

General Motors and Electric Vehicles: Examining the Proper Public Relations Transition Strategy

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General Motors and Electric Vehicles: Examining the Proper Public Relations Transition Strategy

There is some degree of irony when examining General Motors (GM) and the company's history. One of the most iconic automobile brands in the world actually traces their roots back to a time where there were no cars on the road; GM was founded when the main source of transportation was on horseback. In 1900, the company was the largest manufacturer of horse-drawn vehicles in the United States (Kollewe, 2009; DeBord 2019). Throughout the company's long history, they've consistently been forced to evolve. As more Americans navigated toward the automobile, so did GM.

However, one could argue that GM's most dramatic shift is not actually the 1900s-era transition from horses to automobiles, but today's challenge of transitioning their automobile fleet from gasoline to electric vehicles.

The car industry is different than it once was, and General Motors is feeling the brunt of that shift. GM's total market share in 1961 was 46%, leading all other automobile manufacturers; today, they still lead the park, albeit barely (Knoema, 2020). New companies have entered the market, and they are supported by business and automotive strategies that could potentially outmatch GM's electric vehicle strategy.

The charge of our paper was to examine GM from a business and public relations perspective, enact a thorough and well-designed research program, and craft a series of concise, comprehensive plans for the company.

Secondary Analysis of General Motors's Transition to Electric

Key Problems and Challenges

Issue #1: The Market

The challenge in transitioning from gasoline vehicles to electric is not specifically in engineering the car. General Motors can engineer the car. They have the talent, the resources, the funding, and even the support of the White House. Rather, their challenge lies in finding dynamic and proactive approaches to change the market's awareness, excitement, and perception of electric vehicles. More specifically, GM cannot sit and wait for the market to simply change on its own; over time, the market may warm to the

idea of electric vehicles on their own. That said, GM must be on the forefront of the public relations and marketing strategy to change that perception.

Convincing the American consumer to warm to the idea of purchasing an electric car is certainly not easy, just in the same way it was not easy to convince American consumers to switch to a car from a horse-pulled vehicle. Why is this? One issue is infrastructure (Eberhart, 2020). When the market was moving from horse-pulled vehicles to cars, the infrastructure was not yet up to speed (Morris, 2017). Imagine purchasing a car without fully paved roads or gas stations in any reasonable vicinity. One could make the argument that this is currently the case with electric vehicles. Of course, they do not need gas stations, but they do require so-called “superchargers” or “fast speed EV charging stations” (Morris, 2017).

Issue #2: The Infrastructure

Right now, the infrastructure for the electric vehicle market is just not there. Charging stations are not yet widely available. “Road-tripping,” for example, is not possible for some electric vehicles. Of course, as time progresses, this concern will deteriorate (Moloughney, 2021). Technology will undoubtedly catch up; electric vehicle battery capacity will certainly expand and the number of available chargers will increase. But General Motors needs to find a way to convince consumers to purchase electric vehicles now, before any infrastructure boom in electric vehicles. As more American consumers purchase electric vehicles, chargers will pop up in more parking lots, gas stations, and buildings.

Issue #3: Communication Concerns on Priorities

Historically speaking, General Motors has not made electric vehicles a priority. It wasn’t until very recently they decided to move electric vehicles to the forefront of their future strategy (Boudette & Davenport, 2021). That creates serious concern. Even now, GM is failing to communicate with their customers or deliver meaningful messages related to electric vehicles. Their current messaging regarding electric vehicles focuses entirely on environmentalism; that issue is certainly important, and consumers likely care for and about the environment. However, their messaging doesn’t do enough to *sell* an electric vehicle. The company’s marketing does not individualize what an electric vehicle can do for a family, for

example. They don't market any actual vehicle, but rather the *idea* of a vehicle. These messages — while admirable from a public relations perspective — are not meaningful for customers. The effect of not convincing consumers to get on board with electric vehicles will inherently create public relations concerns in the future.

The Public Relations Situation

GM currently represents only 3.9% of the electric and hybrid vehicle market share. It is predicted that the corporation has generated “\$683.3 million in industry-relevant revenue in 2021” (Roth, 2021). Those dismal numbers aren't the worst part of the story; the COVID-19 pandemic put GM in an even more tumultuous position after it was forced to suspend manufacturing operations (Yoney, 2020).

Background on the Problem: Causes and History

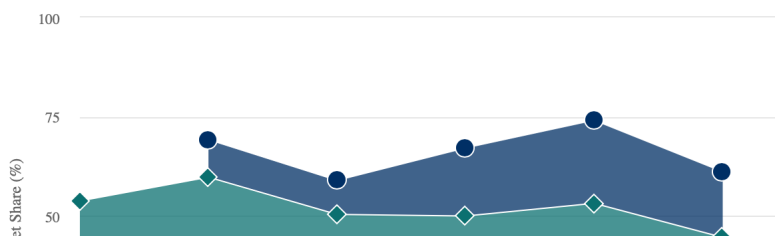
When the personal computer was introduced, it didn't take long before there was a computer on nearly every desk. When the cellular phone was introduced, the market transitioned away from landlines and car phones. And once traditional cellular, flip phones were outdone by smartphones, the market turned to them quickly. The car market, however, is a distinctive industry.

Americans are historically reliant on personal vehicles to complete common tasks: getting to work or school, the grocery store, and the pharmacy. In fact, the United States has uprooted thousands of acres of land in favour of additional roadways to make it easier to complete those tasks by car. So when a transformative new technology tries to uproot the automotive industry, it takes more convincing.

The first electric automobile was actually developed in the 1830s. The International Economic Development Council writes that “These early electric vehicles ran on non-rechargeable batteries and far outsold gas cars for decades.” But at that time, they were more likely to break down, and with a shortage of mechanics, it was a serious concern. Henry Ford, the pioneer of American cars, chose gas vehicles because “gas cars could travel much further between refueling” (Todd et al., 2013).

Electric vehicles, however, made a comeback. It was a “combination of public and private

Major Players and Their Market Share
2016–2021



investment [that] spurred the beginning of mass production of electric vehicles in the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s” (Todd et al., 2013). GM, however, did not jump on that bandwagon in a manner that would have resulted in rapid innovation. At the time, they had more serious concerns.

In 2009, due to financial failures associated with the 2008 great recession, GM was forced into declaring bankruptcy. The federal government invested billions in order to save the company, which restructured (Beech, 2014). In that time, the company was more focused on saving itself and living up to negotiations with the United Auto Workers union (Vlasic & Bunkley, 2009).

Those decisions, however, potentially doomed the company’s future. It was a prime example of a missed opportunity; between 2009 and 2014, the revenue of the hybrid and electric vehicle market grew from \$4.98 billion to \$11.63 billion, a 134% increase of the market’s size. Today, the market size is \$17.52 billion, and it is expected to grow to \$29.62 billion by 2026 (Roth, 2021).

That is all to say that General Motors is coming late to the party. Tesla, Ford, Honda, and Toyota together dominate with 61% of the market share, as is shown on the attached figure; GM is estimated at 3.9% and isn’t even shown on the graph (Roth, 2021). This suggests GM’s force in the automotive industry does not translate to electric vehicles; other car brands hold significant market share compared to GM.

Tesla, of course, is already expanding their reach. They develop and manufacture four of the top five best-selling electric vehicles in the United States; their Model 3 and Model Y were the top two in 2020 (Inside EVs, 2021); GM’s top-selling electric vehicle, the Chevrolet Bolt fell third in the 2020 rankings. With Tesla’s expanded market share, they also dominate the charger market. Of the fast charging stations in the United States in August 2021, Tesla developed and manufactured over 12% of them (US Department of Energy, 2021).

Tesla’s “supercharger network” is also growing at a swift pace; the company says they own and operate more than 25,000 of them worldwide (Tesla, n.d.). While Tesla plans to work with other automobile operators to allow non-Tesla vehicles to charge at their supercharger stations, there is currently no official plan in place to do that (Lambert, 2021).

