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Plug In Life: General Electric's 21st Century Solution to Automobile Fueling.

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PLUG IN LIFE:
GENERAL ELECTRIC'S 21st CENTURY SOLUTION TO AUTOMOBILE FUELING

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B.S., Southern Illinois University, 2009

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Science

Department of Mass Communication and Media Arts
in the Graduate School
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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

PLUG IN LIFE:
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FUELING

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Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Masters of Science

Professional Media and Media Management Studies

Approved by:

Linda Conway Correll, Chair

Graduate School

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
LIST OF FIGURES	iii
CHAPTERS	
CHAPTER 1 – Introduction	1
CHAPTER 2 – Situation Analysis	4
CHAPTER 3 – Creative Brief	10
CHAPTER 4 – Creative and Media Plan.....	15
REFERENCES	20
VITA.....	21

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>FIGURE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Figure 1	7
Figure 1	9

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Global Warming, Eco Friendly, Hybrid, and Go Green are all terms that have been introduced to the US public since the early 21st Century. Environmental groups have focused on these areas to try to protect the world's ecosystem. The pollution increase from vehicles and factories has called for many organizations to volumize or implement green thinking in their corporate social responsibility.

Many car makers, including but not limited to GM, Nissan, and Ford have started creating hybrid vehicles and all electric vehicles due to the rising gas prices and constant pollution of our country. They have slowly taken off but are still a top contender in vehicle sales. In the past few years, these car-makers have decided to make an all electric vehicle. Though, this is no new concept many are intrigued by the innovativeness and precarious attitude of many automobile makers in today's economy. The Chevrolet Volt, Nissan Leaf, Toyota EV Prius, Rav 4 and Ford Motors Focus are a few of the up and coming electric vehicles. The East Coast, West Coast and large commuting cities may already be exposed to these vehicles. In the upcoming months these vehicles will slowly emerge in the midwestern larger cities such as Chicago and St. Louis. However, what about the other smaller cities, farming towns, and villages? Rising gas prices affect everyone, not only large cities and according to an USA Today article "drivers who need gas to get to work will buy it, but they'll cut spending elsewhere, sucking money out of the recovering economy..." "Oil prices ripple through every part of the economy, I think it'll be the second highest year for oil prices on record." (Leinwand, 2011)

To combat this negative scenario, the United States government has set in place many programs to assure the U S citizens have proper information on environment friendly services, products and the companies that distribute them. One major area that has received financial attention from the government is the automobile industry. According to the Washington Post, Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act signed in to law by President Barak Obama, the government has committed \$2.4 billion to boost the industries capacity to manufacture batteries, electric motors, and other EV components as well as to evaluate plug-in hybrids. Additionally, the U.S. government is providing \$8 billion to automobile manufactures to develop and advance vehicle technologies. (General Electric, 2010)

Though this may seem to be a new growing trend, non-gas engine and electric cars were truly a past thought that has been revitalized and reinvented. In the late 1800's through the 1920's electric cars were very popular in the United States. The first electric cars ran on non-rechargeable high storage batteries. Although the electric vehicle was considered easy to drive, these cars eventually lost popularity in the 1920's due to their slow speed and inability to go long distance. Needless to say Henry Fords Model T, quickly rose to the occasion and the mobile needs of the driving public. The electric car was a victim of being produced before its time. However concept of the electric vehicle withstood the tests of time through the concerns in pollution oil prices in the 1960's and 1970's till currently in 2011. This repetition in history with the concern of pollution and high oil prices stages a perfect platform for not only electric vehicle producers but for electric vehicle rechargeable batteries, battery charging pumps, stations and other electric vehicle battery components.

To many, Electricity will be the new fuel for the future. “For every 10,000 gas powered car users that switch to electricity vehicles, CO2 emissions would be reduced by 33,000 metric tons per year – equivalent to the annual CO2 emission of 6,500 traditional cars on the U.S. roads” (General electric, 2011).

General Electric is one of many companies that have taken the “go green” initiative and reinvented it through modern technology and also by becoming personally more responsible to protect the environment. Not only has General Electric taken on the challenge of environmental and economic issues, they created an environmentally friendly, simple to use, multi-vehicle compatible and reliable solution, the General Electric EV charging station. Electric vehicles are on the way to revolutionizing automobile transportation and General Electric will be the prime source in sustainability.

