

# Branding and Mustang

 By [Jeff Nemeth](#)

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17 April was Global Ford Mustang Day and the 50th anniversary of the iconic vehicle. It's been a brand that keeps on giving too, going through many reiterations in the past 50 years while retaining its iconic status.



Following on from the reveal of the re-designed iconic muscle car model in 2014, we launched the all-new Mustang into South Africa in November 2015, spurring some deep thinking about what the Ford – and indeed other – brands mean in South Africa. Amid all the excitement about launching, we're faced with the challenge of an increasingly automated world where the commoditisation of goods is extending to categories that were previously considered exclusive and one-of-a-kind.

In simple terms, the difference between one coffee brand and its competitor, or one pair of jeans to the next was quite clearly defined. But not anymore. According to global brand metrics the leading brand in the world today is Google, having recently overtaken Apple. These companies' revenues are well surpassed by other famous brands such as Shell, Exxon Mobile, Wal-Mart, Samsung and others, but their brand value is far ahead, resulting in them leading in brand equity. There is no doubt this share of brand value has its impact on stock prices too.

## Credibility based on experience

The natural response would be to assume that they spend the most on advertising, but Apple's advertising spend, for instance, is actually less than half that of Microsoft. It is becoming clear that consumers respond less to direct messages or pure information, but rather to an experience and a relationship built over time through meaningful engagements. Credibility based on experience is key.

One thing the late Steve Jobs mastered through the Apple brand was to consistently offer, through the company's products, a unique experience, a fashion statement and a lifestyle. Likewise, the goal in our business, the car market, is to create products that people can grow to love over a lifetime – and that forms an integral, indispensable part of daily lifestyle and comfort.

The morning after the Ford Mustang was first launched on 17 April 1964, it appeared in over 2,600 newspapers and featured in the James Bond film *Goldfinger* in 1964. More than one million Mustangs were built in its first two years of production. For over 50 years the Mustang brand has appeared in over 3,000 movies and television shows: from Steve McQueen's Highland Green 1968 GT in *Bullitt* to James Bond's 1971 Mach 1 in *Diamonds are Forever*, and the classic 1967 Shelby GT driven by Nicholas Cage in the 2000 incarnation of *Gone in 60 Seconds*.

## Consumer experience

A great car brand is not just built in the factory. Each experience the consumer has with the brand - from the in-store journey, delivery and aftersales service, the daily incorporation of the car into memories and experiences - needs to be carefully considered. Today, the consumer has more choice than ever. When charging a premium on products, a manufacturer must always offer that much more.

According to a recent Bloomberg article and US car sales figures (Polk/IHS global sales data) the new Mustang is the best-selling 'sports car' in North America. In reality, the Mustang is a muscle car, but that's just a small technicality. Total sales among women are especially strong, with the Mustang making up 36% of the entire female sports car market.

“ Did you know, the first ever Mustang buyer in 1964 was a woman? [#FordMustangDay pic.twitter.com/oS3L4QhNGG](https://twitter.com/oS3L4QhNGG)— Ford South Africa (@FordSouthAfrica) [April 17, 2016](#) ”

## Sophisticated technology

With cars becoming more sophisticated, on-board computer systems will become synchronised with a variety of devices and networks. In this way the average vehicle will also become a personal organiser, communication point, entertainment store and information centre – and yet, will continue to get you from A to B. With demand for such sophistication, a manufacturer needs to ensure that its products are the most innovative in a variety of key areas.

They need to go beyond merely being functional, but seek to enhance the modern consumer's lifestyle while adding value in newer, previously unimagined ways. Semi-autonomous vehicle systems and other smart applications are allowing motorists to merge their telecommunications and cars unlike ever before. Voice activated texts, music selecting and dialling are becoming a reality, rather than just the realm of heroes like James Bond, which is arguably where all the dreaming started.

The key is consistency. Any brand that can show no place for weakness, no time for excuses and no thought for failure in its offering and core values will have little trouble in winning over new fans and customers.

## ABOUT JEFF NEMETH

Jeffery Nemeth was appointed president and CEO of Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa (FMCSA), effective January 1, 2010. In addition to his role as president and CEO of FMCSA, Nemeth was also appointed president and CEO of Ford sub-Saharan Africa, effective October 2013.

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