

Study: Twitter Marketing Drives \$716 Million in Car Sales

For Best Results Mix With Other Marketing Messages, Media

By Vince Bond Jr. Published on October 28, 2014.

It's a burning question for auto marketers on Twitter: Are our tweets influencing people to buy cars?

To tackle this question, the social network released new data today that attempts to show just how much 140 characters are worth.



Audi tied TV advertising and a Snapchat game to 'Pretty Little Liars' and Twitter.

[MarketShare](#), a marketing analytics company that has partnerships with global brands including Twitter, measured the direct and indirect effects that Twitter had on auto sales for more than 20 volume midsize and luxury compact cars that accounted for 34% of annual U.S. sales in 2013. Twitter says the model also includes "broader media mix, and non-marketing factors that influence purchases such as vehicle price and the economy."

In 2013, [MarketShare](#) concluded that Twitter drove \$716 million in auto sales among those 20 nameplates through Twitter Ads, positive brand mentions, amplification of TV advertising and the Twitter activity of the automakers themselves.

Luxury compact autos generated \$17.80 in revenue for every \$1 invested, while volume midsize cars generated \$7.90 for each \$1 invested, according to the research.

"With over 65,000 daily tweets about purchasing or researching a new car, Twitter gives auto brands the unique opportunity to connect with an audience of in-market shoppers who have expressed intent to buy a car," said Rob Pietsch, head of Twitter's auto vertical, in a statement.

"The new research from [MarketShare](#) highlights the power of Twitter for auto marketers, who can leverage the platform to not only build brand awareness and affinity with auto-intenders, but actually move cars off the lot."

Audi's 'Pretty Little Liars' effort

Twitter has been pushing for brands to strengthen the impact of TV ads by sending out corresponding tweets on the social network that give the messaging longer legs. The idea is that a user engaged enough with a TV show to tweet about it is very likely to have seen the commercials and is a perfect target for promoted tweets.

Showcasing this approach, Audi waged a full-scale offensive this summer with a multiscreen effort surrounding the mystery series "Pretty Little Liars" on ABC Family, which was tied to the A3 launch.

The show's audience demographics fit the income range Audi was looking to hit with the aggressively priced A3, which starts at \$30,795 including shipping, and it performed strongly among women. Plus, "Pretty Little Liars" has a built-in reach stemming from its legion of 2.46 million Twitter followers.

In addition to running A3 ads during the show's commercial breaks, Audi took its outreach a step further by directing tweeters to its Snapchat mobile account, where it posted video clues and puzzles of what would happen next in the episode.

Although Snapchat videos can be viewed for just a few seconds before disappearing, people took screenshots of the clues and distributed them on Twitter.

Audi had to work closely with the "Pretty Little Liars" creative team to keep up with the plotline so it could develop content for the campaign. Ian Harding, one of the show's stars, sometimes tweeted clues.

The Twitter push drew 876,000 engagements overall, and the campaign's #PLLAudi hashtag was mentioned nearly 30,000 times. The promotion resulted in 487 million social impressions on networks, including Twitter, Snapchat and Facebook.

While finding a direct correlation to sales in a campaign like this is difficult, a Nielsen brand-effect study found that Audi awareness ticked upward among those who were exposed to it. Nielsen based the research on a control group, which wasn't exposed to the campaign, and another group that was.

When people were asked what cars came to mind when they thought of the luxury sector, Audi responses rose 30% among those who saw the "Pretty Little Liars" campaign. In addition, opinions of Audi became 56% more favorable among the exposed group.

Audi's efforts were successful because the brand's content was authentic to each channel it was shared on, said Anna Russell, Audi of America's general manager for brand marketing. Twitter, she says, is well-suited for awareness campaigns that can raise favorability among potential buyers. Ms. Russell said Audi sometimes gets anecdotal feedback from people who bought cars because of Twitter.

"It's not about just inserting yourself into a conversation," Ms. Russell said. It's about "bringing added value."

In another instance of connecting Twitter to commercials, Jaguar -- through Twitter TV ad targeting -- amplified the messaging of its "Your Turn" F-Type marketing campaign in 2013 by funneling promoted tweets to people who live-tweeted about TV shows that were flanked by Jaguar's commercials.

MarketShare's analysis found that when auto marketers run TV spots and Twitter ads in a coordinated effort, there's a 19% higher return on investment than when running solo TV ads without a related tweet. A Twitter ad can take the form of a promoted tweet, a promoted account or a promoted trend, which shows up on the list of trending topics.

Acura's in-tweet configurator

Acura brought a new twist to Twitter in August with a campaign allowing users to build their own TLX sedan within a tweet. It was the first time an auto brand used an in-tweet configurator for a vehicle.

The TLX Twitter card push, which encouraged sharing, saw engagement that was five times higher than normal, said brand spokeswoman Jessica Fini.

Ms. Fini said another rollout of in-tweet configurators could be on the way for more Acura and Honda models.

Ms. Fini added, "It was so successful with TLX that we definitely want to use it again."

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