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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FORD VS FERRARI IN MOTORSPORTS HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

The Ford vs. Ferrari rivalry, a historic rivalry in motor sports, is centred around a clash of philosophies. Ferrari, founded in 1947, represents a passion for racing, while Ford, a symbol of American industrial might, aimed to boost its global image through motor sport success. The rivalry reached its peak at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in the late 1960s when Ford developed the GT40 to beat Ferrari. The study explores their key car designs, race strategies, and leadership styles, revealing how their differences pushed each to new heights. The Ford vs. Ferrari saga reshaped how people see racing, influencing car design and brand identity.

KEYWORDS:

Ford, Ferrari, Historic rivalry, Unforgettable mark, American, 24 hours of Le Mans, GT40, Racing, World, Car, Motor sport.

INTRODUCTION:

Motor sport has always been a crucible of innovation, engineering mastery, and passion. The Ford vs. Ferrari rivalry is an iconic and impact example of this. Ferrari, established in 1947 by Enzo Ferrari, was the heart of the company, with their road cars designed to support their true purpose: competing on the track with passion, precision, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. Ford, founded by Henry Ford in 1903, had little involvement in European racing until a business deal turned sour in the early 1960s. Henry Ford II attempted to buy Ferrari to fast-track Ford's entry into high-performance motor sport, but it ultimately collapsed when Enzo refused to surrender control of his cherished racing division.

Henry Ford II vowed to strike back, not in court but on the track, with his goal of defeating Ferrari at the 24 Hours of Le Mans, the very race Ferrari had dominated. Determined to win, Ford poured enormous resources into building the GT40, a purpose-built race car meant to dethrone Ferrari. With help from legendary racer and engineer Carroll Shelby and a team of top-tier engineers, Ford set out to create a machine that could conquer Europe's best. Ferrari, meanwhile, continued to rely on its deep racing heritage and the instinctual leadership of Enzo himself.

The rivalry reached its peak in 1966 at Le Mans, where Ford's GT40 dominated the podium, finishing first, second, and third. This victory signaled that ambition, resources, and a willingness to break tradition could topple even the most established legacy. Ford would go on

to win Le Mans three more times in a row, but the real impact was in perception. No longer just a maker of everyday cars, Ford had earned its place in the high-performance arena. Ferrari, though stung by defeat, responded with renewed focus and innovation, strengthening its identity as a racing powerhouse.

This study delves into the transformation of each brand's racing journey, examining the key decisions, strategies, and philosophies that defined each brand's racing journey. The Ford vs. Ferrari rivalry has become a legend, immortalized in books, documentaries, and Hollywood films. At its core, it's about what happens when two bold visions of greatness collide, sparking innovation, shaping legacy, and pushing everyone involved beyond their limits.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

This study aims to explore and critically analyse the motor sport journeys of Ford and Ferrari, focusing on their iconic rivalry—especially at the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The key objectives are:

1. To compare the racing philosophies of Ford and Ferrari and how these shaped their strategies and successes.
2. To analyse technological innovations and engineering advancements introduced by both brands.
3. To evaluate the rivalry's impact on motor sports evolution, particularly in endurance racing, and its influence on automotive design and performance.
4. To examine how this rivalry shaped brand positioning, legacy-building, public perception, and global recognition.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study uses a qualitative, secondary research approach to compare the motorsport histories of Ford and Ferrari. It explores how each brand's racing philosophy, engineering practices, leadership, and culture have shaped their identities. Drawing from credible sources—including books, academic journals,

documentaries, motorsport archives, and technical publications—the research focuses on thematic analysis to identify key patterns like innovation, rivalry, and legacy. While the study ensures validity through cross-referencing and reliable sources, its reliance on secondary data limits access to firsthand insights and may include subjective interpretations from sources like films and biographies.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The Ford vs Ferrari saga is more than a tale of two automakers—it's a compelling narrative filled with ambition, innovation, pride, and a clash of philosophies that forever changed the world of motor sports. What began with a failed business acquisition quickly escalated into one of the most intense rivalries in racing history, setting the stage for a legendary era in endurance racing.