GM's key problem — on top of their competition issue — is that the market does not yet seem to be ready to make a full transition to electric vehicles. There is ample evidence to suggest that this is the case worldwide. In South Korea, 35% of people said they would not purchase an electric vehicle because there is a lack of chargers. 23% said the perceived short battery life is a reason that would prevent them from purchasing one (Rakuten Insight, 2019a). That research shows similar results in other modern service economies like the United States, such as Singapore and Hong Kong (Rakuten Insight, 2019b; 2019c).

Therefore, we can conclude the cause of this problem is multi-faceted. First, GM is years behind their competitors, and second, they are competing in an industry with a market base that does not yet feel they are ready to move to an entirely electric world.

However, there is a small glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel for GM. In 2021, during President Biden's administration, the United States announced its intentions to aim for "50 percent electric vehicle sales by 2030" (Ewing 2021). It's certainly a lofty goal. At the same time, the CEO of GM was involved in the discussions with the Biden administration about moving to an electric future (Edelstein, 2021; Shepardson, 2021).

General Motors holds a special place in American history. They are one of the largest employers in the United States, especially in the manufacturing industry. As one of the "big three" American car manufacturers, the American government continues to look for ways to make American cars an attractive purchase option for consumers. GM's overall market share in the United States leads all other brands, sitting at 16.5% in 2021 (GoodCarBadCar.net, 2021). If GM can gain the favour of the United States government — especially in a way that could turn into tax incentives — they may be able to find a way to get back on track.

Significance of the Situation

GM says their mission is "to deliver world-class customer experiences at every touchpoint and do so on a foundation of trust and transparency" (General Motors, n.d.). Of course, as a for-profit corporation in the United States, they also have a duty to their shareholders to make a profit.

If we accept that electric vehicles are the future in the United States, then this situation is of the utmost importance for GM. Nearly all of their stakeholders will be affected by GM's public relations and business response to the situation. Shareholders, for example, might be the most affected group, as they stand to lose money if GM does not adapt quickly.

Over time, electric vehicles have become more popular, reaching more consumers than ever before. That market is likely to continue to grow. That means connecting with customers and laying the groundwork for electric vehicles is more important now than ever before.

It's both a short-term and a long-term situation. In a market like automobiles, it can take a long time for the market to shift. But General Motors needs to lay the groundwork now to help push the market forward. That makes the situation a short-term PR necessity for long-term growth. More specifically, GM — in the short term — needs to work toward communicating better with its customers, in an attempt to expand its market long term. The company needs its customers to be keenly aware of the importance of purchasing electric vehicles through mutual relationships.

Without putting a focus on electric vehicles, GM may not be around to support their mission of delivering "world-class customer experiences" to its customers. Therefore, there is enormous potential impact on the organization's mission. If GM fails to connect with its customers and expand its electric vehicle market, it will have a significant negative impact on GM's mission.

This situation is both an obstacle and an opportunity. The electric vehicle market is substantially harder than the traditional. It requires a dynamic sense of marketing, a contemporary sense of thinking, and a considerable investment. All that said, this is a welcomed opportunity for GM; a car company that was forced into bankruptcy a short 13 years ago could be thrust toward becoming a tenacious force in the car market once again. Electric vehicles could be the future of GM, but it will require a sharp and well-developed public relations strategy to get there.

There are, however, significant obstacles in GM's path. Their public relations history presents challenges. For example, part of GM's strategy is an alliance to environmental concerns. However, the company's history on environmental issues is weak. GM spent millions of dollars on lobbying efforts, a

tactic generally unacceptable to the American public. The company “spent a combined \$17.9 million on lobbying in 2011 and 2012” (Palmer and Wong, 2013). A quick shift to pro-environment messaging could be met with stark opposition and allegations of hypocrisy from environmentalists and the American public as a whole.

Resolution of the Situation: a Case Study of Tesla’s Marketing and PR Strategies

In the electric vehicle world, Elon Musk’s Tesla remains the dominant player; their public relations strategy is phenomenal. There are a few principles that show why Tesla’s strategy has worked to resolve the situation. Whether or not you like their tactics — or their cars — it is hard to argue they have not transformed the marketplace of cars.

Example #1: Cars as a Status Symbol

Historically, car companies have generated substantial revenue on the backs of “status symbols.” Cars allow consumers to “wear [their] status on the road” because “Everyone knows which ones are the most expensive” (Barth, 2007). Lexus, BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Jaguar are all examples of car companies whose luxury vehicles drive sales.

Tesla, however, has recently joined this elite group. The cheapest Tesla vehicle is north of \$40,000. Prices, however, can skyrocket to six-figure numbers (Lin, 2021). These prices demonstrate Tesla’s desire — at present — to move into an elite class of vehicles; GM does not have an interest in moving into this elite group. GM’s historic position in the automotive industry is to be an affordable car option.

Commentator and critic Alan Miller suggests those who drive Tesla vehicles are “just looking for attention” (Miller, 2019). Miller’s point has significant merit (though, for clarity, we need not comment on Miller’s suggestion that the cars themselves are of poor quality: that isn’t our place; we, rather, comment on Tesla’s marketing). But while it may be too early to comment on the quality of the vehicles, it is certainly not too early to comment on Tesla’s marketing strategy.

Tesla markets and prices these vehicles as status symbol cars. When Tesla introduces a new vehicle, they create a feeling of exclusivity for its customer base. In 2018, after the introduction of the

company's Model 3 vehicle, more than 450,000 people booked "reservations" to purchase the car (Korosec, 2018). The idea of a waitlist fosters this notion that those who have Teslas were "chosen" or "picked" to have the car. It's a brilliant marketing strategy to assure customers and the general public that Tesla vehicles are status symbols.

Example #2: Redefining a "Car"

Tesla isn't a car company; Tesla is a technology company that also makes cars. If you've ever stepped into a Tesla, you'll quickly notice that it feels just like a smartphone. They've eliminated nearly all of the buttons you typically find in cars, in favour of a large vertical touchscreen. Apps that control music, navigation, and air conditioning all run natively through the car's operating system, which can be updated through software updates.

This is new territory for traditional car companies. Even some of the electric vehicles on the market do not offer this superb interface. It begs the question what Tesla is selling: are they selling you a vehicle? Or are they selling a user experience? After all, a company producing the most technologically advanced mobile phone in the world wouldn't sell a single unit if the user experience didn't outperform iOS or Android. Tesla sells a full user experience, which allows customers to look beyond the obvious flaws currently in place with electric vehicles (range difficulties, for example).

Example #3: Celebrity Status Marketing

One of the methods by which Tesla achieved its notoriety was its founder: Elon Musk. The entrepreneur and billionaire leads the company through a tactic commonly known as press publicity/agency. The goal of the strategy is to do anything for attention. In press publicity/agency, the accuracy of the message comes second; "getting ink" is the most important step. It's the same tactic that then-candidate and eventual-President Donald J. Trump used to run his campaign. Elon Musk has a similar persona.

There are dozens of examples to support this assertion. A series of 2018 tweets from Musk's account "misled the public with a flurry of tweets about a plan to take the electric-car maker private" and resulted in a \$40-million fine assessed to Musk (Larson, 2018). Again in 2021, tweets from Musk

suggested Tesla's stock price was "too high," resulting in more issues with government regulatory agencies (Kolodny, 2021). In fact, "in a similar way to Donald Trump, he uses Twitter rather than press releases to communicate" (Clayton, 2021).

Musk has also been seen smoking marijuana on a videotaped podcast and even gave his own kid an eccentric name, in perhaps another move to gain press coverage (Browne, 2018; Lerman, 2020). Musk has even admitted, under oath, "that his sense of humor gave Tesla free press" (Hamilton, 2021).

