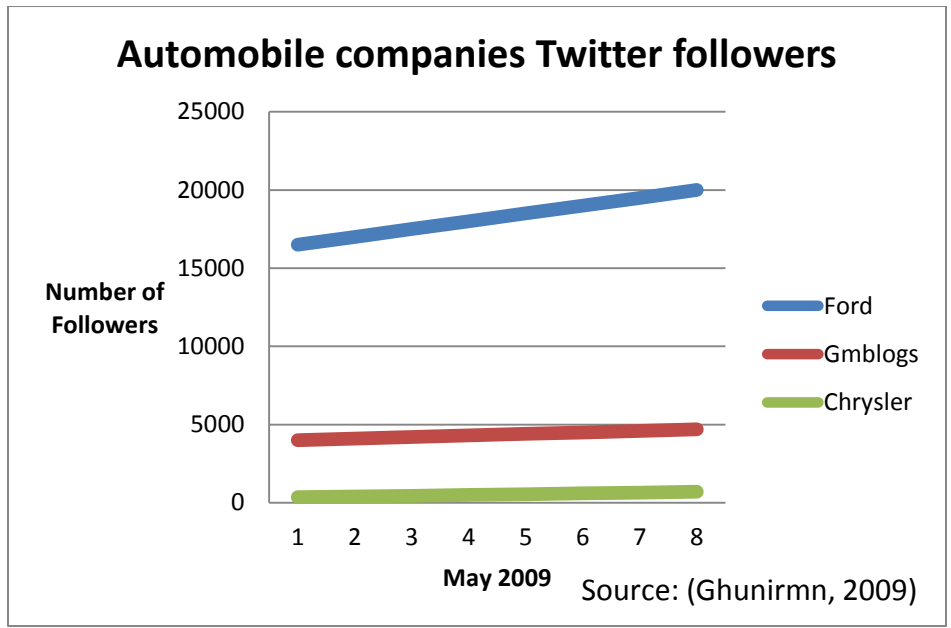
Ford Motors strategy to integrate social networks provides brand recognition and detailed data of the interest of its consumers. Ford Motors can use the data to make improvements based on the current insights of consumers. Ford Motors created webpages on social networking sites such Twitter, MySpace, Facebook, and Flickr to promote both its marketing plan and engagement with consumers. The social networking pages allow consumer-to-consumer, consumer to dealer, dealer to business, and business to consumer networking. “With 500 million people on Facebook we can reach more potential customers in a more personal way,” stated Jim Farley, chief marketing executive at Ford Motors (Michael, 2011). Ford Motors has experience success with marketing on social networks as “Ford also says Facebook ads can help move cars. The Detroit carmaker states online shopping at sites like Autotrader.com for the 2011 Ford Explorer jumped 104 percent during the period when it ran ads” ( Heine, 2011a).

Ford separated themselves from its competitors with the creation of their own social networking sites. Purchasing an automobile is a financial decision that many seek validated advice. Ford Motors engages with its consumers through not only Facebook, Twitter, MySpace but also social network they have created. Ford created social networks for their consumers which including the following: exploreforum.com, themustagesource.com, fiestafaction.com, and social.ford.com. “People word of mouth creates trust for you through Social Media” (Bullas n.d.). Social networks give consumers and critics their own voice. Social.ford.com is more comforting to consumers who are only interested in automobiles then other social networks. Social.ford.com provides potential and current consumers with a social networking platform for potential and current consumer to research and interact with real Ford automobile owners. Consumers can register free to Social.ford.com where they can share their ideas for improvements, discuss their problems with certain Ford Motors products, tell its Ford Motors story, and receive information on new and upcoming Ford Motors products. Social.ford.com webpage provides a section titled *YOUR IDEAS*, where consumers can have a voice in how to improve the convenience, green, infotainment, performance, personalization, and safety of Ford Motor vehicles. “It's a further evolution to making social the core of everything we do. They allow our fans to identify their interests” (Heine, 2011b). Fords Motors social websites gives the company the ability to build a stronger bond with consumers while collecting ideas on how to improve different aspects of the vehicles.

Automobile Brand	Total Cars Sales	
	Mar-12	Column1 Mar-11
General Motors Corp.	99,905	81,890
Ford Motor Company	84,772	80,255
Chrysler LLC	51,514	33,643

Toyota Motor Sales USA Inc.	124,612	101,827
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Source : (Auto sales, 2012)