Ferrari's Racing Heritage:

Before Ferrari became synonymous with speed and style, Enzo Ferrari had deep roots in motor sports. He began as a race car driver in the 1920s and later managed Alfa Romeo's racing efforts. In 1947, he founded Ferrari with one purpose: to create race-winning machines. For Enzo, racing wasn't just marketing—it was the soul of the brand. Ferrari swiftly rose through the ranks, dominating Formula One and endurance events. By the 1950s and early 1960s, Ferrari was the dominant force at Le Mans, embodying Italian passion and engineering excellence.

Ford's Motor sport Ambitions:

Meanwhile, Ford's story was shaped by its industrial roots. Founded in 1903 by Henry Ford, the company was known for transforming car production and making automobiles accessible to the masses. Performance wasn't a key focus until the 1960s, when Henry Ford II sought to invigorate the brand's image and appeal to younger, performance-driven consumers.

To achieve this, Ford targeted the prestigious world of European racing, particularly endurance events like Le Mans. The strategy was straightforward: winning on the track would

boost Ford's credibility and global appeal as a performance brand.

The Failed Deal that Sparked a War:

In 1963, Ford attempted to acquire Ferrari, hoping the partnership would bring instant prestige and racing success. Initially promising, the deal fell apart when Enzo Ferrari refused to relinquish control of his racing division—a non-negotiable for him. The abrupt withdrawal angered Henry Ford II, who took the rejection personally. Determined to retaliate, he vowed to defeat Ferrari where it mattered most—at Le Mans, where Ferrari had long dominated.

The GT40 and a New Chapter in Racing:

Ford responded by launching an ambitious project to build a Ferrari-beating car, resulting in the creation of the GT40. With the help of Carroll Shelby, a former racer turned performance expert, Ford embarked on a journey filled with challenges and breakthroughs. Despite early setbacks, persistence paid off. In 1966, Ford triumphed at Le Mans, claiming a 1-2-3 finish and ending Ferrari's reign.

This victory marked the beginning of a new era. Ford continued its dominance by winning Le Mans three more times, establishing itself as a formidable force in endurance racing. Ferrari maintained its presence in Formula One, but the Le Mans losses marked a significant shift in its racing legacy.

A Clash of Ideals:

The rivalry's lasting impact stems from the contrasting identities of the two brands. Ferrari stood for passion, artistry, and meticulous craftsmanship, shaped entirely by Enzo's singular vision. Ford, by contrast, embodied a calculated, corporate-driven approach backed by immense resources and strategic execution.

Ferrari operated like an artisan workshop, while Ford functioned as a well-oiled machine. This ideological divide made their rivalry not just about speed, but about values and brand identity.

An Enduring Legacy:

Though the head-to-head battles at Le Mans eventually ended, the legacy of Ford vs Ferrari endures. Their rivalry drove innovation and left a profound mark on the racing world. The GT40 became a symbol of American ingenuity, while Ferrari continued to represent high-performance excellence.

Their story lives on in popular culture, immortalized in books, documentaries, and films like *Ford v Ferrari* (2019), introducing new audiences to this dramatic chapter in motor sports. At its core, this rivalry wasn't just about racing—it was a testament to vision, perseverance, and the unrelenting drive to be the best.

Le Mans Rivalry: The 1960s showdown:

The 1960s marked a golden era in motor sports, with the 24 Hours of Le Mans standing as its centerpiece. More than just a race, it was a crucible for greatness—and during this pivotal decade, it became the battleground for one of the most legendary rivalries in racing history: Ford versus Ferrari. What started as a failed business negotiation quickly turned into a fierce, emotionally charged feud that transformed endurance racing and left a lasting imprint on automotive history.

Ferrari's Dominance:

In the years leading up to the rivalry, Ferrari was the undisputed force at Le Mans. From the late 1950s through the early 1960s, the Italian brand claimed victory after victory, thanks to its masterfully designed machines and a deeply embedded racing culture. Enzo Ferrari wasn't interested in building mere road cars—he was obsessed with racing and winning. His pursuit of excellence propelled Ferrari to the top of endurance racing, with a perfect blend of sleek design, advanced engineering, and fearless drivers.