No other car company has this level of press attention on a single person. Rather, they have large press departments; Tesla has none. In fact, "Tesla has dissolved its PR department," which means they've technically become "the first automaker who doesn't talk to the press." One publication said that "Tesla hasn't responded to a press inquiry in months" (Lambert, 2020; Noff, 2020). Fred Lambert (2021) writes that "Tesla has been receiving more press coverage than any other automaker, and yet it always had a very small [PR] department compared to even smaller automakers." Musk has openly refused to hire a PR agent (Lambert, 2021; Noff, 2020). Therefore, public relations holds high value with the organization's top management, as Musk is the CEO of Tesla; that public relations strategy just works differently than it does with most automotive companies.

Features of General Motors

Table 1: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of General Motors

| | |
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| <p>Strengths:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General Motors already has in-house teams operating in the sphere of public relations, marketing, social media, and media relations. 2. GM's "EVerybody In" (stylized to emphasize the "EV") marketing campaign has already taken hold inside the organization, signaling strong support for the transition to electric vehicles (General Motors, n.d.). 3. GM has previous experience doing marketing for hybrid and electric | <p>Weaknesses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GM is fairly new to the electric vehicle market. While Chevrolet, one of their brands, has developed a leading electric vehicle, the vast majority of their sold cars are still traditional vehicles. This means they need to catch up with their competitors. 2. General Motors does not have the status of a "luxury brand," nor do they hold positions as "status symbols." They also, unlike their major competitor, do not have a leader who holds celebrity status. |
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| <p>vehicles, such as the “Shattering Preconceptions” campaign for the Chevrolet Volt (Voelcker, 2016).</p> | |
| <p>Opportunities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General Motors has a strong history in the United States and particularly in the industrial midwest. As more and more positions are transitioned overseas, GM’s “Made in America” message may gain more traction among consumers (Aeppel & Kahn, 2021; Aeppel, 2017). 2. The Biden administration seems keen on an electric vehicle revolution, going so far as to host an event at the White House dedicated to the industry (Ewing, 2021). 3. The Biden administration recently raised the requirements on how much of a product needs to be made in America. This is an opportunity for General Motors because it expands their ability to sell to the United States federal government (Groppe, 2021). 4. Younger generations (who are about to enter the market for cars) have stronger, more progressive views about mitigating the threat of global climate change. 71% of millennials said “Climate should be [a] top priority to ensure [a] sustainable planet for future generations” (Funk, 2021). <p>That statistic could mean that people buying a car for the first time might be more inclined to purchase an environmentally friendly vehicle.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. As more tax credits and deductions become available for customers who opt to purchase electric vehicles, the market is likely to expand even further. | <p>Threats:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Most electric grids are still powered through fossil fuels, which could curtail any public relations message that electric vehicle makers that their cars are better for the environment. 2. Currently, it takes a long time to charge electric vehicles, sometimes half an hour for an 80% charge. That’s far longer than the time it takes to get gas, which could cause complaints from consumers. Additionally, it could prevent other consumers from entering the electric vehicle market. 3. The lack of chargers across car brands could cause issues with growth for GM; if the number of electric vehicles exceeded the carrying capacity of the available chargers, consumer complaints would skyrocket, creating a PR problem. 4. Foreign electric car makers could penetrate the United States market (Cheng, 2021). |

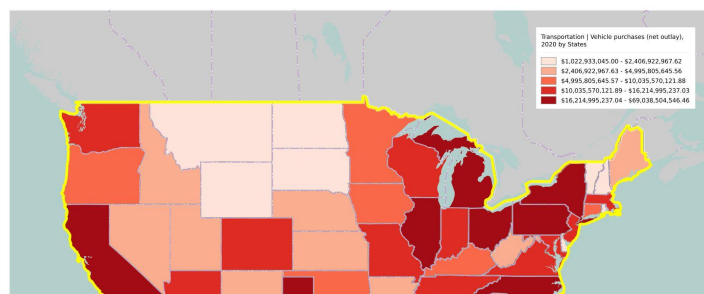


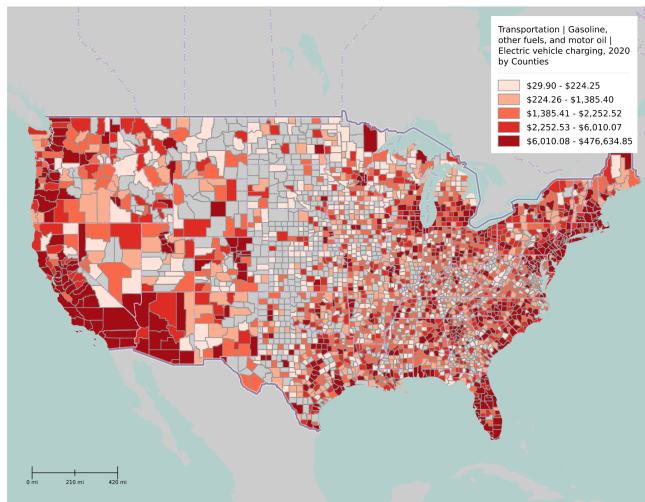
Figure 1: Vehicle Purchases by State

Internal Environment

General Motors has used a variety of communication channels to advance their previous marketing campaigns. When Chevrolet released the electric 2017 Volt (now renamed to Bolt), they coordinated a television advertisement purchase. The marketing campaign was called “Shattering Preconceptions” (Voelcker, 2016). The advertising campaign, however, was not targeted specifically to electric vehicles, but rather GM’s total umbrella brand. Additionally, the Volt’s marketing executive fully admitted that their “customers don’t really watch TV” (Voelcker, 2016).

Faced with that reality, GM has shifted its focus since. Digital and technology coverage has become a must for the company. Some of their media buys for the Volt included ads on major websites and “billboards where California tech-industry drivers are likely to be stuck in traffic.” They’ve focused on hard numbers about the car’s capabilities. Their “goal [was] simply to spread awareness of the car’s capabilities” (Voelcker, 2016).

Figure 2: Electric Vehicle Charging by County



The conversation has moved from national attention to “hitting the right markets” (Voelcker, 2016). Their campaigns for electric vehicles have been narrowed down to “regional or even city and neighborhood” levels. Chevrolet explicitly stated they were not spending advertising dollars in rural areas of the country, remaining determined to focus on urban and

suburban areas.

The two maps in this section demonstrate the reality of vehicle sales and electric vehicle charging. Perhaps due to their large population, the biggest car markets are located in California, New York,

Florida, Illinois, and Texas. That said, GM needs to closely analyze where the majority of electric vehicle chargers are currently located. Map #2 displays electric vehicle charging by county in the United States. It shows suburban counties — particularly in states on the east and west coasts — are the areas most frequented by electric vehicle chargers. This suggests GM’s public relations and marketing needs to be targeted to these areas. It also shows there is opportunity for charging expansion into the midwest, where there are fewer electric vehicle chargers.

Finally, the company expanded their test drive capabilities, encouraging dealers to “bring the cars to the homes of potential buyers, so they can envision it in their own driveways.” Chevrolet’s Volt was also given out as loaner vehicles from GM dealerships (Voelcker, 2016).

(Map #1: Vehicle purchases by state, SimplyAnalytics; Map #2: Electric vehicle charging by county, SimplyAnalytics)

Public Perception

It’s hard to determine specifically what the public perception has been for each campaign, though there are some clues to suggest General Motors has received mixed views from column writers and the public as a result of their electric vehicle messaging.

If you assume that public relations strategies translate into sales, GM’s strategy has seen at least some success. The Chevrolet Bolt quickly became one of the highest-selling electric cars of 2020, reaching third place behind two Tesla cars. The marketing and communications strategies implemented for the Volt — the Bolt’s predecessor — likely had some influence on why the Bolt received such high sales (Inside EVs, 2021).

