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EDGY ADS: Ford starts biggest digital blitz ever

Bryce G. Hoffman / The Detroit News

So, you're driving through Los Angeles when you see it: a garish graffiti mural depicting not the forgotten glories of the Aztec empire, but the smooth lines of "El Nuevo Edge."

And that is not the only unusual place you will find Ford Motor Co.'s new crossover. Once Ford's massive marketing campaign for the Edge kicks into high gear this weekend, it will be just about everywhere you look.

Ford plans to spend in excess of \$100 million to push customers to the Edge. The blitz includes television ads in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese. Animated images of the Edge will be projected onto the sides of skyscrapers. Beyoncé Knowles will sing about the new car in upcoming ads. So will Korean music and soap opera star Ahn Jae Wook.

The Edge will appear on billboards -- not just in the real world, but in video games. And when it does appear on real billboards, it will not be limited to two dimensions.

A full-size foam mockup of the Edge already appears poised to fly off the side of a billboard over Interstate 75 in Detroit, and similar models will soon be on display in other cities around the country. The Edge's Internet home page has already gone live, as have custom Web portals on AOL and MSN. The company is planning "advertising takeovers" of those sites, as well as Yahoo!, in coming days. More than 29,000 Internet users have already downloaded the Edge's theme song, "Miles 'n Miles" by the Montreal artist DEE, and more than 83,000 have already built and priced vehicles at Ford's Web site.

Ford has a lot riding on Edge

It is all part of the largest digital advertising campaign in Ford's history, and one of the most aggressive new vehicle launches ever.

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Edge on marketing

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With so much riding on the success of the Edge, it has to be. It's the only new vehicle Ford has to offer today, and its introduction comes at a time when the company is fighting for survival.

Ford has aimed its new crossover at customers who have turned their backs on the Blue Oval, as well as those who have never owned one of its products.

"Just as the vehicle is designed to meet the needs of the target customers, our marketing is designed to reach that target customer," said Jeri Ward, marketing manager for the Edge.

For example, if you want to see Rolling Stone's list of the 100 best songs of 2006, you will have to open a double-page centerfold ad for the crossover. If you do, you will find out that Ford is subsidizing downloads of each of the hits so that you can load up your MP3 player and plug it in to the Edge's standard MP3 connector.

It is a multimedia marketing blitz, and it is also a multiethnic one. Ads are custom-tailored to fit a variety of target audiences, from urban African-Americans to Korean immigrants. There are not only spots in Spanish for Spanish-language networks, but also others in "Spanglish" for more mainstream networks in heavily Hispanic areas. Ford is even placing Edge ads at the beginning of Chinese soap opera videotapes.

The first teaser ad for the new vehicle appeared Nov. 12, but the big push begins Sunday with the airing of an updated TV spot during Fox's NFL broadcast. That will be followed by a torrent of ads on television, radio and in print outlets. Ford is hoping to create 500 million ad "impressions" over the holiday weekend.

Campaign heads to TV

Over the next few months, the Edge marketing drive will find its way into programs like Fox's "American Idol" and the popular Spanish-language riff on "Deal or No Deal," "Vas o No Vas."

Some of these tactics were employed in last year's launch of the Ford Fusion, but not on this scale.

"We're taking it to a new level," Ward said, adding that Ford will be watching closely to see how much difference this tidal wave of marketing makes.

University of Detroit Mercy marketing professor Michael Bernacchi said the new Ford scattershot campaign is a sign of things to come.

"The mass market is dead. Long live its various segments and subsegments," he said. "This is Super Bowl advertising in reverse."

With the Edge just now arriving in showrooms, it is too soon to say how well the marketing campaign is working, but dealers like Chris Lemley say customers are already asking about the new crossover.

"It's better than the lead into Fusion," said Lemley, who owns several dealerships in the Boston area. "There's more anticipation for these vehicles."

Ford's unconventional approach extends to its television ads. One of the Edge's installments in the ongoing "Bold Moves" series shows a handsome man getting out of his new Edge. An attractive young woman eyes him and his car and tells him how hot they both are. He flashes his wedding ring and tells her his wife says the same thing.

Other elements of Ford's Edge ad campaign include: Ford is giving Edges to nationally syndicated radio programs hosted by Steve Harvey and Tom Joyner. In addition to sweepstakes giveaways, show staff members will be driving the vehicles and sharing their experiences with listeners.

Playing off the crossover theme by sponsoring a contest for Beyoncé Knowles' Spanish-speaking fans. The winner will get a trip to her concert in Mexico City. *Source: Ford Motor Co.*

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Ford

When the \$100 million blitz starts this weekend, the Edge will be everywhere, from billboards to video games. [See full image](#)

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"Bold Stays Faithful," says the tagline.

Another shows hip-hop star Kelis arriving at a red-carpet event in her Edge. Assistants pop open the tailgate and remove a sedan chair, which she sits on and is carried inside as fans swoon at the sight.

"Bold Makes an Entrance," is the message of that spot.

Kelis also has recorded an Edge-inspired song "Push it to the Edge."

"This is an unconventional launch," said Cisco Codina, head of sales, marketing and service for Ford North America. "It's all about getting noticed in a crowded market. You have to have an edge."

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