Problem: Pollution and rising gas prices

Solution: Electric cars

Source of Sustainability: General Electric EV WattStation

CHAPTER 2

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Company Analysis

General Electric is an American multinational conglomerate powerhouse. General Electric started in 1890 under the leadership of Thomas Alva Edison, who established Edison General Electric by joining together several businesses. In 1892 the Thomas Houston Company and Edison General Electric joined forces to become what we know today as General Electric (GE). GE's headquarter is located in Fairfield, Connecticut with locations globally in 160 countries.

GE is competing for a share of the EV charging station market against California-based Coulomb Technologies, which already has a network of charging systems, the ChargePoint Network, operating in 14 countries, and Network Operations Centers in the United States, London, and Hong Kong.

General Electric operates through three major global business components, which are Infrastructure, Finance and Media and each has several counter parts. However, General Electric is known mostly for its contribution to energy products and services, as well as their many electrical appliances, which many could find in their home or office. General Electric has not always been known for its clean and green initiatives. In fact, in the 1990's and early 2000's General Electric was listed as the fourth-largest company producing air pollution. Additionally, the company was once order to clean a 40 mile stretch in the Hudson River for alleged disposal of toxic waste.

Today the company is firmly committed to the education and production green products, investing heavily in research and development. GE's resulted to enhance their

corporate social responsibility. These changes fall under the program Ecomagination launched in 2005. These commitments to a greener and sustainable environment are just small facets in General Electric's larger scheme of taking on some of the world's toughest challenges and making a difference. (General Electric, 2011) General Electric's Current Slogan is Imagination at Work.

In addition to providing EV charging stations, General Electric announced in November, their plan to purchase 25,000 electric vehicles by 2015. GE will initially purchase 12,000 GM vehicles starting with the Chevrolet Volt in 2011. According to General Electric this is one of the largest EV commitment deals to date, which places them in an advantage position to lead the drive into electric vehicles.

Competitor Analysis

The growing trend for sustainability and going green has affected many markets. Most of the major automobile manufactures along with new electric vehicle manufactures have created or in the process of creating hybrid or an all-electric vehicle. Many companies have jumped on the EV bandwagon and have come up with component products to charge these new electric vehicles.

PEP Station

Manufactured and located out of Livonia Michigan, the PEP station serves as a major competitor for EV charging station. PEP chargers offer a sleek design with touch screen capabilities along with a magnetic card readers for easy card payments. It is a level 2 charging station that boast low maintenance and monitor usage for owners. PEP stations offers dual levels so two cars can be charged simultaneously. Similar to its competitors PEP offers a pedestal based unit or a wall-mounted unit. PEP Stations are currently only

located in the metro Detroit Michigan area and they currently do not offer at home charging station. Pep stations four key design features are as follows; identifiable, indestructible, inexpensive and user friendly. (Pep Stations, 2011)

Other EV charging station competitors: Leviton, Better Place, Coulomb Technologies, AeroVironment, Clipper Creek, ECOtality

Consumer Analysis

Product: The Introduction of the Electric Vehicle Charge Station

General Electric is setting the standard for user-friendly design and reliability for their EV Charging stations. Their Electric Vehicle charging station builds on a century of innovation and design. The charging station enables fast level 2 charging for at home charging or in public locations. General Electric is currently releasing their branded GE WattStation EV charger this year globally. The price for the commercial public WattStation will cost between \$3000 and \$7000 and the residential charge station will cost \$1000 to \$1500, not including installation.

GE states, combining functionality with consumer friendly form, from renowned industrial designer Yves Behar, on average the WattStation decreased EV charging time from the standard 12-18 hours to as little as four to eight hours. Also the design allows integration into a smart electrical distribution system. There is a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) option that allows you to monitor activity of the charger and the usage of energy. In addition, it shows how many vehicles are active on the system, which can allow access or deny access to use the charging system. The WattStation has a very modern sleek design that attracts the eye with its LED lights displayed. It works indoor or outdoor and is available for wall mount or pedestal.

Market Analysis: Gas Fuel vs. Electric Fuel

When you compare battery to gasoline power, electricity wins hands down. A 2007 study by the non-profit Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) calculated that powering a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) would cost the equivalent of roughly 75 cents per gallon of gasoline—a price not seen at the pump for 30 years. The chart below (figure 1), indicates the continual rise in gas prices. As of March 7, 2011 the current national average of regular grade gas cost \$3.509 per gallon compared to one year ago when the average cost for regular grade gas was \$2.747 per gallon. The current growing concern is that gas prices will continually raise due to the unrest in the Middle East. Gas has soared \$0.132 with in one week.