Winning was more than an objective for Ferrari—it was part of its DNA. By 1965, the marque had secured multiple Le Mans wins,

establishing a seemingly unshakable dominance in the sport.

Ford's Ambition Sparks a Rivalry:

In contrast, Ford was best known for its affordable cars and mass production expertise. But in the early 1960s, Henry Ford II set out to reinvent the company's image—one that exuded speed, power, and international stature. The fastest route to achieving that? Toppling Ferrari at Le Mans.

After a failed bid to buy Ferrari in 1963—culminating in a dramatic rejection from Enzo Ferrari—Ford took the snub personally. The new goal became clear: if they couldn't acquire Ferrari, they'd out-race them.

This mission led to the creation of the GT40, a bold project combining American innovation with the know-how of racing veterans like Carroll Shelby and Ken Miles. Ford wasn't just entering the competition—they were going in to win.

Le Mans 1966: The Defining Battle:

Following two challenging years of development, Ford returned to Le Mans in 1966 with the formidable GT40 Mk II. Equipped with a monstrous 7.0-liter V8 engine, it was built for both speed and endurance. Though Ferrari remained a strong contender, Ford had not only caught up—they had taken the lead.

The 1966 race proved to be a turning point. Ford swept the podium, taking first, second, and third place in a stunning victory that ended Ferrari's dominance. However, the triumph had a bittersweet edge. In an effort to create a dramatic photo finish, Ford's management ordered their cars to cross the line together—resulting in Ken Miles, a key figure in the GT40's development, losing out on an individual win.

Despite the controversy, the victory sent a powerful message: Ford was now a force to be reckoned with in the world of endurance racing.

The Rivalry Rolls On:

Ford didn't rest after 1966. They returned to Le Mans stronger, securing victories in 1967, 1968, and 1969. The GT40 had become a symbol of American racing prowess, and Ford had proven that determination, innovation, and deep pockets could overcome a storied legacy.

Meanwhile, Ferrari began to shift focus, stepping away from endurance racing to concentrate more heavily on Formula One. While still a dominant name in motor sport, their retreat marked the end of an era at Le Mans.

A Clash of Worlds:

At the heart of this rivalry was a dramatic contrast in philosophy. Ferrari embodied emotion, legacy, and artistry—each car a labour of love and precision. Ford, on the other hand, approached racing like a business: analytical, efficient, and strategically driven.

Le Mans became more than a competition—it was the stage where these two distinct mindsets collided. For spectators, it was a thrilling showdown between heart and horsepower, tradition and innovation.

Why It Still Matters:

The Ford-Ferrari rivalry at Le Mans went beyond racing—it reshaped the way manufacturers approached motor sport and engineering. It drove innovation, raised performance standards, and elevated racing to new cultural heights.

Today, the story continues to captivate audiences, not just for the drama or results, but for the powerful themes it represents: ambition, rivalry, resilience, and the enduring quest for greatness. Whether you admire the scrappy challenger or the proud veteran, this tale speaks to anyone inspired by the pursuit of excellence at full speed.

Technological Innovations and Engineering Approaches:

The Ford versus Ferrari saga wasn't solely about who finished first—it was a battle of engineering ideologies. Each brand brought a distinct philosophy to the track. Ferrari leaned into time-

honoured craftsmanship, emphasizing elegance and mechanical balance. Ford, on the other hand, approached racing with a corporate mindset, leveraging innovation, brute strength, and strategic investment. Their opposing methods collectively advanced motor sport technology in revolutionary ways.

Ferrari:

To Enzo Ferrari, constructing race cars was a lifelong pursuit of passion. His machines were more than vehicles—they were expressions of art and purpose, created to deliver both beauty and speed. Rather than chasing sheer power, Ferrari prioritized harmony, balance, and a deep mechanical synergy in every design.

Key Ferrari Innovations:

Legendary V12 Engines:

Ferrari's hallmark was its high-revving V12s—compact, smooth, and full of character. These engines were more than just components; they were symbols of the brand's technical soul.

Lightweight Construction:

Ferrari excelled at using lightweight materials like aluminium, creating agile and responsive cars. This focus on weight reduction made a real difference on long, twisty circuits.