That said, GM’s recent announcement to move to a fully electric fleet by 2035 has been lauded and criticized. It’s been paired with GM’s “EVerybody In” campaign, a marketing campaign aimed to announce GM’s commitment to electric vehicles (General Motors, n.d.). The Biden administration has been using GM’s announcement as a selling point as to why the market may be ready for change.

Some critics, however, have suggested the “EVerybody In” campaign is an empty promise. Prominent critic Seth Weintraub (2021) writes that “Press releases are easy and often for GM” but that

getting “EVs on the lots is what [he] want[s] to see.” Weintraub (2021) notes that GM will likely be “rolling gas vehicles off its assembly lines” until 2035, suggesting that GM’s new announcement is “a little...greenwashy.”

GM’s perception increased after the federal government announced electric vehicle infrastructure would become a priority. President Joe Biden publicly supports GM’s manufacturing of electric vehicles. That quickly moved GM to the forefront of the press’s attention. It remains to be seen to what exact extent this affected their targeted audience.

In our qualitative and quantitative analyses, we will have greater success in specifically determining what the public perception is toward GM’s strategy.

External Environment

Major Competition: a Domestic and Global Catastrophe

General Motors’s largest domestic competitor in the fight for electric vehicles will undoubtedly be Tesla. As mentioned earlier, they dominate charging infrastructure and currently what looks to be a stronger public relations strategy. As Tesla continues to lower its prices to cater to a more economically diverse audience, the company will continue to be a formidable competitor for GM.

As the transition from gas vehicles to electric vehicles is made, GM’s more traditional competitors will continue to be adversaries. Ford Motor Company — which is also transitioning to a more-electric fleet of cars — will be a corporate competitor. As the two companies are in the same price-range for most vehicles, they will compete directly on price.

GM’s competition, however, is not limited to domestic competitors. Foreign car makers from China and Germany are quickly jumping into the electric car market. China’s “booming electric car industry” is expanding rapidly. Followed by the rapid success and growth of Chinese automakers Nio and Xpeng, “tens of thousands of companies jumped on the bandwagon as the industry grew” (Cheng, 2021).

In Germany, electric vehicle “growth is exponential” (Franz, 2021). German automaker Volkswagen “is now only second behind Tesla in global electric vehicles sales.” This demonstrates GM’s

growing list of competitors across the globe. Put simply, GM faces stark competition from both foreign and domestic automakers, which will make it hard for them to corner the market quickly.

Opposition

There is some opposition to electric cars in the United States, which could cause harm to General Motors. Specifically, the “oil industry is trying to crush the booming electric car movement” (Bade, 2019).

One of the major advantages to purchasing an electric car is lucrative tax credits and deductions given to consumers. The major attempt from the oil industry to disrupt the electric vehicle revolution is to limit those tax credits or remove them entirely. Additionally, a majority of states in the country have implemented so-called “EV fees,” a replacement of the gas tax assessed to traditional car owners (Plungis, 2019).

Identifying Publics

The identification of General Motors’s publics is a key element of our analysis. By understanding more about the different publics to which GM services, we can better understand how to promote a public relations strategy. Specifically, we hope to look to Generation Z (those born around and after 1998) as GM’s next generation of customers. Table 2 describes the publics of General Motors.

Key Publics

Table 2: Publics of General Motors

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| <p>Customer: Key customers for General Motors are potential automobile buyers in the states that purchase the most number of vehicles. The most populated states — notably California, Illinois, New York, Texas, and Florida — have the highest amounts of purchased vehicles (electric and non-electric). Customers in these states are the targeted public for electric vehicle sales in the United States. Selling their electric vehicles to highly populated states will stimulate the spread of electric vehicle use throughout the country.</p> | <p>Producer: The producers for General Motors are the owners, shareholders, investors, customers, and employees. All of these groups provide input into the organization and influence their sales/production. The General Motors employees produce the vehicles, while the customers purchase them. The employees at GM are represented by the United Auto Workers union, which is one of the largest unions in the country.</p> |
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| <p>GM historically targeted their electric vehicles toward urban populations rather than rural ones, which suggests the coastal states and cities will most likely be the targeted consumer for electric vehicles (Voelcker, 2016).</p> <p>Generation Z is quickly going to become the next major generation to purchase cars. This younger group is, statistically speaking, more likely to be sympathetic to environmental issues and climate change concerns (Tyson et al., 2021).</p> | <p>General Motors decisions come from the leadership team and the company's board of directors, which affect the production and sales. The chain of producers is connected through the cycle of decision, production, and sale. This cycle produces profit which keeps the organization in business.</p> |
| <p>Enabler:</p> <p>General Motors's biggest enabler is the United States federal government. The Biden administration has placed a high priority on the expansion of electric vehicles. Through tax credits, the government is actively encouraging new development and purchasing of electric vehicles.</p> <p>Other enablers include environmental groups. As electric vehicles are better for the environment, these groups are key for support when GM enhances their public relations campaign.</p> <p>GM's new electric vehicle marketing campaign does not have any major influencers supporting it, as of now.</p> | <p>Limiter:</p> <p>The key limiters are General Motors's competitors. Tesla, Ford, Honda, and Toyota are all recognized as top producers in the market of electric vehicles. These organizations are direct competition for GM, meaning they are trying to limit the organization's success.</p> <p>One strong limiter against electric car production is the petroleum industry. The E&P industry estimated \$2.74 trillion in revenue globally for 2020. Organizations in alliance with the petroleum industry will be the largest competitors with electric vehicle production. Without gas vehicles on the streets, the oil industry will take losses in vehicle fuel revenue. This group not only limits GM, but all electric vehicle producers.</p> |

Analysis

Issues

General Motors has always been a motor vehicle manufacturer. The change from gas-fueled cars to electric ones is a big business change. Not only is this a big change for General Motors, but also for the vehicle industry as a whole. As demand rises for electric vehicles, there will be issues that arise.

The first issue for General Motors key publics is the price of EVs. GM's recently announced GMC Hummer EV has a base price of \$79,995. That price is extremely expensive for the average US family annual income of \$78,500 (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020). The price of the Chevrolet Bolt EV is slightly more reasonable at \$36,620. The price of the Bolt is still relatively high in comparison to an average sedan.

The second issue for EVs is the infrastructure of charging. The average person drives 29 miles each day (Environmental and Energy Study Institute, 2020). The majority of EVs in the market have a battery life of 150-250 miles per full charge. Most individuals can charge their EVs at home with a special wall mount in their garage, but for those in apartments and other locations there is difficulty charging overnight because of the lack of charging stations in apartment garages or lots. That lack of infrastructure is even more evident when examining the lack of charging stations equipped for those who travel. The term "range anxiety" is used to describe EV owners who drive longer distances and become fearful they will not have a place to stop and recharge (Environmental and Energy Study Institute, 2020).

The third issue with EVs is charging compatibility. There are "Three different varieties of...fast chargers" that are "used by different auto manufacturers: the SAE Combined Charging System (CCS), used by most manufacturers; CHAdeMO, used by Nissan and Mitsubishi; and the Tesla Supercharger (only available to Tesla drivers)" (Environmental and Energy Study Institute, 2020).

The CCS is the charger that is compatible with the Chevy Bolt. These chargers are not always the easiest to locate and without the correct type, you cannot charge your EV. This issue is closely related to the problems with the overall charging infrastructure in the US.

Organization

General Motors has always been recognized as one of the largest car manufacturers. With their current push to move to an entirely electric fleet by 2035, some questions from their key publics are sure to arise. Their goal of 30 new EV released by 2025 seems excessive but their chief sustainability officer, Dane Parker, is confident they will succeed. In an interview with CNBC reporter Michael Wayland he said he knows "there are hurdles" and "technology challenges," but that they remain confident they'll be

successful with the expertise and resources available to them (Wayland, 2021). GM is recognizing that there will be challenges in their change to all EV's, but they are ensuring to their customers that they will fulfill their promises.