Figure 1 – U.S. National Average for Gas per gallon

	Regular	Mid	Premium	Diesel	85	**E85 MPG/BTU adjusted price
Current Avg.	\$3.509	\$3.643	\$3.772	\$3.878	\$2.941	\$3.870
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.503	\$3.634	\$3.763	\$3.863	\$2.929	\$3.854
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.368	\$3.468	\$3.613	\$3.713	\$2.840	\$3.737
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.122	\$3.251	\$3.377	\$3.480	\$2.672	\$3.516
Year Ago Avg.	\$2.747	\$2.917	\$3.022	\$2.896	\$2.339	\$3.079

Highest Recorded Average Price:		
Regular Unl.	\$4.114	7/17/2008
DSL.	\$4.845	7/17/2008

The average car tank size is 15 to 18 gallons. The average American person refuels their car once a week (need ref). If calculating that a person fills up a 15 gallon tank at the nation average price of \$3.509 at least four times a month for one year they are spending \$2526.48 a year on gas. It was stated that someone with a home charging pump will only spend approximately \$500 more a year on electricity. With an electric vehicle a person will be saving almost \$2000 a year. According to Nissan, charging your electric vehicle at home will cost approximately \$2.75 a charge (\$.11/k/Wh) and also approximately the same for a charge at a public charging station for a full charge.

There are several companies producing EV charging stations around the country. Charging stations are starting to submerge in Washington DC, California, Oregon, and Washington. Several other states are planning on bringing in charging stations with in the next few years.

To the concern of the consumer or one who is contemplating purchasing an electric vehicle of electric vehicle charging component, the United States government has committed to provide tax relief. Consumers will can receive up to \$7500 in a tax rebate when purchasing a electric vehicle. Additionally, those who purchase electric vehicle charging stations can receive up to 50% of purchase and installation cost for chargers with a maximum of \$2000 credit for each station installed.

Top three popular selling electric vehicles current cost. (List price before tax rebate)

1. General Motors Chevy Volt -\$41,000
2. Nissan Leaf - \$32,780

3. Tesla Motors - \$57,000 (starting price)

Top three selling cars in 2010 United States

1. Ford F-150 MSRP-\$22,415 - \$51,140
2. Chevy Silverado- MSRP: \$20,850 - \$41,775
3. Toyota Camry- MSRP: \$19,720 - \$29,370

(US New, 2010)

Figure 2 SWOT

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General Electric familiar house hold brand 2. Creates shorter charging times compared to competitors. 3. Sleek, contemporary (attractive), user-friendly design 4. Website gives great detail of product and promotes purchase for city and community. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Currently limited advertising of WattStation home pedestal charger. 2. Limited traditional advertising, out of home, ambient, and gurilla advertising. 3. Unclear target for advertising. 4.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rising cost of gas prices prevents need for other fuel source outlets. 2. Increase sells of Hybrid and Electric plug in vehicles. 3. Surge in production of Electric Cars 4. General Electric partnership with General Motors 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Several competitors in the market 2. Fairly new product creates higher cost. 3. Currently competitors are being placed in larger cities and urban areas. 4. Due to lack of advertising and information many do not understand the benefits of electric car chargers and components.

CHAPTER 3

CREATIVE BRIEF

Key Selling Idea

The key selling idea for this campaign is Plug In Life. With our targets fast paced, full packed daily lives, many times they forget to take time for themselves. With the GE WattStation the target will save time and money and will provoke their desire to Plug In Life.

Campaign Objective

To promote purchase and use of the at home and public WattStation to drivers of electric vehicles and those who own hybrid charge vehicle as well as target that live in top 50 green cities.

Marketing Objectives

- To acquire and obtain target demographic of men and women ages 22-35
- To increase target market share of General Electric by 10%
- To raise awareness of the benefits of driving electric vehicles and using alternative fuel through focusing on:

- Sustainable environment
- Saving money (Tax breaks)
- Gas pollution

Communication Objectives

- To become the preferred brand of electric car charging vehicles.

- To create a sense of comfort and stability in the consumer and the WattStation while focusing on:

- Convenience
- Sustainably
- Affordable

Media Objectives

- To reach 80% of target audience through advertisements to increase use of the public WattStation evoke need to purchase home WattStation.
- To draw in target audience through buzz of promotions, events, through media advertising

Why are we Communicating?

We are advertising to increase awareness of GE's WattStation by expressing to the possibilities of using and purchasing this alternative fueling agent.

- To inform the target audience that they can charge their car with the alternative fuel source concept of electricity for significantly less than fueling with gasoline.
- The WattStation Cuts down on charging time in half and will cost an estimated \$2.75, significantly less than fueling with gas.

