

# Mustang, History

**Fourth in a Series**  
**by**  
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*Research of data from "Mustang Guide", by Bill Stone, published by the Benson Printing Co. 1965; and "The Mustang Story" by the Ford Motor Company, Educational Affairs Department, number 5.*

On April 17, 1964, a new and different car was presented to the American public: the Mustang. Within a year the car achieved unprecedented public acceptance among a wide range of buyers and established itself firmly among the top selling vehicles in the industry.

Today, Ford Motor Company is frequently asked — what forces shaped the success of the Mustang? Was it a result of good planning? Shrewd anticipation of market demand? Or the good fortune to introduce just the right combination of car values at a time of spreading prosperity? The answer is that all of these factors — good planning, accurate market analysis and good fortune — played a part in the success story of the Mustang. To see the picture whole, to see the interrelated marketing, design, engineering and management decisions that went into the creation of the Mustang, it is necessary to move back a few years, back from that Introduction Day in April, 1964.

As the decade of the 1960's opened, Ford marketing researchers were watching several new sociological and economic developments:

*The Young Buyer.* First, the product of the World War II baby boom was coming of buying age. Millions of young people would enter the automobile market as customers in the 1960's. In fact, it was expected that the young buyers in the 18 to 34 age group would account for more than 50 percent of the increase in new car sales projected for the coming decade. Beyond that, they would account for the bulk of the buying in the used car market. It appeared inevitable that youth would be a potent factor in the marketplace. And research showed that youth would exercise an important influence in shaping car design. Young buyers, it was clear, had definite ideas of their own about style and performance.

For example, 36 percent of all persons under 25 liked the "four on the floor" feature — the four-speed floor shift. But among those over 25, only nine percent wanted to shift gears. Bucket seats were a favorite feature among 35 percent of the young people, as against 13 percent in the older group.

The study procedures of market research are by their nature statistical and scientific. But researchers are interested



in more than cold figures. Proof that market research is in sympathy with the warmer aspects of buyers attitudes is the new-famous study made by Ford marketers to determine whether college students consider bucket seats an impediment to romance. A survey of colleges in eight cities across the country indicated that 42 percent preferred bucket seats for "first dates." But among couples going steady, only 15 percent preferred bucket seats to the standard bench-type.

Other design preferences expressed by young people included the sound of a high performance engine and the feeling of being close to the road. Youth, in sum, was casting a ballot for a car with a sporty flair.

*The Educated Buyer.* Another important development affecting the market was the trend toward higher education. Some three-and-a-half million students were enrolled in the country's colleges in 1960, with the total expected to double by 1970. The new young buyer was going to be a better educated buyer. The significance of this development is found in the correlation between education and car-buying. College-educated people buy cars at a markedly higher rate than non-college people. In 1964, for example, they purchased 19 percent of all the new cars sold in the country that year. In addition, consumers as a whole were becoming increasingly sophisticated and discriminating through improved communications, including the persuasive influence of television.

# of a Love Affair

*The Multiple-Car Buyer.* A third phenomenon of the marketplace was the explosion in the number of multiple-car buyers. In 1959, one million U.S. families owned two or more cars. Researchers felt certain that throughout the decade of the 1960's, the number of multiple-car families would increase steadily. Events proved the correctness of their forecast. In 1964, the number of multiple-car owners topped 13 million. By 1967, two million American families owned not just two, but three cars.

The growth of multiple-car ownership was a natural result of the increasing affluence of the nation. More people were enjoying higher incomes. Market research indicated that the number of people earning higher incomes would continue to increase, and this forecast was also borne out by events: The trend is still continuing.

Research also showed that the influence of women was a substantial factor in the growing number of multiple-car families. Women were demanding that second car. And they were forming decided opinions about what kind of car it should be. The ladies wanted a car that was small and maneuverable, one that would handle and park easily. With two cars in the family, it was not necessary for both cars to transport the entire family. One of them could be a small, specialized vehicle. Women wanted it to be stylish and attractive.

These, then, were the forces that were beginning to point a new direction for car design. The growing number of young adults, the trend to higher education and greater sophistication, the swelling affluence of the nation, plus a desire for style and sporty flair in a specialized automobile — all these

factors combined to create a demand for a car that was not currently available on the market. It was obvious that no ordinary car would satisfy this new market. Two criteria were essential. First, the car would have to be novel in

design with an exceptionally attractive personality. Second, the price would have to be within the reach of the new young buyers whose sophisticated tastes tended to outrun their relatively modest means.

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