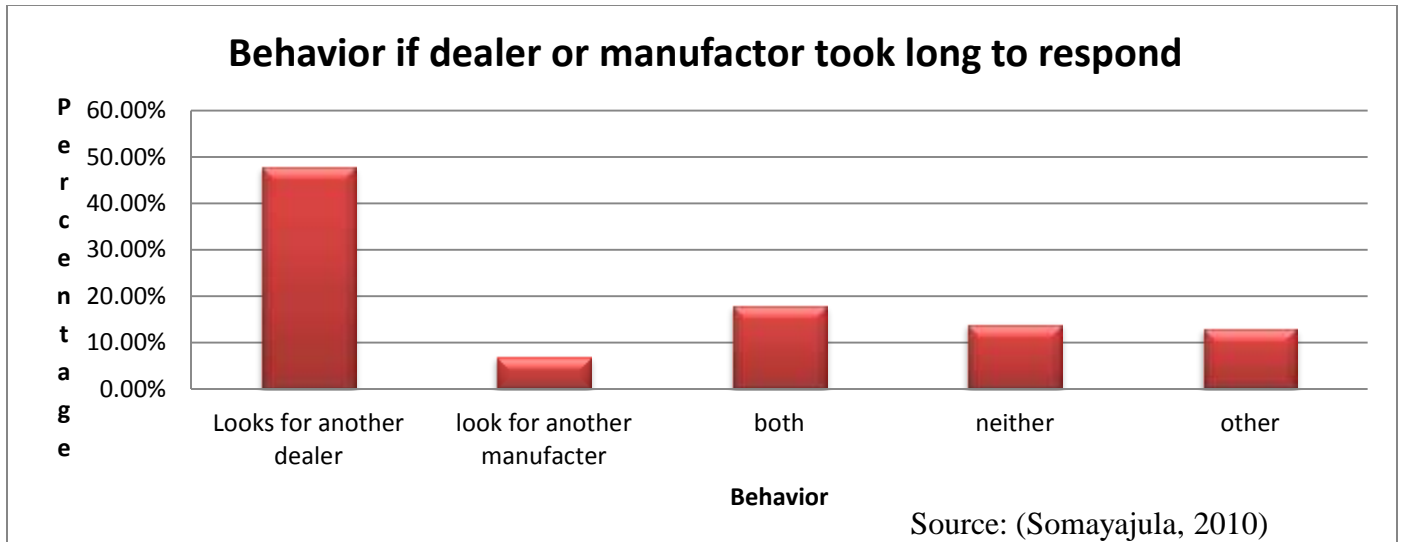
“Scott Monty (Head of Social Media for Ford) is working hard to give Ford a social media personality. Whereas GM and Chrysler are following a more traditional brand voice. There is a halo effect of having four times more followers, which results in getting more media coverage, so the story of Ford and social media is jumping to print and TV platforms, which is driving further reach and growth back on Twitter and social networks in an awareness loop”( Ghuneim 2009) .

Comparing its business against its competitors, Fords uses the comparison to calculate its success and weaknesses. Toyota sells the most automobiles in the United States, and Ford Motors wants to shorten that gap between itself and Toyota. To increase the sale of cars in the United States Fords engagement with potential consumers through social networks. The interaction through social networks creates the halo effect generating more coverage for Ford

and its products. General Motors and Chrysler are Ford Motor engages with their consumers more on Twitter than their competition by having more than 20,000 more followers than GM, and Chrysler. Ford having more Twitter followers lets Ford interact with more people bring more gathers more data and trends. Fords competition including GM, and Chrysler only invested 9% of their total spending into digital shares as opposed to Fords investing 25% of its total spending into digital shares.

Ford Motors used its connection with consumers on social networks to launch a new marketing plan. In 2009, Ford Motors launch the Fiesta Movement in which they did not spend a dollar on tradition media. Ford promoted the Fiesta Movement virally through blogs, websites, and multiple social networks. Fords Fiesta Movement campaign the re-launch of the “environmentally friendly Ford Fiesta. The gained popularity in other countries allowed Ford to plan to re-launch them in North America. “The Fiesta Movement campaign is squarely aimed at Millennia’s... These consumers, which will total 70 million drivers by 2010, use social media daily and offer a prime opportunity for Ford to tap into a group that hasn’t yet established brand loyalty”( Ford Names, 2009). The demographic of Millennia’s and their attractiveness to more environmental friendly automobiles provided the platform for Ford to reach their demographic at its main source of media. “As part of social media initiative, 100 young trendsetters will test drive and “live” with a Fiesta for six months, traveling as “agents” on special “missions,” who will then relate their experiences through a variety of social media sites”( Ford Names, 2009). The 100 young trendsetters would post videos of their experiences along with text updates on social networks. The videos posted by the 100 participates in the Ford Fiesta Movement were perceived as playful and causal instead of the tradition automobile commercial intending to sell a car. The videos are entertaining which can lead to consumers sharing them along with their

