

ADVERTISING

Marketing the new Range Rover: No room for British understatement

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By TRICIA CARR

Jaguar Land Rover is taking a no-holds-barred approach to the marketing for the next-generation Range Rover, the first redesign of the model in 11 years, to outdo fellow SUV models from brands such as Mercedes-Benz, Porsche and, soon, Bentley.

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Leading up to the live global reveal Sept. 6 in London, Land Rover seems to be targeting its efforts for the next-generation Range Rover to the Internet-addicted generation with efforts spanning a microsite, Land Rover's international Web sites, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The question is, will Range Rover's affluent British roots be diluted with these new money-focused efforts?

"Land Rover, like many other companies, seems to have only one strategy – expand the market," said Al Ries, chairman of marketing consultancy **Ries & Ries**, Roswell, GA. "It is a strategy that may be successful in the short term, but never in the long term."

Mr. Ries is not affiliated with Land Rover, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Jaguar Land Rover did not respond before press deadline.

Best in class

The next-generation Range Rover will officially debut next month, but until then, the automaker is raising awareness with a digital history display, vehicle imagery and a video.

Land Rover will likely pinpoint a few notable features of the next-generation model in its marketing efforts.

The automaker described the model as “unmistakably a Range Rover” and “a modern interpretation of iconic design cues.”



Next-generation Range Rover

The next-generation Range Rover is the first SUV with an all-aluminum unibody structure, which is 39 percent lighter than the steel body in the outgoing model, according to the automaker.

The model has updates such as a weight savings of up to 926 pounds in comparison to the outgoing model, a larger interior with rear legroom increase of 4.7 inches and the new automatic “Terrain Response 2 Auto” system.

The Range Rover will continue to be available with a choice of V8 engines in the North American market, but with new eight-speed ZF automatic transmissions.

Additional specifications and model pricing will be released in September when the model is shown at the Paris Motor Show. A reporter with The Daily Telegraph estimated that the vehicle will start at approximately \$110,000.

Land Rover is presenting its digital marketing efforts for the Range Rover on a microsite at <http://allnewrangerover.landrover.com>.

The automaker is also spreading specifications, select press reviews, images and the video via its international Land Rover and Range Rover Web sites, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

The campaign video shows the next-generation model driving out of water and down a paved road on tree-filled terrain. Text at the top-left corner of the video tells views that the

model will be revealed Sept. 6 in London.

Next-generation Range Rover world premiere video

Meanwhile, Jaguar Land Rover is up against many competitors that are marketing SUVs.

In fact, Bentley has been raising awareness for its EXP 9 F SUV concept car at various live appearances.

British traditions

Despite the ready-made hype that a model reveal such as the next-generation Range Rover creates on its own accord, Jaguar Land Rover is refusing to let its model get lost in the crowd.

The automaker seems to be abandoning reserve in its marketing efforts for the Range Rover to target the nouveau riche – consumers who are new to the luxury car scene and want what they perceive as the most sought-after models.

A digital approach seems to be warranted for the Range Rover model at this time, but does Land Rover risk diluting the image of the model to longtime consumers?

No matter the scope of its digital efforts, the Range Rover will remain to be a niche vehicle, according to George Magda, vice president of [Herman Advertising](#), Fort Lauderdale, FL.

Automotive consumers are traditionally loyal to a certain brand and are aware of the Range Rover's humble beginnings.

While some automakers might be trying to take that image, Land Rover is effectively retaining its customers by focusing on the quality of the vehicles and not compromising innovations for a lower price point.

"Land Rover has the Evoque for the new buyer, whereas the Range Rover is not a mass-appeal vehicle," Mr. Magda said. "Range Rover appeals to the luxury segment better than most products out there.

"The model does not appeal to the masses, but to the luxury car buyer, with the Range Rover panache," he said. "It is a very unique brand with such a relaxed buyer.

"Range Rover has a higher exclusive segment with certain products and certain special editions."

Furthermore, the digital efforts surrounding the model will hopefully be balanced out with grassroots efforts such as polo and high-fashion-event appearances.

New generations have likely been influenced by celebrities who are seen driving the high-end Range Rover models and consider the brand superior in that way.

Also, mobile is a medium that the brand should use to bridge the gap between a purely-digital approach and traditional channels.

"The high-end consumer that is buying the Range Rover does not typically sit at home," Mr. Magda said. "These folks are on the iPad or iPhone."

"There are definitely mobile and social customers, but you also need to reach them in a traditional manner," he said.

The Range Rover brand will not likely be hurt by competitors in the marketplace, said Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#), Miami.

"Land Rover, as do all successful luxury brands, has a point of view that is unique," Mr. Ramey said. "It is about leveraging that distinction."

"It is not about one SUV versus another," he said. "Each SUV customer desires a different product and brand attributes."

"Land Rover understands brand alignment and filling the void."

It is difficult for luxury brands to build a reputation among target consumers, so automakers should be careful not to down-market at this time, according Mr. Ries.

"Fortunately for Land Rover, the other luxury automakers like Mercedes-Benz and BMW have also been going down-market," Mr. Ries said.

"In particular, Mercedes-Benz has been undermining its brand by introducing less-expensive vehicles," he said. "That reduces the pressure on the Range Rover brand."

While Land Rover is not compromising on the quality of the next-generation Range Rover, it should be certain that its future efforts focus on loyalty.

If luxury automakers are expanding their brand message to include the nouveau riche, they could risk causing existing customers to be less loyal, per Mr. Ries.

However, a brand will not weaken overnight.

"Many automobile customers are very loyal to their current vehicles," Mr. Ries said. "When a Range Rover customer needs a new car, he or she tends to trade in an old Range Rover for a new one."

Moreover, brand expansion can cause problems for any automaker.

"Look at Chevrolet, for example," Mr. Ries said. "What is a Chevrolet? It is a small, large,

cheap, expensive car or truck.

"That is one reason General Motors went bankrupt," he said. "None of their brands really stood for anything."

Final Take

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