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# Mantras

## Beat got Right

By DHALETA SURENDER KUMAR

**I**t was the beginning of June 2009, the once great company – General Motors (GM) had filed for bankruptcy in the US. Ten days later, in India however, it surprised all with its forward looking plans with the launch of the LPG version of its best selling car (in India), Spark. A blitzkrieg campaign – 'There for You, There for India' – too was launched to allay the Indian consumer's fears. The campaign was extended to the 'Chevrolet Promise' of an offer that takes care of labour cost, parts for all services, maintenance and running repairs for a period of three years or 45,000 kilometres, which ever occurs earlier. That was in August. If there were still any fears in the consumer's mind, the doubts were further cleared when the company launched its D-segment offering, Cruze in October. However, the story is not about how GM beat the recessionary blues and how it overcame the bankruptcy fears in India. It is about its latest offering, Beat, in the small car segment, which was launched in January this year.

Since then, it has become the company's largest selling car in India beating Spark. In April, Beat sold 3,852 units as against 3,507 units of Spark. It had clocked 10,000 bookings in 24 days. While the consumers are rating the car as a competitor to Maruti Ritz and Hyundai i10, the company would like it to compete with the latter and Maruti Swift. The company, which currently holds a 9.5 per cent market share in the small car segment with the Spark and U-VA, riding on the success of Beat, expects to corner a 14 per cent share of the most highly contested segment by 2010-end.

*How did GM get the launch right? Read on for the 10 marketing mantras which Beat got right.*

### The ride uphill

Since its launch in January 2010, Beat has become Chevrolet's largest selling car in India

January

2,825\*

February

4,431\*

March

4,508\*

April

3,852\*

Grand Total

15,616\*

\* Units sold

## 1 WELL PACKAGED

The story of Beat goes back to May 2007, when the car was showcased as a concept car for the first time at the New York Auto Show along with two other cars – Groove and Trax. An online poll on vote4chevrolet.com, primarily done by the US audience, voted Beat as the best design. It was later launched as Spark in many markets. However, India is the first country to go back to its original name, as according to Ankush Arora, Vice-President, Marketing, Sales & After-Sales, General Motors India, “Indian market already had Spark in



another design.”

He adds, “In fact, it rarely happens that there is such less difference in the designs of a concept and final product. Beat is one such rare product.” The second in the 300-series engine (after Cruze), the five-door hatchback is available in seven colours

**“Beat's styling was led by GMDAT design centre based in Korea with involvement from Europe and India”**

**Gaurav Gupta,**  
*Director, Marketing, GM India*



including Linen Beige, Caviar Black and Misty Lake. According to Gaurav Gupta, Director, Marketing, General Motors India, “Beat's styling was primarily led by the GMDAT design centre based in Korea with extensive involvement from Europe and India design teams.”

The car, which is touted to give a mileage of 18.6 kmpl, has features claimed to be the first in the segment like automatic climate control, integrated stereo with USB, tilt steering, 60:40 split folding seats and tubeless tyres.

## 2 VALUE FOR MONEY

However, it's not only its features that make the car desirable to its TG – the upwardly mobile youth. The car is competitively priced too. The base model – Beat PS is priced at Rs 3.34 lakh (ex-showroom), Beat LS for Rs 3.54 lakh and Beat LT for Rs 3.94 lakh. The LT model has an option to add features like ABS and twin



**“With Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai as players, pricing will be important in the success of Beat”**

**Ankush Arora,**  
*VP, Marketing, Sales & After-Sales, GM India*

air-bags, which take up the car's price to Rs 4.34 lakh. In comparison the base model of Hyundai i10 starts at Rs 3.43 lakh (Delhi, ex-showroom), while its high-end model comes for Rs 5.56 lakh. Similarly, the starting model of Maruti Ritz is priced 60,000 more than that of Beat, and the price range for its different models goes up to Rs 5.27 lakh.

“With strong contenders like Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai in the market, pricing will play an important part in the success of Beat. Having said that, priced under Rs 4 lakh, the Indian consumer has not yet experienced the kind of features Beat comes packed with,” says Arora.

### 3 FOR THE 'EXPRESSIVE' INDIVIDUAL



While most cars are for all things for everyone, Beat has been clear about its TG from the beginning. Shunning the "safe communication" route to reach out to its TG, which necessarily is not youth but is "expressive and individual in nature."