Elegant Aerodynamics:

Even without cutting-edge tools, Ferrari's car designs featured natural aerodynamic flow. Models like the 250 GTO and 330 P weren't just visually stunning—they were aerodynamically effective.

Driver-Oriented Design:

Every Ferrari was engineered with the driver's experience in mind. From suspension to transmission, each element was fine-tuned to provide intuitive control and feedback.

Ford:

While Ford lacked Ferrari's racing legacy, it possessed the ambition, funding, and drive to compete at the highest level. After the failed 1963 acquisition attempt, Henry Ford II set his

focus on conquering Ferrari where it mattered most—at Le Mans. This led to the birth of the groundbreaking GT40 project.

Ford's Engineering Breakthroughs:

Massive V8 Power:

The GT40 Mk II featured a formidable 7.0-liter V8 engine—significantly larger than anything Ferrari fielded. It emphasized sheer output and endurance, dominating long stretches of the track.

Scientific Development:

Ford took an analytical approach, applying wind tunnel testing and data-driven design. This technical rigor replaced gut instinct with hard evidence, giving them a measurable edge.

Modular Construction:

With a focus on consistency and reliability, Ford designed cars that were easier to service and upgrade. This efficiency proved vital during the stresses of a 24-hour race.

Enhanced Cooling and Durability:

Ford paid special attention to cooling systems and mechanical durability. These improvements were essential for enduring the punishing conditions of endurance racing.

Fast Iteration:

Unlike Ferrari's gradual evolution, Ford moved quickly. Through continuous updates and relentless experimentation, the GT40 rapidly transformed from an underdog into a champion.

Two Visions, One Goal:

What made this rivalry truly compelling was the contrast in how the two teams approached car building. Ferrari's machines were finely tuned instruments, imbued with soul and crafted to connect deeply with the driver. Ford, in contrast, saw racing as a challenge to be solved with muscle, metrics, and innovation.

Ferrari relied on heritage and instinct. Ford relied on process and technological advancement.

Lasting Influence on Motor sport:

This ideological clash didn't just produce iconic races—it redefined how race cars were designed. Ford's triumph demonstrated that forward-thinking engineering and aggressive development could challenge even the most revered names in racing. Ferrari, though dethroned at Le Mans, continued to innovate and lead in Formula One, cementing its reputation as a motor sport titan.

Even now, the legacy of their duel lingers. Ferrari remains the embodiment of passion and performance, while Ford's racing arm still channels the relentless drive that fueled its 1960s success.

Ultimately, this wasn't merely about titles—it marked a transformation in racing design philosophy and proved that greatness could be pursued through wildly different, yet equally impact, paths.

Motorsport Strategy:

The Ford versus Ferrari showdown in the 1960s was more than a contest of engineering—it was a duel of ideologies. Every pit stops, every race call, and every lap reflected two fundamentally different philosophies on how to succeed. Ferrari entered the arena with a legacy steeped in emotion, heritage, and an undying passion for racing. Ford, the ambitious newcomer, brought determination, vast resources, and a clear objective: win at all costs.

This was no ordinary rivalry—it was a battle of strategic vision that redefined what it meant to build a champion racing team.

Ferrari:

For Enzo Ferrari, motor sport was the essence of his brand. Racing wasn't just part of the business—it was the soul of Ferrari. Every choice made by the team came from pride, tradition, and a love for the sport. They didn't follow trends—they trusted their instincts and honed their craft through experience.

Ferrari's strategic strengths included:

Selective Focus:

Rather than competing in every event, Ferrari zeroed in on key races like Le Mans and Formula One. Victories in these arenas carried weight far beyond just trophies—they represented global prestige.

Driver-Led Decisions:

Enzo held his drivers in high regard, relying on their judgment during races. Strategy was often shaped by what the driver felt in the moment, making their input crucial.

Evolution Over Revolution:

Ferrari was all about refining successful formulas. Each new car was an improved version of the last, with continual enhancements that added reliability and performance.

Durability First:

Ferrari valued consistency and resilience. Their cars were engineered to last the entire 24 hours of Le Mans, prioritizing mechanical sympathy and race-long balance over explosive speed.

In-House Mastery:

Ferrari designed and built all their components in-house. This allowed them to maintain full control over quality, ensuring everything worked seamlessly together.