Communication

The new look of General Motors website is certainly pushing their pledge to an all-electric future. They address it on the opening page with the slogan “EVerybody in,” and following information on their plan for electrification and the restructure of the company and its values. Not only is GM pushing for all-electric vehicles, but they are also incorporating an autonomous future and diverse workplace.

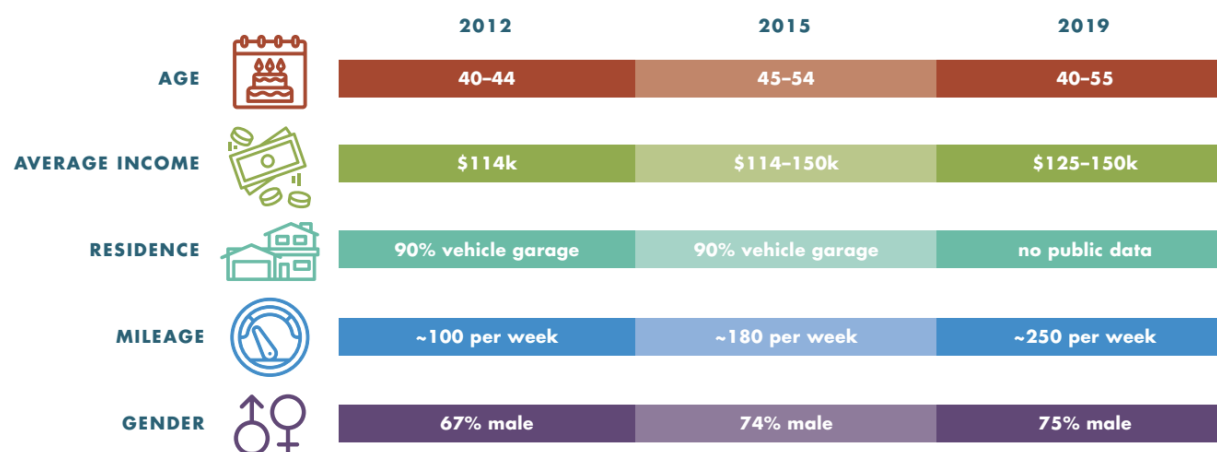
They are communicating their mission and vision well to their public. They are also going beyond their channels and speaking for climate change, diversity, and inclusion. On their website, they include a quote from their CEO & Chairperson, Mary Barra: “General Motors is creating a future of Zero crashes, Zero emissions and Zero congestion with a diverse, inclusive team that brings wide-ranging perspectives and experiences to solving transportation challenges” (General Motors, 2021).

Their website features an educational page for consumers looking to learn more about the function and process of manufacturing EVs. They explain the way the Ultium batteries in these new vehicles function and what process they took to develop them.

Demographics

When looking at the demographic of EV owners in the past two to three years, the typical owners have been middle-aged white males with an average annual income of \$100,000 or more. These owners also typically have a college degree or higher and another vehicle in their household (Fuels Institute, 2021). However, the demographics of EV owners has been changing. With more EVs available for purchase, the demographics will surely continue to change (the table included in this section — created by the Fuels Institute — explains the consumer behavior in the EV market).

The data recorded on the EV buyer demographics has fluctuated over the past 10 years. Even though age and average income have remained relatively unchanged, the gender gap and mileage look very different from 2012-2019.

Figure 3: Evolution of Key Electric Vehicle Buyers**FIGURE 14: EVOLUTION OF KEY EV BUYER DEMOGRAPHICS (2012-2021)****Benefits**

Though the cost of purchasing an EV is higher than that of a conventional vehicle, purchasing an EV may save the owner money long term. The location of residence plays an important role in the long-term costs of gas-fueled vehicles compared to electric vehicles. Brian Palmer (2020) notes that “Over the anticipated 15-year life span of a vehicle, the electricity required to run a battery-powered electric car can be as much as \$14,480 cheaper than fueling up an internal combustion vehicle.” However, in a different location — like Hawaii, for example — “charging up your electric car could ultimately cost \$2,494 more than topping up a gas tank over 15 years” (Palmer, 2020).

This data has positive and negative reactions when examining the cost efficiency of EV ownership. You could assume that in a largely populated state with high gasoline prices, owning an electric vehicle would save consumers money. EV notably require less maintenance than vehicles with internal combustion engines. The battery, motor, and associated electronics require little to no regular maintenance. There are fewer fluids — such as engine oil — that require regular maintenance. Brake wear is also significantly reduced due to regenerative braking (Alternative Fuels Data Center, n.d.).

Secondary Analysis Conclusion

Electric vehicles are a technological transformation that will change the car industry forever. If electric vehicles really do represent the future of the industry — as the White House and General Motors wants us to believe — GM's top priority needs to be communications, public relations, and marketing plans surrounding electric vehicles.

The market — and the infrastructure — is not yet ready for a full-scale release of electric vehicles. But it remains clear the market is moving in that direction. We will get there. In the meantime, GM can set a few common goals.

GM needs to establish short-term and long-term communications strategies. In the short term, GM can choose one of two paths: either they work toward high-technology, marketable vehicles that attract a similar demographic to Tesla, or they try to penetrate the true middle-class market that Tesla has failed to secure. In the long-term, GM needs to focus on the greater strategy: communicating the positive environmental effects, tax/financial incentives, the ongoing expansions of infrastructure, and how an electric vehicle can be a leap forward in usability. Additionally, GM can start to transition toward a technology company that makes automobiles rather than an automaker failing to catch up to the technology of other companies.

Feelings Toward General Motors and Electric Vehicles: a Qualitative Analysis

Introduction

General Motors seeks the positioning of an environmentally friendly organization dedicated to serving and improving the communities their customers live in. We aim to have the targeted public view of the company as a producer of safe, reliable electric vehicles. Our three main goals are reputation management, relationship management, and task management. We want to expand the “EverybodyIn” campaign and reinforce GM's environmentally friendly image through a newer customer base. When focusing on relationship goals we believe it to be crucial that GM fosters a bond between them and environmental groups. Long term we would hope they also connect with state and federal government agencies who can solidify a concrete eco-friendly image. Our focus would be on motivating customers to

change their everyday actions towards the environment and relay to them how GM can help with these changes for task management. This would advance the change within the environmental issues that are currently being faced.

This study provides insight into exactly how the general public perceives GM, specifically their relationship with electric vehicles and environmental friendliness. It is necessary because we can use our results to draw conclusions about how the organization is viewed by their publics. This allows us to form a complete analysis of exactly what GM needs to do in order to solidify its message. We can determine what channels would best be used to communicate this information and bond their brand with a positive environmental outlook. We expect to obtain information about their publics and shed light on possible changes that can be made to better General Motors' public perception.

For our group study we interviewed subjects who were 18 years or older, holders of a valid driver's license, and currently enrolled in a college/university program. We held our interviews in person in Monroe County, Indiana. The in-depth interviews were conducted by group members on October 5-6. The interviewee's read and signed a consent form created by our team. In this form they agreed to be recorded for the purpose of transcription after the interview was completed.

Methods

For this study, we conducted in-depth interviews. This was a good way to conduct this research because it allowed us to have a formal conversation with people in order to really understand their points of view on certain elements of GM's reputation and feelings toward electric vehicles. We conducted seven interviews with students at Indiana University. They were all between 19 and 21 years of age. These interviews were conducted in various places on campus, such as Wells Library, off-campus apartment buildings, the Indiana Memorial Union (student center), and Franklin Hall (an academic building). These interviews were all conducted on or before Thursday, October 7, 2021.

These interviews were one-on-one interviews, with one member of our team interviewing one interviewee. Each interviewer generated questions from a list of predetermined topics; every interviewer

asked questions in each topic, though the specific wording of each question may have been different from interview to interview. Follow-up questions were also common in these interviews.

Some examples of questions included:

What challenges do you think would arise when owning an electric vehicle?