social network friends. The Ford Fiesta Movement videos displayed space for potential consumers to comment and share publicize their feelings of the Ford Fiesta. The Ford Fiesta Movement lasted six months, and Ford received some impressive statistics. The Ford Fiesta movement produced “4.3 million YouTube views, 500,000+ Flickr views, 3million+ Twitter impressions’ and most importantly ‘50,000 interested potential customers, 97% of which didn’t currently own a Ford” (Parr, 2009). The movement proved that social media could influence the interest of potentials customers, build brand recognition while having a personal connection with the digital savvy consumer. Fords Fiesta Movement success provided consumers insight, trends, and reaction to the Ford Fiesta. Ford “was clever in introducing contests for YouTube, which drew thousands of submissions, gained a steady trickle of Twitter buzz and generated a healthy dose of blog and news coverage, the latter of which would have costs millions in advertising” (Ghuneim, 2009). Ford pitched its automobiles without consumers feeling pressure. The generated buzz of the Ford Fiesta caught the attention of almost 50,000 potential consumers who did not own a Ford. Ford Motors did not cost a dollar of tradition media and saved millions promoting using social networking. Ford Fiesta Movement would serve as the blueprint to launch future campaigns because of the ability to be more efficient in reaching consumers while cutting cost in advertisement.



Ford Motors goal of marketing remains to provide tools or services to promote more engagement and enhance the connection between consumers, local dealers, and Ford as a brand. Ford Motors provides consumers the ability to communicate with local dealers or each other using mobile applications and devices. Consumers are tending to use smartphones to search and shop because they are able to do so in the comfort. Consumers are becoming frustrated when they do not receive instant messages or updates when contacting a local dealer or automobile company forcing the majority to look for another dealer or company. Fords creates these new services to decrease the chances of a consumer frustration leading to distrust and abundance of the brand. The digital market provides the opportunity for Ford to create joint ventures with mobile companies and applicators to create applications or services that would speed up the interaction between consumers and local dealers. Fords partnership with Hipcricket launching new text service for consumers who prefer to shop for automobiles on its smartphones.

“Customers watching a Ford Fusion television commercial can text ‘Fusion’ to a short code to receive local offers. Customers are then prompted to text their zip code and applicable incentives are sent to the customer. Customers are then given the option to text their name if they would

like to be contacted by their local dealer. Customers who submit names are sent to the local dealer for follow up” (Michael, 2011). The new text service let consumers seeking information engage in conversation with a local Ford dealer or Ford representative instantaneously. Ford provides more applications and text services to strengthen communication between their consumers and dealers. Ford Motors also partnered with Zubi Advertising to reach the rapidly growing demographic of Spanish-speaking Internet users. “Hispanics are the fastest-growing segment of the US population, and eMarketer expects the Hispanic online population to grow by nearly 10 million people between 2010 and 2014” (11 Trends). The partnership allowed Cielo to create an application that helps Latino’s or Spanish-speaking consumers interact in their natural language with other consumers and receive information. The application directs the phone used to the mobile site, that “allows Ford to engage the Latino audience around SYNC®, a voice interface system in many new Ford, Lincoln and Mercury vehicle.

“Ford is looking to its future and realizing that it's a person's experiences with its brand and its cars that continue to sell the vehicles”(Evans, 2010) .Ford Motors successfully engaged their consumers with their marketing plan to expand its advertising into the digital, mobile and Internet markets. More potential consumers are interacting daily on social networks and blogs giving their opinions on Ford as a brand and how the company can improve. Ford has built a bond with consumers by provided blogs and social networks for car lovers to network and interact comfortably. Ford Motors can integrate the collect data to meet the consumer’s demands. “Realizing that the future of marketing is getting people to engage, talk, and share their experiences is something that Ford has put to good use”( Evans 2010). Ford Motors has many possibilities now that have a proven blueprint for pitching their automobile to consumers without pressure of purchase in digital and Internet markets. Ford will learn from its consumer ideas to



help create and improve Ford automobiles. Ford understands that incorporating their Internet marketing with their traditional marketing the more effective. “It’s a smarter, more cost-effective way to reach and engage consumers” (Ford Blends, 2011). Ford continues to experiment with new forms of digital marketing. Scott Kelly, digital market manger states in an interview conducted in March of 2011 that “We’re [Ford] always mixing different forms today. For something like a Focus Rally, it’s very heavy in online video and Hulu-type media. If we are running a sales event, however, we’re using more search and doing more online targeting” (Ford Blends, 2011). Ford can expand its digital tactics to podcasts, gaming, and mobile advertising to engage more potential consumers. Expanding their marketing into digital tactics continues the halo effect of continuous advertisement. Now that Ford has gained interest from thousands of potential consumers, they can experiment ideas or products to the public through social networks to receive. The company can continue to promote its own offers and contest through its social networks free. Now that Ford has improved its tools and services for engagement between brand and consumer, Ford can shift the focus of its marketing plan to training the local dealers on how to interact with consumers. The local dealers can learn from the social networking campaigns that more interaction and a subtle approach to pitching automobiles can increase sales. Ford Motors will continue to use the data received to create appropriate campaigns for specific automobiles. “Every car that Ford produces appeals to a different segment, audience, ethnographic, and demographic. No two campaigns that Ford has launched for a specific vehicle has been the same; each campaign appeals to the audience it's targeted for” (Evans, 2010). With no two campaigns being the same, Ford will have to decide which vehicles to promote to its Internet demographic.

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