Ford:

Ford's approach to racing was built around a singular ambition: to defeat Ferrari on the world's biggest stage. After the failed acquisition of Ferrari, Henry Ford II was determined to prove that his company could rise to the challenge. The GT40 was not just a racing car—it was a calculated move in a broader plan for dominance.

Ford's strategy:

One Clear Goal:

Ford's entire program was built around one target—overthrowing Ferrari at Le Mans. Every move, from hiring to development, was aligned with this singular aim.

Recruit the Best:

Ford looked beyond its own walls for talent. They enlisted Carroll Shelby, adopted designs from Lola, and assembled a powerhouse of skilled individuals to accelerate success.

Corporate Muscle:

Backed by massive financial support, Ford spared no expense. Their budget allowed for extensive testing, technological advancement, and assembling a world-class team.

Data-Driven Strategy:

Ford leaned heavily on data and metrics. Their approach relied on driver feedback and rigorous analysis, with decisions based on evidence rather than emotion.

Brand Over Individual:

Ford operated with corporate discipline. The drivers were expected to follow directives, and maintaining a specific image was vital. The 1966 finish—where Ken Miles was denied a solo win for a staged photo—is a clear example of this brand-centric mindset.

Break It in Testing:

Ford deliberately pushed their cars to the limit during testing. They wanted to discover weaknesses early and fix them fast—leading to both setbacks and critical advancements.

The Legacy of Their Strategies:

Ferrari remained true to its heritage, standing as a beacon of racing passion despite losing its grip on Le Mans. Ford, through bold moves and a laser-sharp mission, demonstrated how calculated investment and innovation could shake up the status quo.

This epic rivalry wasn't just about who had the faster car—it was about how each team chose to chase glory. Ferrari exemplified what it means to live and breathe motor sport. Ford proved the power of vision, strategy, and relentless pursuit.

Ultimately, both approaches left a lasting impact—and motor sport is forever better because of it.

Brand Identity & Motor sport Marketing:

The epic battle between Ford and Ferrari wasn't solely about horsepower, lap times, or trophies—it was a duel of identities. Every moment at Le Mans wasn't just a race—it was a bold declaration of what each brand stood for. For Ferrari, racing was the soul of the company. For Ford, it was an opportunity to transform perception and build excitement around performance and innovation.

Motor sport became more than competition—it was a powerful storytelling stage that helped both brands define themselves in the eyes of the world.

Ferrari:

Ferrari's brand was born on the racetrack. To Enzo Ferrari, motor sport wasn't a commercial strategy—it was the essence of the company. Each victory, every model, and all the emotional highs and lows told a story of passion, heritage, and purpose.

Key elements of Ferrari's branding approach:**Prestige-Driven Success:**

Wins weren't just results—they were symbols of Italian excellence. Triumphant at races like Le Mans elevated Ferrari as a representation of elegance, innovation, and national pride.

Passion-Fuelled Narrative:

Ferrari built its identity around emotion. The drama of competition, the elegance of its cars, and the charisma of its drivers all contributed to an inspiring legacy rooted in storytelling.

Deliberate Exclusivity:

Ferrari never aimed to mass-produce. Its brand was shaped by exclusivity and status. Owning one wasn't just about performance—it was about joining an elite club.

Racing at the Core:

For Ferrari, racing wasn't a promotional tool—it was the company's foundation. This dedication to motor sport gave the brand unmatched authenticity and a deep connection to its roots.

Ford:

Ford represented the strength of American industry, and their leap into endurance racing was anything but sentimental. For Henry Ford II, beating Ferrari at Le Mans was more than personal—it was a way to redefine Ford's image and make a statement to the world.

Ford's motorsport brand strategy included:

Blending Power and Purpose:

The GT40 wasn't just another model—it was a symbol of American determination, technical skill, and corporate strength. It was a bold response to a challenge.

Racing as Marketing Fuel:

Ford made each Le Mans win a marketing victory. They turned race results into proof points, reinforcing the idea that their cars were built on the same DNA as their track-dominating machines.

Performance for the People:

Where Ferrari sold dreams to the few, Ford gave pride to the many. Their victories showed that a carmaker for the masses could conquer the elite.

