

brand into the very lifestyle of our target customer."

However, not every kinship is a match, says Mitchell Johnson, multicultural public affairs, Ford Brand, the Uniworld Group. "Unlike some automakers, we've matched the right products with the right spokespeople," he says. "Ford is successful because it has identified people who are fascinated with its product. Take what we've done with Magic Johnson. He told us he loves the product, especially the Navigator. Funkmaster Flex is a Mustang nut. Nothing seems forced with what we have been doing."

And if it is forced, it may not work. "Young people ages 25 to 45 are very market savvy. They're never going to buy a car just because a rap artist does a video or says something about a car," says Ann A. Fishman, president of Generational Targeted Marketing. "...They see through hype and spin."



◀ Actor Terrence Howard, seen here with The Chrysler Group's Ralph Gilles has affixed his signature to a customized edition of the Jeep Commander.

▼ As has Magic Johnson (literally) to a version of the Lincoln Mark LT.



She says marketers likely stand a better chance with consumers younger than 25, though that's no sure bet either. "They might not have ever paid attention to a Solstice if Ludacris hadn't promoted it, but whether that makes them go out and buy one is yet to be proven."

So far, automotive marketers have used more males than females to pitch their rides.

Despite studies that show that women buy at least one-half of all vehicles, and influence up to 80 percent of all vehicle sales.

"Every company has its own strategy ... but many times Snoop Dog and Magic Johnson may not be the right spokesperson to motivate women," says Pepper Miller, president of the Hunter-Miller Group. "These may be opportunities they're missing." ■



◀ Entertainer Kenya Woot and Lincoln's Zephyr