What are your thoughts on the safety of electric vehicles?

What is your general opinion on General Motors?

Do you believe electric cars will be more common than traditional vehicles in U.S. households by 2035?

Are there any pros/cons that come to your mind when you think about owning an electric vehicle?

The decision to not restrict interviewers to a fixed list of set questions was to create a conversation rather than an interview. Before the questions were asked, interviewers made sure to have the interviewee sign a consent form and inform them that everything they say will be kept anonymous and any recordings will be destroyed after the study is complete. Interviewers recorded each interview either on a mobile device or a separate audio recorder. Each interview was transcribed. The interviews lasted between 15 to 20 minutes. After the interview, interviewees were assured their data would remain anonymous with all recordings destroyed.

All recording transcripts were viewable by every member of the research team. The identities of interviewees was provided to each member of the research team to ensure no interviewee was interviewed twice. In this report, we selected a few key quotes from each interview that best exemplified the thoughts and feelings of the interviewee.

Throughout the interviews, interviewees were tasked to look for specific key words or phrases to help group together the general feelings of the interviewed subjects all together. For example, many interviewees discussed the charging aspect of electric vehicles. Since this was a common topic, we focused more energy on why people may feel this way about charging.

Results

The subjects of the in-depth interviews provided insight into our framework of our public relations plan. Many of our interviewees showed concern about the logistical difficulties of owning and driving an electric car. Their biggest concern surrounded charging. One of the interviewees said, “I can’t go a single day without my phone running out of battery. What happens if that happens to my car? That’s a serious problem for me when thinking about an electric vehicle. Huge.” This demonstrates people are concerned about the need to charge electric vehicles, so much so that they are reluctant to buy the vehicle in the first place. It also demonstrates a larger concern: some presume the use of electric vehicles is similar to the way they use other types of technology, such as mobile phones. In practice, traditional vehicles are not treated this way. This suggests our public relations plan needs to use tactics to re-frame charging. Batteries in electric cars are inherently stronger than the ones in mobile devices; consumers clearly need to be told as such.

Some interviewees also expressed concern about how often electric vehicles would require charging. One of the interviewees said, “I think charging it would be difficult. Like on holidays we always drive to my family’s house which is a 9-hour drive. It would be inconvenient to stop and recharge the car for however long it takes while gas cars just need 5 minutes.” This suggests many of our interviewees were having a hard time conceptualizing how charging stations are going to be more efficient than gas stations. In their view, charging an electric car would take substantially longer than filling a traditional vehicle up with gasoline; our research suggests they are right. However, the quote shows consumers do not think enough about charging their electric vehicle at home, which many owners do nightly. This finding suggests General Motors must spread awareness to the public of the efficiency and easy process of charging electric vehicles, so that the process of charging does not seem as complicated and troublesome.

The interviewees also expressed concerns about the quantity, availability, and prevalence of charging stations. One interviewee said they “believe that electric vehicles will be the future of cars, but I think that the biggest problem will be the low amount of charging stations.” This quote illustrates how

people believe there are not enough charging stations or they don't know about enough charging stations. If the demand for electric vehicles is to increase, these charging stations must be at the forefront of the lives of every consumer; they need to see them when they are, for example, driving to work, stopping at a grocery store, or picking up a prescription. This finding also implies GM must raise awareness of the number of electric car charging methods, in order to prove to consumers that charging is not a drawback to owning an electric vehicle.

In addition, interviewees were generally unaware GM even produces or sells electric vehicles. The only brand most of our subjects discussed without a prompt was Tesla. For example, one of the interviewees said, "I didn't even know that GM was thinking about electric cars. I honestly only thought of Tesla when you asked me about electric cars." Some interviewees also mentioned Tesla executive Elon Musk by name without needing a prompt. This suggests our subjects directly correlate electric vehicles to Tesla and Elon Musk. This also indicates GM must advertise its electric vehicle initiatives to the greater public, so that GM becomes a major player in the EV game.

Furthermore, some of the comments from our interviews implied GM's advertising is not targeted appropriately to our targeted audience. Most of them did not know GM offered an electric option. One interviewee said, "I think [GM is] great but there should be more advertising or awareness of electric companies." Another interviewee said millennials "are also the first generation to be in with all the new trends and be active in the media. Nowadays, a company will not make it if they do not have a strong social media presence." This quote reveals there is a strong belief that a strong social media presence is key to a successful company, as it holds the ability to reach millennials and members of Generation Z, who are a target audiences for many companies. GM clearly must improve its social media presence — in both shared and paid media — to reach younger generations like Millennials or Generation Z; members of both generations are either actively looking for cars or will be in the next half decade.

We found many of our interviewees were concerned about the affordability of electric vehicles. One interviewee told us "cost is a huge factor and electric cars are super expensive so people aren't going to make that change when they can just get a regular car for a lot less." Another interviewee said that

“Everyone still will prefer gas even if companies continue to normalize electric vehicles” because “They are usually really expensive and will take a while to regulate.” These two quotes show that people believe the high price of electric vehicles makes up a significant disadvantage of the cars. In addition, the interview subjects expressed the belief that people will compare the prices of electric vehicles to the prices of gas cars, and they will end up choosing to buy a gas vehicle due to the lower price. These findings suggest that GM must craft an effective campaign that shows several benefits of electric vehicles compared to gas cars, so the advantages of electric vehicles outweigh the high price.

Table 3: Notable Interviewee Responses

| Interviewees' Gender, Age, and Position | Direct Quotations |
|---|--|
| Female Age 19 College-Student | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “My dad used to own a Gemcar, and growing up he always would drive it short distances to get around town. He would choose to drive the electric car over a gas car. He was even in the newspaper for it.” - “If ten is the safest and 1 is the least safe I would rate electric cars 6 but I think I would also rate gas cars 6.” - “I think charging it would be difficult. Like on holidays we always drive to my family’s house which is a 9-hour drive. It would be inconvenient to stop and recharge the car for however long it takes while gas cars just need 5 minutes.” - “Everyone still will prefer gas even if companies continue to normalize electric vehicles. They are usually really expensive and will take a while to regulate.” |
| Female Age 21 College-Student | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “I think they’re great but there should be more advertising or awareness of electric companies. Maybe on social media.” - “I don’t know much about electric vehicles vs gas vehicles. I look more at |

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| | <p>how nice a car's inside is and how safe it is to drive."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Yes, I don't see why they wouldn't be safe. I would rate them a little less than gas cars because I know more about them." - "I know electric cars are good for the environment because everyone always says that but I have never given them much thought." |
| <p>Female Age 19 College-Student</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "General Motors historically has a rough reputation. I've never thought they are reliable, and I've never looked for a GM when thinking about a car." - "I didn't even know that GM was thinking about electric cars. I honestly only thought of Tesla when you asked me about electric cars." - "I see Tesla cars all over the place now. Elon Musk must dominate the electric car world. They just opened a new charger near my house." - "I can't go a single day without my phone running out of battery. What happens if that happens to my car? That's a serious problem for me when thinking about an electric vehicle. Huge." |
| <p>Female Age 20 College-Student</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "When I think of electric cars, I think of Tesla and the environment." - "I think that electric cars will be more common in the U.S. by 2035, but there's a long way to go." - "I think that electric cars are the future of cars." - "I think charging is a big challenge for electric cars." |