When asked how one felt about "electric car charging stations/pumps", there were a variety of positive responses stating that they are a step in the right direction. However, many posted responses voicing concerns about cost of electric vehicle or that electric car chargers seem good but are not informed of much on the subject. This must improve.

People currently like the concept, now we need to get them to plug in to it.

Who are we communicating to?

Target

Target – 22-35 Young professionals, Family oriented, rural or small town living (Caucasian, Hispanic, African American and Asian). This target is health conscious and aware of the green movement for sustainability for a healthier and cleaner environment. Much of this target is trend and technologically savvy. This target market is broken down into two segments the “movers” and the “shakers”. Movers are those living in the top green cities who drive hybrids and are consider electric or hybrid plug in vehicles. The shakers are those in the target market that currently own an electric vehicle.

Target Segment - Typical Consumer

Michael and Laura -The Movers

Michael and Laura live in a small town outside of Portland, Or and just purchased their first home and are expecting baby Ashley soon. They commute about 25 miles to work everyday in their Toyota Prius. Michael is an accountant a small marketing agency and Laura is a High School math teacher. They are learning to budget and becoming more financially responsible since purchasing their new home and preparing for their baby. Laura enjoys watching HGTV, Food Network, Bravo and WE TV and Michael enjoys Food Network, TLC and movies. They enjoy playing the Wii together on weekends and love to go to town for dining.

They both surf the web daily she watches news on TV in the morning, while he prefers to get his new off the web. They both are tech savvy and he loves to get the latest electronic gadgets and they both are Mac users.

Jake -The Shaker

Jake just started at new job in Downtown Chicago and he currently lives in the north suburbs outside on the out skirts of the city. Jake lives alone but is dating. He lives a fast paced life style during the week keeping up with the new job and a social life. He is a fan and avid follower of the going green trend and eats and uses only organic products. Jake sometimes commutes to work by public transportation and he just invested in a GM Chevy Volt. Jake does not get to watch much TV during the week so he usually TIVO's shows or uses Hulu to catch on what he has missed. Jake lives out of his blackberry with text, twitter, and the web

What is the most important thing we want to get across?

To encourage the target to Plug in Life! With using the General Electric car charging station, you will be saving hundreds of dollars a year. The WattStation is user-friendly, easily accessible, offers a contemporary sleek design, and essentially will be the new form of fuel for vehicles.

Why will they want to Plug in to General Electric?

With the increase in gas prices and over all cost of living makes our target gun shy at the pump. The WattStation will curb those prices and our targets pockets. Additionally, GE has been delivering quality and innovative products for many years. GE is a household name that many have relied on for years. The WattStation is one facet of GE's innovative approach of bringing in a new generation of sustainable and clean air green products that is making the world healthier and more affordable to live in.

Rationale

Plug in Life is exactly what we want the consumer to do when they use the General Electric WattStation. “Plug in” used in the literal sense meaning to fill in or connect exemplifies how the consumer will use the product. Everything Springs from ‘Life’. Life evokes the feelings of energy, passion, love, desire, high spirits, & overall pleasing sensations. The statement “Plug in Life is” a commanding statement evoking the consumer to engage and experience life with WattStation. We want to excite the consumer and let them know that they need to take control of their life and finances. By engaging the consumer in the tag line will allow the consumer to utilize public WattStations or purchase the at home station. The final component of Plug in Life is convenience.

Tone

The tone of this campaign is informational, supportive, conversational, friendly, and opportunistic. We want our target to experience all of our campaigns and encourage them to Plug in their life to the advertisements. The positive messages will express to the audience the opportunities of using the WattStation.

CHAPTER 4

CREATIVE EXECUTIONS AND MEDIA PLAN

The Plug in Life campaign will run from June 1, 2011 for one full year to June 1, 2012. This campaign will be the introduction phase of the WattStation. The media campaign hinges on the ability to create social interactions among our audience through the use of traditional media, non traditional media, promotions and events. The execution of the campaign will concentrate in the top 50 green cities in the United States and those who own electric vehicles. The advertising will concentrate around the target age of 22 -35

The strategy will focus more than half the budget on non traditional media with the other portion focusing on traditional media and promotions. We will organize, execute, and promote with this campaign so that it may reach the media objectives.

