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2006 Mercury Voga Debut at Miami Fashion Week

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 advertisement

Especially designed for Hispanics

With \$736 billion of the nation's buying power, Hispanics are among the most influential consumers in the marketplace. And with arms wide open, Ford Motor Company is making every effort to welcome these influential customers to its family of vehicles.

Mercury hopes to engage Hispanic consumers in a big way through its sponsorship of Miami Fashion Week, the largest Latin American fashion event in the U.S., which is being held May 6–10 in Miami Beach. The event brings top designers from Latin America and Florida to preview their spring 2007 collections.

"Mercury is bringing a distinct voice into the Hispanic marketplace and introducing great new products that offer a smart, sophisticated alternative to the competition," said Cisco Codina, vice president, Marketing Sales and Service.

The all-new Milan is now Mercury's top-selling car among Latino customers, and the Mariner SUV continues to be a top choice.

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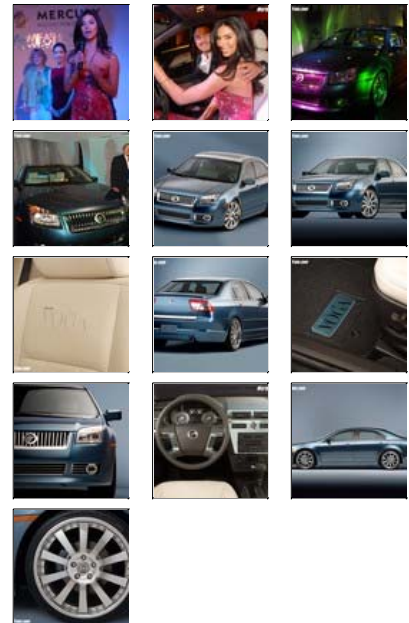
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Voga during the event. The car was designed with the Nuevo Latino in mind by Ford GT car designer Camilo Pardo. Actress Roselyn Sanchez will unveil the car, which will be auctioned online in June at www.Ebay.com/Milan. All the proceeds will benefit MANA, A National Latina Organization, which is committed to empowering Hispanic women.

"It's going to be really cool because I've never had the opportunity to get involved

"The Milan is designed for the young, savvy individualist whose personal style is shaped by fashion, new technologies, and the discovery of new and different ideas. Nuevo Latinas and Latinos are an important part of this group, and they express their individuality through these 'passion points,'" said Kim Irwin, Mercury brand manager.

Mercury will debut a customized 2006 Mercury Milan

with the design of a car and then deliver it to the Hispanic community," said Pardo, who is a descendant of Columbia. "We've used the Ford GT as a centerpiece before, but this is a car designed specifically for this purpose, and it is going to be auctioned off for a very worthy cause."

Pardo is also one of the featured clothing designers for Miami Fashion Week. Twelve of his Mercury-themed clothing designs -- including two inspired by his work on the Milan Vogue -- will be featured throughout the event.

Reaching out to the Hispanic community through events like Miami Fashion Week is a smart move, according to Jeffrey Humphreys, director of the Selig Center for Economic Growth, an economic forecasting center at the University of Georgia. He's been studying minority buying power since 1990.

"This is where the growth is in our own backyard," he said. "The Hispanic market is not the largest of the niche markets, but it is the fastest-growing. By 2010, nearly one person out of every six living the U.S. will be of Hispanic origin, and their buying power will reach \$1,087 billion."

Ford Motor Company's efforts to strengthen its relationship with the Hispanic community don't end with the action in Miami Beach.

Mercury is the exclusive sponsor of Terra Nostra: Solamente Salma, an exhibition by Latino artists featuring paintings of actress Salma Hayek, which will be on display at the Blue Star Contemporary Art Center in San Antonio through June 18. Mercury is also the exclusive sponsor of the AOL Latino Short Film Festival, Festival Cine Corto, which includes a sweepstakes designed to discover up-and-coming Hispanic filmmakers.

"Our involvement with fashion and film brings Mercury into the lifestyle of Hispanic consumers who appreciate new discoveries," said Irwin. "As they learn about our brand, they find that getting behind the wheel of a Mariner or Milan offers another great way for them to express their own personal style -- just as they do with their clothes, music, art and other aspects of their lives."

David Rodriguez, who works with Ford's Hispanic advertising partner, Zubi Advertising, says that in addition to special events, the company advertises regularly on Hispanic television and in various print publications.

"We work in tandem with the company's general marketing efforts in terms of overall strategy, but we tailor it and do customized research out in the Hispanic marketplace to make sure we're connecting with the audience in the most effective ways possible," he said.

According to Rodriguez, the company is particularly targeting young, first-time buyers.

"We have great new products -- like the Mercury Milan and the Ford Fusion -- that are at the right price points for people just entering the mid-size segment, and we want to get to these first-time buyers as early as we possibly can."

Rodriguez is particularly excited about Ford's sponsorship of the Daddy Yankee radio show, which airs on the ABC network in top Hispanic markets across the country. "Reggaeton" is the hottest musical genre in the Hispanic market, and Daddy Yankee is the No. 1 "reggaeton" artist in the country.

"This is certainly one of the most high-profile and most current initiatives we have that really taps into Hispanic pop culture," he said. "We've created a specific radio commercial for Fusion on the show, and Daddy Yankee also does live mentions."

2006 Mercury Vogue Debut at Miami Fashion Week