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| <p>Female Age 20 College-Student</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The most important things for me in a car are leather seats, good gas mileage, safety, reliability, and nice looking (not luxurious but good quality).” - “Lots of my family and friends drive cars manufactured by General Motors. They love their cars and have always recommended them to people they know.” - “Definitely more common than this present moment. I hope the market of electric cars grows in the coming years. I’ll be interested to see how the companies producing these vehicles grow and accommodate a new market of consumers with electric vehicles.” - “I wish electric cars were more common and I believe there is a transition happening. I think in the future there will be a rise in electric cars and the amount of people who own them. I hope they become more popular.” |
| <p>Female Age 20 College-Student</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Money is an important factor for me. I wants to get the bang for her buck” - “I am aware of sustainability but I do not practice it.” - “Elon Musk comes to mind when I think of electric vehicles. ” - “I do believe that electric vehicles will be the future of cars but I think that the biggest problem will be the low amount of charging stations.” |
| <p>Female Age 20 College-Student</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The only electric car brand I knew was Tesla. I think it’s just because that is how Tesla is advertised like that is their thing.” - “I don’t really see electric cars as normal cars, it’s like they are a whole different category.” - “I think millennials because they are more reliable and more likely to change their |

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| | <p>views. They are also the first generation to be in with all the new trends and be active in the media. Nowadays, a company will not make it if they do not have a strong social media presence.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Like if you really want to make the change I mean cost is a huge factor and electric cars are super expensive so people aren't going to make that change when they can just get a regular car for a lot less.” |
|--|---|

Key Findings

We found many of the interviewees were concerned about the prices of electric cars in comparison to traditional vehicles fueled by gas. This showed price may be a significant reason for the possible failure of GM's goal for electric vehicles. Additionally, interviewees were concerned about the need to charge electric vehicles. Potentially by relating vehicles to phones, there is concern vehicles could lose charge when needed most. Concerns were also expressed about complications that may result from forgetting to charge their cars overnight. We also found many people immediately thought of Tesla or Elon Musk when asked what came to mind regarding electric cars. This reinforced our previous knowledge that Tesla is a force in the electric vehicle market.

We also found the interviewees approved of the environmental sustainability of electric vehicles, whether or not they believed they could personally own or purchase an electric vehicle. They believed a major benefit of electric vehicles is their positive impact on the environment. Therefore, they believed that it would be beneficial in the long run if electric vehicles become more popular to American consumers at large. That said, they expressed doubt it would happen due to complications in price competition and charging infrastructure.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications of Qualitative Analysis

Price was a concern many of our interviewees voiced during their interviews. The cheapest electric cars such as the 2021 Mini Cooper SE start at around \$30,000, a price higher than some cheaper

gas car options. Traditional gasoline vehicles have a bigger price range because of their high demand; they options are more flexible on the cost. There are, however, methods by which to extend the education on electric vehicle savings. General Motors, for example, could create an average savings chart to show how much electric vehicle users save on gas each year. In many areas of the country — particularly in those where nuclear energy is a form of energy — the savings on gasoline outweigh the new costs associated with the energy needed to charge an electric vehicle. The projected savings may educate consumers and targeted publics on exactly what an electric car is as an investment.

Another recommendation is related to vehicle charging. Interviewees addressed this topic by comparing charging their cars to charging their phones. They had reservations about how difficult it may be to bring an electric car on road trips and the possible complications that may arise from the need to charge your vehicle; at this time, they are correct in that it would be difficult to “road trip” with an electric vehicle. However, the ways most Americans use cars would not change if they switched to an electric vehicle. In order to create a positive perception around idea of “going electric,” GM should expand charging availability. If GM seeks an all-electric future by 2035, this would not be an option, but a requirement. By creating more options to charge electric vehicles on highways and in targeted communities, they would be — in effect — aiding drivers, developing driver experience, *and* expanding the GM brand. Charging stations are very effective marketing and public relations tools. Those who are driving by would see electric vehicles, establishing a relationship between regular drivers and electric vehicle users. This could also accompany a social media campaign aimed at advertising efficient charging stations and showcasing their availability in many areas of the country. This strategy in particular would benefit their marketing toward Generation Z, considering the generation maintains a strong presence on Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok.

Focusing on the “Next Generation”

Our interviews reveal a lack of knowledge about GM, the vehicles they sell, and electric vehicles as a whole. This, perhaps, makes sense; moving to something new is scary, and it creates significant uncertainty in the market and among consumers. Our interviewees currently associate this market with

Tesla and Elon Musk, the company's founder. Tesla is seen as the front runner for electric and environmentally friendly vehicles. One of our participants emphasized a need for GM to have an increased presence on major social media platforms. These interviews revealed social media to be a main source for collecting information and news. If GM were to increase its advertising spending and better target its "Everybody In" campaign, the company would more effectively reach younger audiences such as Generation Z. The young generation ranges from age 9 to age 24 (those born between the years of 1998-2012). In the next decade, every member of this generation will reach driving age, and some members of this generation might be searching for their first or even second vehicle. It is sheer coincidence this generation also happens to be one of social activism and environmentalism; nothing could be better news for an organization attempting to position its future as environmentally friendly. Put simply, this is a prime public, and it is also GM's future demographic. Adding to the company's activism on social media will add relevancy to their electric vehicle and environmental friendly campaigns in the present to help increase its sales in the near future.

Evaluating Generation Z's Feelings Toward Electric Vehicles Generally and General Motors

Specifically: a Quantitative Analysis

General Motors seeks the positioning of the organization as an environmentally friendly company dedicated to serving and improving the communities in which they operate. The future of this market is a younger, more diverse, and more environmentally conscious generation. GM needs to understand and evaluate the future of their market: Generation Z. GM aims to position the company as a producer of safe, reliable electric vehicles (EVs). GM also wants to market itself as environmentally friendly.

Generation Z is their targeted audience. If it isn't their targeted audience at present, it soon will be. Every member of this generation will be of driving age within seven years. Within five years, the vast majority of the generation will driving. Additionally, the oldest members of this generation will be nearing age 30 within five years. In other words, this generation will soon be looking for cars. GM's ability to showcase its environmentally friendly policies will determine whether or not the generation

becomes electric vehicle supporters and buyers, or whether Generation Z will become another generation stuck in the era of traditional, gas-run vehicles.

This quantitative study accomplishes a major element of our analysis; it provides key insight into multiple areas. First, it examines exactly how our targeted audience perceives GM, specifically the company's relationship with electric vehicles and environmental friendliness. This is necessary because we can use our results to draw conclusions about how the organization is viewed by consumers. It will also be a key element in forming a complete analysis of what GM needs to do in order to solidify its messaging in the future to Generation Z.

Second, it examines how Generation Z views electric vehicles generally. How the generation understands these vehicles is important to this study. It is crucial to understand what educational lapses or misunderstandings the targeted audience may have about electric vehicles as a whole (inside or outside of GM). This provides necessary insight into exactly how GM can market vehicles moving forward.

Third, this quantitative study examines what channel is the most effective platform for communicating and marketing to our targeted audience. When making recommendations for GM's public relations strategy, it is crucial the company understands exactly what platforms are best for marketing and public relations.

Finally, the study also demonstrates the relationship Generation Z has with the environment. Whether or not Generation Z cares about the environment matters to our study. Specifically, it is important to know the elasticity of our consumers: will they change their buying habits in order to make a positive environmental effect on the environment?

We expect to obtain information about GM's Generation Z audience and shed light on possible changes that can be made to better General Motors' public perception.

Our research process took place from October 25-28, 2021. Our study utilized an electronic survey (hosted by Qualtrics), serving seven different constructs with five to seven questions within each construct. We had 130 responses from the questionnaire from which we derived our research.

Methods

In order to properly collect information about electric cars and General Motors, we created and deployed an electronic survey. The survey's main target was individuals between the ages of 18 and 24, focusing on the upper age range of Generation Z (which runs between the ages of 18 and 24).

Participants

To achieve our goals, our online survey was conducted anonymously; the data was collected through Qualtrics between October 25 and October 28. The anonymous survey was conducted by our research team. It was supervised by instructor Yoosun Ham at Indiana University. The participants were all U.S. citizens. After agreeing to the consent form, participants answered all of the questions that we provided. We shared our survey link with 200 participants. A total of 130 participants responded. For the final data (N = 130), more than half of the participants were female (79.2%). The majority of participants were 18-24 years old (83.9%) and the majority were white (81%).

