

# ENHANCING BRAND PERFORMANCE IN THE US LUXURY AUTO MARKET

**We researched one of Europe's major auto manufacturers to determine the strength of its brand relationships with customers in the United States.**

## The client

The client is a large European auto manufacturer that focuses on the luxury segment.

## Situation

This company has improved the perception of its product and brand in the US market over the past few years and is establishing itself as a serious alternative for premium car buyers. Though its brand equity and sales are steadily growing in the US, we conducted research around ways our client could further strengthen its performance. Our study would provide insights into how consumers are experiencing, connecting to and engaging with the marque.

## Approach

We analyzed the auto manufacturer's market impact using our Brand Vivo methodology – an approach that provides insight into consumer-brand relationships (CBR). An important element of Brand Vivo is the CBR framework, which uses human relationships as metaphors for relationships between brands and consumers.

This globally validated model allows us to understand how brands are bonded with their customers – as casual acquaintances, close friends, family or enemies, for example. It also

helps us to understand how these relationships and customer experiences evolve over time.

Our research compared the client's brand performance to that of around a dozen of its competitors in the luxury car market. We interviewed some 1,000 luxury car owners to track their experiences and relationships with these marques.

## Outcome

The research showed the client is lagging the market leaders in consideration, familiarity and buying intention, despite its growing success in the US market. We found that the automaker's relationships with a high share of consumers in its target market were weak. Furthermore, it trailed market frontrunners when it came to building consumer relationships that allow companies to command a price premium and build critical market share.

Among customers with strong relationships with the brand, our client had an image of making vehicles that are fun to drive, understanding their needs, and having momentum from doing and saying more than competitors. We found that talking to company representatives and other consumers as well as visiting the website helped to activate brand



equity among customers with strong associations with the marque.

Thus, to increase long-term brand success in the US, we recommended that the client:

- evaluate current communications to ensure it had strong “personal fit” and “fun to drive” messaging
- monitor social media buzz and take actions to encourage website visits
- ensure relevant distribution of service centers

## Your contact partner is there for you:

Hartmut Dziemballa  
T +49 911 395 3068  
hartmut.dziemballa@gfk.com

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