

## THE FORD FIESTA LAUNCH IN THAILAND

**OVERVIEW:** A successful launch of the all-new Ford Fiesta in Thailand - positioned as the lead market for the ASEAN region due to local manufacturing - was seen by the company as crucial to start a strategic transformation of the Ford business and brand, both locally and across the region. Creating a new, more modern and dynamic brand image was seen as a key task apart from driving sales.



**OBJECTIVES:** The challenge for the integrated Ford WPP team represented by Hill & Knowlton Thailand team in March 2010 was four-fold: **1)** to effectively engage a discerning “I want it now” consumer group during an extended (five-month) pre-order period; **2)** to assist Ford in achieving pre- and post-launch metrics; **3)** to help the company move away from its traditional truck and SUV image to a younger, more modern brand that is directly connected with and relevant to Thai consumers; and **4)** to coordinate a complex integrated (PR/Activation/Promotion/Digital Marketing/Social Media) communications campaign.

**RESULTS:** The campaign exceeded expectations: It generated significant market buzz and demand; built an extremely engaged online community in the tens of thousands and achieved extensive coverage across automotive and non-automotive media that positioned Fiesta as a next generation market leader upon introduction – all of which helped drive a tremendous jump in overall sales. The campaign also had an immediate impact on the Ford brand image, which was seen as key to the success of the entire Fiesta launch campaign and which continues to gain momentum. By the public launch date of Ford Fiesta, there were more than 30,000 highly engaged fans in the Ford Fiesta Thailand Facebook community and nearly 3,500 pre-bookings for the All-New Fiesta. All this translated into September 2010 sales being doubled year-on-year and best monthly performance for Ford Thailand since December 2007 – an upward trend that has continued ever since.

Peter Fleet, Ford ASEAN President, commented – “Fiesta got off to a flying start in September, clearly demonstrating its strong appeal among Thai consumers.” There was no doubt that this appeal was supported and driven by the strong awareness of a new, forward-looking Ford brand and a class-leading vehicle that Thai consumers saw as directly connected with them in so many ways.

**ENGAGING THE TARGET GROUP AND CHANGING BRAND PERCEPTION:** The highly successful ‘Love Fiesta...Snap It Now!’ integrated communications initiative was the cornerstone element in carefully timed and executed pre-launch plan. Love Fiesta was, in fact, so successful that Thailand’s *Marketeer* magazine named it “The Best Marketing Campaign” of 2010.



The three-month campaign invited members of the public to become fans of the Ford Fiesta Thailand Facebook community, take and upload creative ‘snaps’ with a Fiesta, and vote on their favourite photos. Weekend getaways in Thailand were awarded for the photo receiving the most votes during each respective week of the campaign, and the ultimate prize – a brand new Fiesta (1.6L Fiesta Sport model) was awarded to the fan whose photo received the most votes overall through the three-month campaign.

And the buzz all began when some 220 reporters attended the **Love Fiesta... Snap It Now!** pre-launch event hosted by Saroj Kiatfuangfoo, Ford Thailand's senior vice president and Thanabodee "Mark" Kulthol, Fiesta launch manager. *"The amazing turnout exceeded our already high expectations. And the overwhelmingly positive comments confirmed our belief that the new Fiesta is going to take the small car market by storm when it's officially launched in September."*

The campaign then hit the airwaves via a co-promotion with Virgin Radio Thailand as ‘Connect with Fiesta on the Road’ focusing on Fiesta’s ‘voice control’ system and ‘kinetic design,’ which was leveraged to promote the

**Love Fiesta...Snap It Now!** photo competition itself. It was also used to promote a nationwide Fiesta roadshow to more than 50 locations and Fiesta pop-up star appearances at trendy venues in and around Bangkok as well as key upcountry markets, plus an ongoing series of radio spots and DJ interactions on one of Thailand's hottest radio stations supported the campaign.

The result was more than 30,000 young and discerning consumers nationwide becoming Ford Fiesta Facebook fans and actively helping to create that all-important pre-launch buzz. Significantly, the competition itself attracted almost 800 'snaps' with the winner receiving an amazing 39,000 votes from Fiesta Thailand Facebook fans. On the sidelines, the campaign supported **My Car My Lifestyle Workshop** – A two-day event, was held to provide hands-on experience for lifestyle media of the Fiesta's game-changing 'PowerShift' technology; & **Digital Influencer Drive** – An eclectic collection of bloggers and influencers, that included a TV host, a celebrated astrologer, singers, artists, screenwriters and gadget geeks, asked to relate personal accounts and behind-the-wheel experiences of Fiesta. This was part of a proactive drive to present a series of wide-ranging perspective to support the pre-launch awareness campaign and its message of brand-changing innovation.

**THE LAUNCH – 01 SEPTEMBER 2010:** At Bangkok's iconic Parc Paragon, an open air event space at Siam Paragon shopping centre and a high-traffic location, the early evening program started with an employee-only launch (picture on right), followed by a very colourful launch party for media, celebrities and partners of Ford. An exclusive preview of Fiesta's new and technically innovative TVC, which would launch nationwide the following day, was shown. Nine strategically placed Fiestas, each in a different and eye-catching colour, were set up as the star attractions – and had the media and public snapping and filming away. Well-organised launch events generally attract a fair cross-section of targeted media, but the Fiesta launch exceeded expectations with 267 representatives from 165 media outlets – 23 newspapers, 91 magazines, 11 websites, 3 news agencies, 10 radio and 27 TV stations – all keen to get their share of the publicity pie. Their combined efforts generated **91 media coverage items (61 print, 17 online items and 13 TV reports)**.



**POST LAUNCH:** PR initiatives to maintain the Fiesta success story were based on a careful 'match the media' strategy of pitched stories, where the innovative and class-leading features of Fiesta were brought to life in stories about how they 'connected' with Thai consumers; 'Faces of Ford' program that set up interviews for Ford's young Thai executives with key publications to put a trendy face on the brand and explain how Ford and Fiesta connected with Thai consumers; as well as special activities that included a '**What Women Should Know About Cars Workshop**' and '**Meet the Fiesta World Tour Leader**' group interview. A popular and effective activity also involved loaning Fiestas to selected media for real-time trip reports. This sustained media effort resulted in nine different topics achieving substantial coverage in 53 print and online media outlets.

**SUMMARY:** The Ford Fiesta Thailand PR mission was accomplished in exemplary fashion. The 'Love Fiesta... Snap It Now!' campaign in particular helped to educate a sophisticated and discerning consumer segment through their favourite communication channels. Did it create awareness where it mattered? **It sure did.** Did it help transform the brand perception? A post launch media audit showed that since the launch of Ford Fiesta **"...the Ford brand is perceived as more modern and young oriented, and not just a truck company."**

**Talk about Ford's sales targets and market penetration?** A January 2011 Ford press release headlined **Ford's December Sales Jump 162 Percent** continued: *"Ford Thailand today announced a strong finish to 2010 with December sales that jumped 162 percent from the same month a year ago to 2,728 units. The outstanding finish to the year helped drive Ford's full-year sales in Thailand up 79 percent from 2009. The exceptional December was led by the popular Ford Fiesta, which recorded monthly sales of 1,631 units and ended the year with more than 8,000 customer bookings in the four months since its September launch. During the month of December, Ford celebrated the retail sale of its 5,000th Fiesta – a 5-door 1.6L Chili Orange Sport model."* Love Fiesta indeed.