Confident Challenger Spirit:

Ford portrayed itself as a fierce rival with the tools and talent to compete. Their messaging had swagger, positioning themselves not as underdogs, but as disruptors ready to shake things up.

The Legacy Lives On:

The strategies developed during this legendary rivalry still shape both brands today.

Ferrari continues to embrace its heritage, showcasing elite engineering in everything from Formula One cars to its high-end road models. The brand is still synonymous with legacy, excellence, and exclusivity.

Ford remains a bold storyteller. The modern GT was a celebration of past glories, while vehicles like the Mustang Mach-E carry the legacy of innovation with a fresh, forward-thinking edge—still echoing the spirit of Le Mans.

Modern-Day Presence in Motorsports:

Although the legendary Ford vs. Ferrari battle of the 1960s is a part of history, its influence continues to resonate in the modern racing world. While the technology, tracks, and vehicles have evolved, both brands still compete—though not always head-to-head—by shaping the narrative of contemporary motor sport. Ferrari remains a cornerstone of elite racing, particularly in Formula One, while Ford focuses its efforts on races that align with its broader vision of performance and innovation. Here's a look at how these two racing icons have carried their legacies into today's racing world.

Ferrari:

Ferrari hasn't just stayed in the racing game—they've dominated it. Since the inaugural Formula One World Championship in 1950, Ferrari has been present every season without fail. Their commitment to motor sport is not just a marketing strategy—it's woven into their very DNA.

Where Ferrari Races Today:

Formula One (Scuderia Ferrari):

F1 is Ferrari's home turf. The iconic red cars, the prancing horse emblem, and the passionate fans, or "tifos," create an atmosphere unmatched by any other team. While championships have been scarce in recent years, Ferrari remains at the forefront, fueled by world-class engineering and top-tier drivers.

World Endurance Championship (WEC):

In a remarkable return to endurance racing, Ferrari re-entered the top-tier of the World Endurance Championship in 2023 with the hybrid-powered 499P Hyper car. Their Le Mans victory not only marked their return but also echoed their historic dominance in endurance racing.

Ferrari Challenge Series:

This series is more about bringing Ferrari's elite clientele into the racing fold. It offers a unique blend of excitement and prestige, where customers can experience the thrill of racing without the pressures of competition.

What Ferrari Stands for in Modern Racing:

Ferrari's approach to motor sport remains intrinsic to their identity—not a mere marketing tool. Whether in F1 or at Le Mans, each race serves as a stage to showcase their legacy, elegance, and unmatched racing heritage. Ferrari competes not to advertise its cars but because racing is an integral part of who they are.

Ford:

Ford's modern racing approach differs in that it's more about purposeful participation than widespread presence. Ford enters races with clear intentions, whether to make a bold statement or to reinforce a broader brand narrative.

Where Ford is Active Today:

Le Mans & IMSA (Ford GT Program):

In 2016, Ford made a dramatic comeback to Le Mans, 50 years after their historic victory in 1966. The new Ford GT didn't just compete—it won its category, symbolizing the underdog spirit that remains a core part of Ford's identity.

World Rally Championship (WRC):

With the hybrid-powered Puma Rally1, Ford competes in WRC alongside M-Sport. Rallying allows Ford to test their vehicles under the harshest conditions, from snow to gravel and everything in between.

NASCAR:

Ford has been a dominant force in American stock car racing for years, with teams like Team Penske and RFK Racing regularly competing at the highest level and keeping the Mustang at the forefront of NASCAR, a sport deeply ingrained in American culture.

Off-Road & Sustainability:

Ford has expanded into electric off-road racing with Extreme E, and remains a formidable contender in events like the Baja 1000, reinforcing its commitment to rugged durability and innovation in the world of sustainability.

What Ford Represents in Modern Racing:

Ford doesn't race just for competition's sake—they race with a purpose. Every entry has a clear message tied to a product, a legacy, or a technological breakthrough. Whether demonstrating hybrid technology in rallying or electric power in off-road events, Ford uses motor sport to tell stories that resonate with today's audience.

