

RESEARCH

## Tesla, BMW pull ahead in engagement rankings

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*Aerial view of Tesla's Model S*

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

German automaker BMW and U.S. electric automaker Tesla Motors are the two top automotive brands on Twitter and in generating offline word of mouth momentum, according to Engagement Labs.

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Chevrolet Corvette took the top spot in the two remaining categories of offline word of mouth sentiment and Facebook use, but a number of luxury automakers placed in the top 10 in at least one of the four categories. Luxury brands are generally thought to be slow adopters of digital technology, but these findings prove that is not always the case.

"Our view is that both online and offline word of mouth are very important, especially in today's competitive market," said Bryan Segal, CEO of **Engagement Labs**. "That is the ethos to why we are developing a 'Total Social' perspective, which will provide brands with the ability to track, measure and benchmark the conversations happening around their brand or industry, both online and offline. In fact, we increasingly find that people have conversations offline about what they see online, including in social media - individuals I like to call multi-channel influencers."

### Social reach

BMW's only other appearance in a top 10 was the last spot on the offline word of mouth sentiment ranking, but Tesla placed fourth in sentiment, fifth in Facebook use and eighth in Twitter use, the only brand to place in all four categories.

Among other luxury brands, Mercedes-Benz placed in both social network categories, Jaguar in Twitter and offline momentum, Audi was second in offline sentiment and seventh in Twitter, Lexus was fourth in Facebook use and Maserati and Ferrari placed sixth in Facebook and Twitter, respectively.



*Ferrari 4582*

The findings prove both that success on one social network does not translate to success on another only three out of 10 brands appeared in the top 10 for Facebook and Twitter and that online buzz does not translate to offline buzz and vice-versa.

"Today, both word of mouth conversation and social media are major drivers of brand consideration and purchases," said Bryan Segal, CEO at Engagement Labs, in a statement. "However, what brands must realize is what people are talking about offline may not necessarily be what people are talking about online.

"Therefore, it's important for marketers to understand how their brand is measuring up on both mediums and create content that can help fuel conversation, be it online or offline," he said.



*BMW ActiveE*

Tesla's environmental slant aids its appeal to younger consumers in particular, and being active online while also generating positive sentiment and momentum offline indicates that the company, despite being a relative newcomer among automakers, is poised to continue growing.

Data from the 2014 CMO Council Report suggested that 38 percent of consumers will look to social media when they next purchase a car. In addition, millennials are preparing to take over the marketplace; they are projected to make two-fifths of car purchases over the next decade and almost all will use the Internet at some point in the process.



*Lexus RC*

These numbers reinforce the importance social media has for consumers, particularly younger consumers. That luxury brands are already engaging with prospective consumers online positions them to make sales through the next decade and beyond, while a good showing in offline word of mouth sentiment and momentum categories shows that being visible online does not mean sacrificing the luxury label.

#### Digital presence

Some luxury brands in other sectors have also risen to the top in digital customer experience.

The third edition of ContactLab's [Digital Competitive Map](#) report looked at both the strategic reach and digital customer experience of 30 brands, creating a graph that compares the two areas. Among the 17 criteria are the number of languages available, product presentation, delivery and cross-channel services.

While it takes home top prize on the strategic side, Burberry is number seven on the digital customer experience axis, outpaced by Gucci and Louis Vuitton, which took home the top spots. Gucci was ranked first for its improvements within personal services such as made to order and personal shopping, speedy delivery including same-day service in New York, Saturday delivery and streamlined path to purchase involving few clicks ([see story](#)).

Retailers are fighting a similar battle as they try to incorporate omnichannel tactics into marketing, a strategy some luxury brands have pulled off more successfully than others.

L2's [Digital IQ Index: Department Stores](#) report attempts to assign a digital IQ to 58 retailers, looking at the brand's site and ecommerce, digital marketing, mobile and social media.

In L2's rankings, Nordstrom was the highest ranked luxury retailer, tying for second place with JC Penney right behind top ranked Macy's. Some examples of Nordstrom's "Genius" capabilities include a strong organic search presence due to extensive tagging, use of engaging social media and email campaigns that show off a range of products and drive consumers to the retailer's Web site and stores ([see story](#)).

"Leveraging social media channels is a great way for brands to create two-way communication amongst current and potential consumers, as it helps build brand affinity both online and offline," Mr. Segal said. "By engaging their social media channels and creating effective content, brands can enhance relationships with fans and followers, which can translate to offline conversations and help guide purchase decisions.

"Today more than ever, consumers live their lives both online and offline and the distinction is not important to them. It's about sharing and learning from each other."

#### Final Take

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