Gupta says, "Your two-wheeler base is a very good benchmark to suggest as to what is your new car buyer base. Now the guys are used to 60-70 kmpl of fuel efficiency and low maintenance cost. However, before moving up to a car, there is an initial clout in his mind - not about the brand part but the functional part that what will it cost him including the EMIs, fuel efficiency and maintenance cost. I say that the first car buyer is a very safe buyer. There will be only 15 per cent buyers who will take a risk and take unconventional decisions. They will play safe with the tried and tested product in the market."

He adds that Beat is targeted at two sets of consumers – one, who is the first time buyer and wants to jump into the 15 per cent bracket to buy something contemporary and new, and two, people who are looking for a replacement of the current hatchback they own or looking at having an additional car in the family. Gupta further says, "The additional car could be again from two sources. He can have a three-box car in the family and wants a small car or

wants another hatchback in the family."

Hence, the communication, according to him is 'not safe'. "I didn't want to play a safe communication in this car. The Spark, for example, has a safe communication. Spark's latest 'Chutki communication' is husband, wife and daughter. The Spark is for the conservative family and for the tried-tested approach. The Beat communication is very expressive, and very individual in nature. Beat is for the person who is looking at flaunting his style quotient in the market," Gupta adds.

Beat is necessarily not being targeted at the urban customer. The company believes that it is a myth to segment the urban and semi-urban customer. "Because of boom in retail and ease of travel and exposure to media, the semi-urban customer is lot aware today. He knows as to what he wants and is no different from the urban customer," Arora says.

He is surprised at how the company has got its target audience right, "Surprisingly, when I say that we are trying to target a customer who is not just looking at cheap pricing, but somebody who understands the value proposition, that is coming true – with 70 per cent of Beat's sales coming from the top-end variant. The customer is not ready to compromise; he wants the best."

## 4 3Fs OF POSITIONING

The car has been positioned as 'Sexy, Smart and Tough'. The car has been labelled sexy for its designs. The colours, the aerodynamic looks, and a first-in-segment offering of an integrated rear spoiler make the looks sporty. "Beat is a car that is ideal for those with a modern lifestyle. With the styling of a sporty hatchback, it showcases a new direction in the design of mini-cars. The interiors too have been designed keeping in mind the three Fs – fun, fashion and functionality. The clear goal from the very beginning was to create a revolution in size and design despite the restrictions of the mini segment. The vehicle is destined to make a statement with an innovative design that would go far beyond a typical mini-vehicle and set new standards for the segment," says Gupta.

The Beat, according to Gupta is 'Smart', "as it does not compromise on performance. It delivers a 'best in class' mileage of 18.6 kmpl. The engine is designed for higher exhaust gas recirculation, resulting in combustion stability at low speeds and optimal performance at high speeds together with improved fuel efficiency. This all contributes to a reduction in emissions, making the Beat a truly eco-friendly vehicle."

On the Tough quotient, the car comes with features designed for improved crash safety and driving performance. The first-in-segment triple acoustic structure and special under-body structure prevent noise inflow from outside for optimal quietness. Wind noise is minimised through the Beat's aerodynamic body line and detailed door sealing structure. Beat's body, according to Gupta, "is the stiffest and toughest in the mini segment; 66.5 per cent of its body is constructed of high-strength steel and over 16 per cent is made of ultra-high-



strength steel. This ensures the highest level of protection in the segment."

He adds, "The Beat has been developed to withstand up to four times its weight – which goes far beyond industry regulations."

## 5 RIDING ON SELECTIVE MEDIA

The media strategy for Beat involved a 360-degree campaign. According to Basabdatta Chowdhury, CEO, Platinum Media (the agency handling Chevrolet Beat's media plans), "The vehicle choice was selective, keeping in line with the target audience. We restricted Beat activity to high affinity channels. The very selective approach across media allowed Beat to operate at high decibel levels over a longer period."

Given the TA's affinity towards Bollywood and reality shows, the car was showcased at the Chevrolet Apsara Awards, in January. An entire dance sequence was conceived featuring the Beat.

Pre- and post-launch, premium sizes in print and innovative outdoors at premium and high traffic

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**Basabdatta Chowdhury,**  
*CEO, Platinum Media*

locations including airports made Chevrolet Beat the talk of town. In print, the front page photograph on DNA on the day of the launch was Chevy Beat - the news of the day. In the regional press, island position ads were booked to induce potential customers. "On TV, we identified the moments which make your heart beat, like the swinging stock market updates on business channels, stunt and daring events on AXN, thrilling cricket moments on news channels, Moto GP racing on VH1. They all were branded as Chevrolet Beat. Each placement was done with clear message - Chevrolet Beat will make your heart beat in the same fashion as these events or situations do," says Chowdhury.

On the internet, 'What's your Beat' – an online game was created during the launch phase.