Legacy in Motion: Two Icons, Two Paths

While both Ferrari and Ford have evolved, their strategies in motor sport still reflect their foundational principles:

Ferrari is the perennial racer—always present, always pursuing perfection, with a commitment that blends emotional passion with technical excellence.

Ford is the calculated competitor—selecting its battles with precision and leveraging each appearance to make a lasting cultural and commercial impact.

Their rivalry may no longer play out in direct competition on the track as often, but the contrast in their approaches continues to inspire the motor sport world. Whether it's Ferrari's poetic dedication to racing or Ford's strategic brilliance, the legacy of their competition lives on in every race, every victory, and every fan.

Legacy and Cultural Impact:

The Ford vs Ferrari rivalry is far more than a series of races won or lost; it has become a crucial part of our collective cultural memory. The clash between American industrial strength and Italian passion for speed has left a lasting imprint on both motor sport and car culture. Even today, this rivalry influences how we view

engineering, performance, and the values of these iconic brands.

Ferrari:

Ferrari's motor sport heritage is driven by one key element—passion. From the founding of Scuderia Ferrari in 1929, racing has been at the heart of the brand. Ferrari doesn't just build cars; they craft emotional experiences, and this philosophy has defined their identity both on and off the track.

The Cultural Impact of Ferrari:

1. A Symbol of Prestige:

Ferrari's racing victories have always been about more than just collecting accolades. Triumphs, especially at events like Le Mans and Formula One, have cemented Ferrari as a symbol of Italian excellence and refined luxury. Owning a Ferrari means becoming part of an elite club, where heritage and exclusivity are just as important as performance.

2. The Passionate Fan base – Tifos:

Ferrari's influence extends beyond their cars. Their Tifos (fan base) is legendary, turning every race into an emotional celebration of speed and skill. Whether it's the passionate chants at Formula 1 events or the iconic Ferrari Red, the connection between the brand and its fans is electric. Ferrari has become more than a racing team—they represent a cultural movement.

3. Art and Emotion:

Ferrari's cars are crafted with artistry, often in ways that Ford has not. They are more than mere machines; they are expressions of Italian craftsmanship, transforming engineering into an art form. Cars like the 250 GTO and La-Ferrari are considered cultural artifacts, symbols of passion, precision, and beauty. Driving a Ferrari isn't just about getting from point A to point B—it's about owning a piece of automotive art.

4. The Ferrari Lifestyle:

Ferrari has transcended motor sport to become a global luxury brand. Their racing victories, whether in Le Mans or Formula 1, have become

cultural milestones, reinforcing Ferrari as not just a symbol of speed but a luxurious, exclusive, and timeless lifestyle choice.

Ford:

In contrast to Ferrari's traditional and exclusive approach, Ford entered the motor sport world with a focus on innovation, determination, and the American spirit. Ford's rivalry with Ferrari wasn't just about speed—it was a bold statement that American engineering could compete with European tradition and come out victorious.

The Cultural Impact of Ford:

1. The American Dream and Grit:

Ford's entry into motor sport resonated with the ethos of the American Dream—it was not just about the cars, but the story of perseverance and ingenuity. After multiple failed attempts to conquer Ferrari at Le Mans, Ford's victory with the GT40 in 1966 became the ultimate underdog triumph—a victory of American grit and determination.

2. Performance for the People:

Ford was never about exclusivity. While Ferrari focused on the elite, Ford aimed to bring high-performance vehicles to the masses. With iconic cars like the Mustang, GT40, and Shelby Cobra, Ford made performance accessible. Their commitment to motor sport, from NASCAR to Indycar, proved that racing could be for everyone, and that speed wasn't just for the rich and famous.

3. "Win on Sunday, Sell on Monday":

For Ford, motor sport wasn't just about victory—it was about visibility and consumer engagement. The famous slogan "Win on Sunday, Sell on Monday" encapsulated their philosophy: victories on the track were a powerful marketing tool, directly influencing sales. Their participation in Le Mans and NASCAR transformed racing into a strategy for driving consumer behaviour.

4. Shaping Motor sport Culture:

While Ferrari helped shape the culture of elite racing, Ford made racing mainstream. Their involvement in NASCAR and other domestic series made Ford a key player in American motor sport culture. The Ford Mustang, a symbol of American muscle, remains iconic for its power and performance, rooted in the brand's racing legacy.

