

TELEVISION

## Keys to luxury automaker success via TV commercials

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By TRICIA CARR

Luxury marketers such as Jaguar, Audi, Lexus, BMW and Mercedes-Benz should take advantage of new television advertising opportunities that include cable networks and Internet-based integration to keep an emotional connection with target consumers as well as aspirational.

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Of all high-end industry sectors, luxury automakers are the most apt to use TV as a primary marketing channel. Correct placement of a TV ad and a brand message that shows innovation, technology and craftsmanship can still assist automakers in reaching their target audience of high-net-worth consumers in a digital age.

“Best practices in brand advertising are based on creating emotional connections between the brand and the consumer,” said Karen Creamer, president of **K2 Brand Consulting**, Overland Park, KS.

“Despite the range of media choices and opportunities, TV remains the most effective platform to deliver evocative, emotionally-driven messages and images to create desire and preference for a brand,” she said.

“Luxury car marketers use TV advertising to fulfill consumers’ desires for exclusivity,

quality, performance and prestige.”

#### Commercial appeal

Luxury automakers use TV to reach consumers that prefer traditional channels, which likely overlaps with mature, affluent consumers that have the means to buy into these brands.

“TV is a medium with broad-based viewership that is exceptionally good for demonstration,” said Rob Frankel, branding expert at marketing consultancy firm [Frankel & Anderson](#), Los Angeles.

“Before the Internet, TV was the only viable means of remote demonstrations requiring visuals, sound and motion,” he said.

Demonstrating a vehicle’s qualities, whether in-person or via video, is the No. 1 factor in auto sales, per Mr. Frankel.

Even if a television commercial reaches a person who is not ready to purchase, it is important that the viewer watch and hear the vehicle start and move. This can trigger proactivity to buy into the brand, or at least trigger admiration among mainstream consumers.

Even though many brands use social video to do this, automakers can benefit from the wide reach of television and might use YouTube or Facebook to add younger consumers to the mix.

In addition, the audience of a TV ad can be molded based on the content that it is shown during. This is similar to print ads, another traditional medium that many luxury automakers use to reach traditional, affluent consumers.

“A second reason TV why works so well is that when used effectively, it can demonstrate to a qualified audience, based on the programming around which the demonstration is viewed,” Mr. Frankel said.

“Focus on the brand, not on some celebrity or special effects distraction,” he said. “If the brand is a true luxury brand, that is fascinating enough.”

There are a few different approaches from luxury automakers in terms of demonstrating a vehicle.

For example, German automaker Audi took a turn in its marketing efforts for the A6 model by showing a TV commercial that uses child humor in a primetime spot, in contrast to the automaker’s past commercials for this model that focus on safety and performance.

Still, the automaker hints at performance in the 30-second commercial called “Alien” that features a child naming reasons why her father is not from this planet including that he drives a spaceship, which is his Audi A6 ([see story](#)).

### *Alien commercial*

Also, British automaker Jaguar showed the brand's highest-performing XFR, XJL Supersport and XKR-S models as well as the energy that consumers feel behind the wheel of its vehicles in a 30-second spot titled "Jaguar at Play" ([see story](#)).

Embedded Video: [http://www.youtube.com/embed/ihW\\_l0hOm0U](http://www.youtube.com/embed/ihW_l0hOm0U)

### *Jaguar at Play commercial*

The goal of a TV ad should be to connect with consumers emotionally, per K2 Brand's Ms. Kreamer.

A TV ad can do this spontaneously whereas most brands need to be sought-out or followed by the consumer on the Web before brands can initiate that connection.

Also, a commercial should stand the test of time. An Internet-based video has the ability to go viral for a short amount of time, but then be overshadowed by the next social video.

For instance, the general public associates Mercedes with quality engineering and considers BMW the ultimate driving machine likely due to TV commercials, per Ms. Kreamer.

"TV ads for luxury cars should focus on winning the heart of the luxury consumer," Ms. Kreamer said. "The most effective TV ads stand out and are remembered for their clarity, simplicity and impact.

"Luxury automakers should be singularly-focused on the emotional context of the brand," she said. "There are many other opportunities to market product features, promotions and pricing.

"Luxury cars provide more than just power and status – they help define us."

### *Placement patterns*

Luxury automakers should examine their own audiences more carefully to take advantage of cable ad options that might be new for the affluent audience.

"With the increasing specificity of programming and the proliferation of cable offerings, brands can pick and choose as never before," Frankel & Anderson's Mr. Frankel said.

“Some choices may surprise media buyers because the traditional perception of the luxury audience has changed in terms of both psychographics and demographics,” he said.

In the case of major sporting events with high viewership, there is likely no Internet-based replacement for luxury automaker commercials.

Audi used a pop-culture reference to grab eyes of viewers of its Super Bowl XLVI ad for the S7.

The automaker attempted to wipe out the long-hyped vampire fad while promoting its powerful LED lights that can apparently destroy creatures of the night ([see story](#)).

Embedded Video: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/lw9ZeXB2uKs>

### *Super Bowl commercial*

More recently, Audi premiered its Alien commercial during the National Hockey League playoffs.

Meanwhile, luxury automakers are advertising in and alongside shows and videos on TV network Web sites to strengthen the brand message to consumers that prefer to watch that way.

Mercedes-Benz and BMW have advertised on NBC.com while consumers are watching the latest episodes of prime-time shows.

In addition, Toyota Corp.’s Lexus is extending the “What’s Next?” concept for its RX and RX F Sport models in a series of online video and audio sponsorships with NPR, MSN, ESPN and Food Network, which the automaker rounded out with TV and digital advertisements ([see story](#)).

Lexus is also positioning its “Turning the Page” commercial that shows the transition from the original RX to the RX Hybrid to the 2013 RX F Sport during primetime shows including *Revenge*, *20/20*, *Community*, *The Apprentice*, *Dancing with the Stars*, *The Bachelor*, *Castle* and *Modern Family*.

Embedded Video: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/POrNhl-cLDg>

### *Turning the Page commercial*

Yet another way to bridge the gap between TV and digital content and aim at younger, aspirational consumers is to share commercials via social media channels.

However, brands should not only rely on the Internet to spread a commercial. Placement is key in reaching target consumers.

Audi took an approach to its R8 campaign that promoted its viral “Want an R8” Twitter campaign in a 30-second TV commercial spot.

The automaker offered fans the chance to drive an Audi R8 for the day in its second go-around of its #WantAnR8 hashtag contest that was promoted in the TV ad ([see story](#)).

Embedded Video: [http://www.youtube.com/embed/21\\_YfPQ73u0](http://www.youtube.com/embed/21_YfPQ73u0)

### *Audi R8 commercial*

“TV media strategy continues to evolve, especially with DVRs providing TV viewers more control over content than ever before,” K2 Brand’s Ms. Creamer said. “Evening programming, news, sports and special events are particularly well-suited to reach luxury consumers.

“Luxury automakers should continue to make an investment in TV advertising as the backbone of a larger integrated communications effort,” she said. “TV advertising provides the umbrella under which other communications flourish.”

### Final Take

*Tricia Carr, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

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