## 6 DECODING THE CREATIVE DNA

The entire traditional communication mix for Beat was conceptualised by Wieden & Kennedy led by agency's Managing Director, Mohit Dhar Jayal and Executive Creative Director, V Sunil. "The creatives designed for Beat do not break convention but sell to everyone. Half of our job was done by the design of the car itself. We simply had to amplify it," says Jayal.

The brief, according to Sunil was the car itself. "If you see the car, there is a reaction to it, it is beautifully designed, and many of our creative ideas were from that perspective. While there was a marketing strategy and all that, which was in place, it was the iconic look of the car – very simple and strong that you would see played the key role in the creatives."

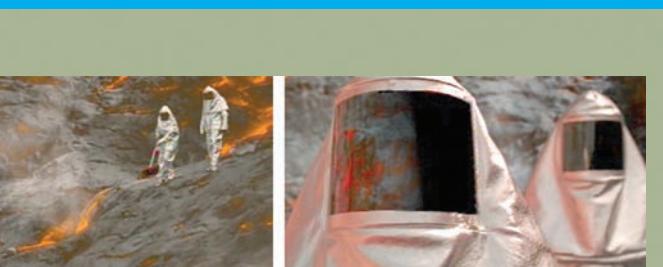
Adds Jayal, "We didn't want to do the regular thing. Just about every campaign revolves around consumer benefit and even we discussed it. There was a debate on should we spell this in terms of consumer benefit, or does this change my life, but we avoided it, since the product was so strong. We didn't want to do anything else but make that even stronger - the product is the consumer benefit. And now you see the campaign has a raw effect on you that stimulates your heart beat."

The TVC and print, both were based on heart beat. The beat part was shown by the car and heart was

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*MD, Wieden & Kennedy*





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**V Sunil,**  
*Executive Creative Director, Wieden & Kennedy*

the heart.

The TVC shows moments in life, which send the heart racing – like jumping from a cliff, a bomb explosion, a volcano, spotting a tiger, a race start, a dance and a goal – inter-cut with Beat racing through a white tunnel. The focus is all on the design of the car externally as well as internally. Sunil says, "I deliberately chose a white tunnel instead of the mountainous terrain or a desert to let the focus on the car rather than the surroundings. TVC itself sets the heart racing." The TVC has been directed by German director, Marco Kalantari, and produced by MAD Films. The agency debated for long to focus on which aspect of the beat – a heart beat or a love beat? "Eventually, we went with the heart beat, as a love beat could have different meanings for different people," says Sunil.

As for the print and outdoor campaigns, the creative has no headline, and no body copy – just the car and a heart. "We tried to give it an iconic look of the '50s poster art," says Jayal, adding, "The look adds a familiarity, but at the same time it is new, and that is also a reason for the success of the campaign."

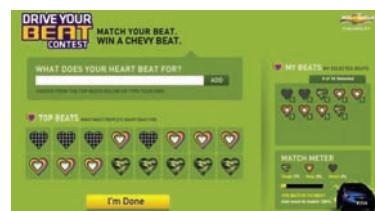
But does the consumer understand the simple look? Sunil retorts, "Saying that public won't understand, or the public won't think like that, is entirely a misconception. They get it. Only the people in the conference rooms don't get it."

## 7 A DRIVE THROUGH THE WEB

Considering that Beat's target audience – the youth who are highly active on the net, 10 per cent of the marketing budget was skewed towards digital. According to Gupta, "A car-buying process involves a lot of pendulum swing between the net and the show-room. With so much of involvement on the net, it's no surprise that digital was high on our mind for Beat."

The digital plan consisted of two legs – pre-launch and post launch, which was executed by Quasar Media. The pre-launch campaign involved 'Drive Your Beat' contest on [driveyourbeat.com](http://driveyourbeat.com). Sandeep Singh, Co-founder & Business Head, Quasar Media, says, "Psychographically, we were talking to the 18-35 year old, who make their own rules and are not afraid of taking their own path. The 'Drive Your Beat' contest involved expression of one's 'beat' for a thing, emotion, place, country, person or the like."

A social buzz account was created on social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter which would lead to [driveyourbeat.com](http://driveyourbeat.com). Banner ads were booked in photograph sections of sites like Orkut.