How Ford and Ferrari Continue to Shape Motor Sport Culture Today:

Even decades later, the Ford vs Ferrari rivalry still echoes in the motor sport world. While Ferrari remains entrenched in the highest levels of racing, Ford's involvement has evolved, blending heritage with innovation.

Ferrari's Lasting Influence:

Ferrari continues to dominate Formula One, remaining a benchmark of excellence. Their consistent presence and technical innovations keep them at the forefront of motor sport, even when championships elude them. Ferrari's status as a symbol of luxury, performance, and tradition remains unmatched.

Ferrari also creates a unique bond with racing fans through their customer racing programs, offering enthusiasts the opportunity to become part of Ferrari's legacy, regardless of skill level. The brand remains synonymous with prestige, both in motor sports and in everyday life. Ferrari's victories, particularly at Le Mans and in Formula 1, are celebrated as global cultural events.

Ford's Lasting Influence:

Though Ford may not dominate Formula One, their legacy is firmly rooted in American racing culture. Their ongoing success in NASCAR and rallying, alongside the return of the GT to Le Mans in 2016, highlights Ford's commitment to performance and engineering excellence. Ford's focus on innovation, from hybrid rallying to electric off-road racing, ensures that they remain relevant in the modern age of motor sports.

The Ford Mustang continues to represent American power and performance. The brand's ongoing presence in racing, especially NASCAR and electric racing, demonstrates their commitment to performance and sustainability.

Cultural Reflection:

The Ford vs Ferrari rivalry has also had a profound impact on popular culture. The 2019 film Ford v Ferrari brought this incredible story to a global audience, highlighting the human drama, corporate intrigue, and cultural clash behind the legendary race. The film served as a reminder that this rivalry was about more than just cars—it was about legacy, identity, and the way two companies battled for greatness by blending tradition with innovation.

Conclusion:

The Ford vs Ferrari rivalry is more than just a competition between two car manufacturers on the racetrack; it represents one of the most pivotal moments in motor sport history. This legendary battle not only influenced engineering advancements and racing strategies but also reshaped how we view brand identity and fan culture in motor sports. Though the rivalry began with the fierce contest at Le Mans in the 1960s, its impact extends far beyond the racetrack, leaving a lasting imprint on both the automotive industry and popular culture.

At its essence, this rivalry was a clash of philosophies. Ferrari, with its deep roots in tradition, luxury, and a passionate love for racing, became the symbol of Italian craftsmanship and exclusivity. For Ferrari, motor sport wasn't just a marketing tool—it was an emotional cornerstone of their brand. Their continued presence in Formula One and endurance racing, along with their devoted fan base, the Tifos, solidified their reputation as a brand that embodies high-performance and elite status.

In contrast, Ford's approach to racing was built around innovation and accessibility. Their pursuit of victory at Le Mans was more than just

a contest—it was a declaration of American ingenuity and determination. The success of the GT40 at Le Mans in 1966 was emblematic of Ford's use of motor sport to connect with the masses, proving that cutting-edge performance could be made available to everyone, not just the privileged few.

Both brands have carried their legacies into modern motor sports in ways that align with their core identities. Ferrari remains a dominant presence in Formula One and endurance racing, maintaining its commitment to excellence and tradition. Meanwhile, Ford's involvement in NASCAR, rallying, and electric racing reflects its ongoing dedication to both performance and innovation, staying true to its values of accessibility and technological progress.

The rivalry has also permeated popular culture, especially with the 2019 film *Ford v Ferrari*, which brought the story to a wider audience. This tale goes beyond race results; it's a story about the clash of visions—Ferrari's legacy of craftsmanship versus Ford's drive for American innovation. The rivalry stands as a cultural symbol for both passion and progress in the automotive world.

Ultimately, the Ford vs Ferrari story is about the enduring legacies of both brands. Each has made significant contributions to motor sports and car culture, and their rivalry has inspired generations of fans and engineers alike. As both companies continue to evolve, their influence on motor sports will persist for years to come, ensuring that their legendary competition remains an unforgettable chapter in the history of racing.

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