Traditional Media

Television: The television campaign will run on broadcast and cable networks. The “Another Great Idea” Campaign will initially start out during primetime network television spots on ABC, CBS Fox and NBC Universal Networks including NBC, CNBC, Bravo, E!, A&E, Style and USA. Other networks that will be phased in starting in July will be ESPN, Food Network, HGTV, and the Travel Channel. Of the sample surveyed for this campaign, watching television was among the top 3 activities that people do in their spare time. “Another Great Idea” This advertisement will be a 15 second spot ran exclusively after GM Volt Commercials during the month of June and July. In August heavier rotation of the advertisement will be picked up during season premier season and run through October 31st 2011. In January a new 15 second

commercial will be launched that will be more related to the changing of seasons and will run until the end of the campaign phase.

Product Placement

Product placement on network and cable stations will start in August 2011. Our target is very busy and does not always have the opportunity to watch television. However, they catch shows online. To ensure we will reach our target through traditional media we will implement product placement of our targets most watch shows which will aid in our efforts to further reach our target audience in a conventional way. NBC shows include 30 Rock, Parks and Recreation, and new shows Friends with Benefits and Marriage Ref (with Jerry Seinfeld). Travel channel shows will include Triple Rush and HGTV shows will include Property Virgins and My First Place.

Magazine

Despite the growing concern of the decline of readership of the magazine industry, we will still take advantage of this industry because there is still a need for this media. We will advertise in top purchased magazine that is read by the target market. The Magazine advertisements will run in June 2011 through December 31st 2011. We will run advertisements in Better Homes and Gardens, Cosmopolitan, Car and Driver, and Maxim. These advertisements will run once a month in these magazines through the entire advertising phase. Time and Readers Digest are two very popular magazines with Readers Digest being the number circulated magazine, however they do not directly fit our target demographic. We will run a tester advertisement in these magazines in July and August. The magazine advertisements will equally target both men and women.

Outdoor

There will be traditional billboards located in the US top green cities as well as other smaller rural cities and towns. The green cities include Portland, Oakland, San Francisco, Berkley, Boston, Seattle, and Chicago. Other cities that will be included (but not limited to) in the outdoor campaign are Knoxville TN, Nashville TN, Springfield IL, Kansas City KS, Carbondale, Il. The billboards will be localized highlighting the city that it is posted. The Billboards will be placed in the larger and US 50 top Green Cities starting in June 2011 to June 2012. In addition to the billboard advertisements in these top 50 US green cities, signs will be placed in bus stop areas as well as near bike racks.

Non – Traditional

Online/ Non-traditional

General Electric have created a user-friendly website that gives in depth information about the WattStation and if your town is ready. The website is colorful and very interactive. We will use our traditional and nontraditional advertising to people to this website.

Newspapers Websites

Instead of running a traditional advertisement in the newspapers, we will run advertisements on the online cites of the top 3 most circulated newspapers. We will place advertisements on USA Today, Wall Street Journal and New York Times. These advertisements will run on the first Monday of the months of October 2011 Through April 2021.

Search Engine Optimization

We will purchase phrases “WattStation”, “Car Charger”, and “Electric Vehicle Charger” “GM Volt” and “Nissan Leaf” and place paid advertisements on Google. We will initially want to become sponsored links on Google. In addition, when these phrase are put in we will assure that the link to General Electric will direct the user to the Ecomagination WattStation page.

Social Networks

We will implement a Facebook and Twitter Page, which will promote information on the WattStation and the various events and promotion. These pages will go up in June 2011 and will last through the entire phase.

Mobile Application GPS System

WattsUP GPS Application will be offered to mobile customers for an annual fee of \$20. With this mobile application the user will be able to monitor their battery life of their electric or hybrid vehicle (when in the vehicle) through their Bluetooth capabilities. In addition, the mobile application will be able to direct the user to the nearest WattStation location. The WattsUP application will also work as a normal GPS system that can pick up signal anywhere in the United States and navigate you to your desired location.

Promotions

GE WattStation will team up with Sprint, General Motors, and Nissan to promote purchase of the WattStation. When someone purchases an electric vehicle they will be offered a 25% discount on purchase of an at home WattStation as well as a one year free Subscription of the WattsUP mobile application. Sprint users will also receive the discounted price of the WattsUP application of \$10 a year. Exclusively to Sprint

Customers, with the annual subscription of WattsUp, they will receive a monthly text of a discounted charge prices for public WattStations.

Event

The WattStation will be placed on the Today show lot. Also there will be a 10 minute news segment on how to use the WattStation on the Today show in June 2011. The crowd will receive a text to their phones of the website of the WattStation and the promotional offer of a 10% discount on their first public charge. This promotion will be good for 1 year.

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