**"In all, there were over a lakh people who had shown engagement with the car on the internet"**

**Sandeep Singh,**  
*Co-Founder & Business Head, Quasar Media*



The post-launch leg involved ads on sites like [123greetings.com](http://123greetings.com), [in.com](http://in.com), [tech2.com](http://tech2.com), [rediff.com](http://rediff.com) and [yahoo.com](http://yahoo.com) besides major auto websites. "Besides the TV and print campaigns, these sites lead the consumer to [chevybeat.in](http://chevybeat.in), which talks about the features of the car and offers a test drive booking. "In a two-week time, since the car's launch, there were 28,000 requests for a test-drive, about 14,000 wallpaper downloads, over 8,000 screensaver downloads and about 12 lakh page views in the first month. In all, we can say there were over a lakh people who had shown deeper engagement with the car, this kind of a feedback is not even possible at the Auto Expo," says Singh.

Quasar plans to take the Drive Your Beat campaign offline around September and October, when activities would be done to target the consumers. Also, activities around cricket and soccer too are planned in the near future.

## 8 NO BUMPS ON GROUND

Keeping the changing media trends in mind, GM was high on on-ground activations too as far as marketing Beat is concerned.

"Activations allow an interacting point with the consumer and the product," says Gupta, adding, "Hence ground activations too were high on our radar."

The launch kicked off with Beat brigades at corporate / high footfall areas, like BPOs and IT Parks, where a troupe of 70-80 European performers created a carnival like atmosphere with high energy acts, in cities like Mumbai,

In a one-off co-branding effort, Beat tied-up with the iconic jeanswear brand Levi's. Seven denim wrap-around and Levi's branded Beats were up for grabs as a part of the contest. "Levi's and Chevrolet's was a coming together of two like-minded brands, which stand for smart, sexy and tough. It is for the modern progressive people. Jeans are worn by not only 18-30 age group but by 50-60 as well," says Arora. As a part of the contest, people could pose in their denim outfit with a Levi's branded Beat at select 15 Levi's outlets, across the country. The



Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai. Another one was a select pub activity (like a Salsa performance during Beat Hours) to promote music in select cities. All this culminated into a rock concert featuring actor Saif Ali Khan and Parikrama (a rock band from Delhi) in Bengaluru, which according to Gupta, was a huge draw.

"We also tried to take the product features and information closer to the consumers through Bluetooth, enabled at airports and some malls," adds Gupta.

photographs labelled as either Sexy, Smart or Tough had to be uploaded on to [driveyourbeat.com](http://driveyourbeat.com), where users could vote for the best photograph.

Alternatively, users could download a Levi's branded picture of Beat and super-impose their picture and upload it to the site. While externally, the Levi's branded Beat is wrapped in flex, the interiors too, like the seat covers have been made of denim. The promotion is part of Levi's completion of 15 years in India.

## 9 AN EFFECTIVE BUZZ

The marketing mix for Beat also involved a well planned and extensive PR campaign, “targeted to create a buzz around Beat.” To lend a preview of Beat, a test drive was conducted from Delhi-Samode (Rajasthan)-Delhi involving key automotive journalists across media organisations. “The test drive ensured that Beat got critically examined by the who’s who of automotive media. Not surprisingly, it earned rave reviews from the media,” says Gupta. The public relations’ duties for GM are being handled by Edelman India. Abhishek Mahapatra, Senior Account Manager - Corporate Practice, Edelman India, says, “From an integrated marketing perspective, it was critical to develop messages that convey the unique brand attributes of the revolutionary Beat. Along with GM team, we helped launch a comprehensive campaign that enabled Beat to be positioned as a game changer in the small car segment in the country. Leveraging PR initiatives, we were able to establish the desired credibility, let-

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*Senior Account Manager, Edelman India*



ting Beat to cut through the competitive clutter.” To lend a preview of Beat, Edelman planned experience engagements with key automotive journalist/stakeholders. This was followed by a pan India launch of the car and “marquee display” at the 10th Auto Expo in New Delhi in January 2010. “As a result of this extensive and integrated campaign, Beat earned rave reviews from the media and established itself as the industry benchmark in a highly competitive segment,” adds Mahapatra. In addition, the integrated PR campaign for Beat leveraged initiatives like the ‘Beat Carnival’ in Bengaluru, and collaboration with Levi’s.

## 10 SPREADING THE NET

Beat is currently being sold through 206 sales points across the country, and serviced through 200 authorised service outlets. According to



Arora, the current waiting time for Beat after booking is between 45 and 60 days. “We till now were constrained because of the 4,500 units coming out every month. However, since, we have ramped up production by adding the second shifts at our Halol (Gujarat) and Talegaon (Maharashtra) plants, and increased the number of per month units to 6,000; we hope to bring down the waiting time.”

The company also plans to take the network to 300 sales points and an equal number of authorised service outlets by the end of the year. The company further plans to launch Beat in over 150 markets around the world including those in Europe, other parts of Asia and North America in the coming days. ■

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