Results

Social Media

The social media usage of our survey participants is a crucial aspect to our public relations strategy. The survey found that 45.8% of the participants use social media 3-4 hours per day. This was a pretty close margin with the people who answered 1-2 hours, which accounted for 41.7% of the participants. This suggests the overwhelming majority of surveyed individuals use social media platforms for at least one hour each day. These results suggest social media is a very prevalent element in people's lives and can be used to our advantage when we are trying to get the word across about General Motors.

When asked why they used social media platforms, 45.8% of participants answered to communicate with others; only 16.7% said they used it to get information. This leads us to the conclusion we should focus our social media campaigns on being more interactive with potential customers. If the main reason people use social media is to communicate with others, then GM needs to take advantage of that advantage and become an extremely interactive company, focusing on one-on-one, two-way communication strategies.

Instagram was the most common social media platform to be used in order to get information. More than half of respondents, 51.3%, said it was their most-used platform for information. The second-most-used platform was Snapchat; 15.3% of respondents said it was their most-common platform for obtaining information. This suggests Instagram is the primary platform for Generation Z-aged adults; therefore, Instagram should be the main platform used to advance information for our primary audience.

Social media presents the intention to purchase a product. 40% of respondents said advertisements showing action are the most likely to resonate with them. As with the research surrounding communication on social media, the research with advertising suggests our campaign should be more interactive on social media, rather than a mere display of facts. By actively reaching out to our potential consumers through communicative and demonstrative advertisements, GM will be able to reach our target audience more effectively.

55.7% of survey participants said social media influences their decision to purchase something. This indicates the importance of building an aggressive social media presence, as it clearly bears a significant effect on a considerable portion of our sample. Interestingly, 67.1% of people said influencers did not have a meaningful impact on their decision to purchase something. This is very interesting because it contradicts traditional interpretations in the public relations sphere. This indicates GM should keep focusing on a strong, interactive social media presence. This will cause our audience to feel we are genuine about the environment, rather than using an influencer to promote our electric vehicle plan. To try to raise the appeal of influencers, future research could help us conclude what influencer could appeal to the college-aged student market. By finding a celebrity to be the face of GM's electric vehicle strategy, our appeal would be less superficial and people would know that this celebrity actually does enjoy our products.

Environmental Concerns

Electric vehicles opened new marketing strategies for traditional automobile companies. Once vehemently criticized for anti-environmental lobbying, car companies now hold the opportunity to shift

their public reputations on environmental issues; therefore, it is important to analyze our respondent's feelings surrounding environmental issues.

83.6% of participants said they have grave concerns about the future of our planet. However, what's more important is examining whether or not our respondents are willing to change their habits to promote a healthier environment. Luckily, the survey results suggest many of our respondents are willing to do just that. For example, 81.3% of participants said they were willing to sacrifice some personal comforts in order to save energy. Many people are comfortable with having an electric car, but they do have some concerns that it may be more difficult to obtain, manage, and maintain. Because we know such a high percentage of our sample is willing to sacrifice some comfort in their life if they know they are saving energy and cleaning the environment, we can conclude that an electric vehicle campaign surrounding clean energy may be effective among this target audience.

It is crucial we always reiterate the fact that the health of the environment is very important to GM in order to keep the company's public reputation strong. 64.2% of participants said they are willing to pay higher prices for goods and services if it helps us protect the environment. This suggests the price of our electric vehicles won't always necessarily be an inhibitor to GM's success or campaign, since it seems as if our target demographic is willing to pay more in order to protect our environment.

Frankly, this contradicts some of our findings in our qualitative research. Some of our interviewees said cost *would* be an inhibitor to purchasing an electric vehicle, citing higher prices for electric vehicles. This further suggests GM's first messaging priority should be environmental concerns, as our quantitative analysis suggests costs could be less of an issue than originally expected.

Charging

As was true in our qualitative analysis, the biggest complaint with electric vehicles is charging. While certainly not a new concern, it remains the largest. There are three separate issues with charging; the first is the range of an electric vehicle. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, "Most EVs can travel more than 100 miles on a charge," with some being able to reach ranges of "200 or 300 miles depending on the model" (U.S. Department of Energy, n.d.). The conventional wisdom suggests the

uncertainty of being able to travel long distances causes concerns for American consumers looking to purchase a vehicle. Our survey, unfortunately, suggests that convention wisdom is based in reality. 90% of our survey's respondents said the ability to drive for long periods of time without charging a vehicle or filling a car up with gas was important to them. This indicates GM's strategy needs to find ways to counter these concerns in their messaging. The importance of interactive content was discussed earlier; the concerns surrounding charging suggest GM should take steps to paint a picture of what life could look like with an electric vehicle and how the range of vehicles may not be a concern for most individuals.

The second issue with charging is availability. Unlike fueling stations at every highway exit, it can be more difficult to find a place to charge an electric vehicle. 40% of our respondents did not know if they lived within 20 miles of an electric vehicle charging station. However, just over one-third indicated they did, an encouraging statistic. GM should consider communications strategies to show how widespread charging stations are in some areas of the country.

The third issue with electric vehicle charging is time. Time is a valuable asset in a world that moves faster than ever. Traditional vehicles can fill up with gasoline in less than five minutes. Modern society allows for a driver of a traditional vehicle to stop at a gas station, fill up their car, and get back on the road all within ten minutes. Electric vehicles, however, do not charge as quickly. The U.S. Department of Energy writes that "Fully recharging the battery pack" in an electric vehicle "can take 3 to 12 hours" (n.d.). Vehicles utilizing "fast-charge" capabilities can still take half an hour. About two-thirds of respondents said the speed of charging their car or filling it up with gas was important to them. GM must prioritize finding ways to encourage consumers to look past the issue of charging their vehicle outside of their home. Many consumers often forget electric vehicles can be — and often are — charged overnight; this means charging a vehicle doesn't necessarily need to be refilled in the same way a traditional vehicle does. Going to a gas station may not be the reality faced by owners of electric vehicles. GM's marketing needs to reflect that reality.

General Motors's Reputation

Consumers seem somewhat indifferent to General Motors, specifically in regards to electric vehicles. The average score in this section of our survey was a 3.07, which means people are marginally more likely to evaluate GM higher when thinking about the electric vehicle market.

However, in every question specific to GM, the majority of respondents did not agree or disagree with the statement presented. This suggests the Generation Z demographic is undecided on this issue and can be swayed toward or against GM easily. This presents an opportunity: GM can — and needs to — leverage the vast resources at its disposal to incorporate strong communications, public relations, and marketing tactics to sway the demographic to its side. Considering how serious the generation clearly takes the global climate crisis, messages surrounding pro-environment initiatives, policies, and strategies could have significant influence on this demographic.

Electric Vehicles Generally

The feelings toward electric vehicles generally were also measured in our survey. Nearly 60% of respondents said they believed electric vehicles were “luxury cars.” GM, of course, has very little intention of marketing their electric vehicles solely to buyers looking to purchase luxury vehicles. This could mean two things for a GM communications strategy. It could suggest some consumers are turned off, because most consumers do not look for luxury vehicles in fear they are too expensive. However, it could also mean electric vehicles are generally viewed as the future, which is good for obtaining a strong clientele of younger consumers. Other elements of this construct, however, suggest it is the former rather than the latter. 62.3% of respondents said they believe electric vehicles are usually more expensive to own and maintain. GM needs to find ways to counter the notion that electric vehicles are more expensive. Doing so will encourage more consumers to enter the electric vehicle market. GM should also leverage the various tax credits offered to consumers who purchase fully electric vehicles. 63.5% of respondents said tax credits for electric vehicles would make them more likely to purchase one. This suggests a key tenet of GM's marketing strategy should be to market the various tax credits provided to consumers.

Conclusion

There are two major pieces of information gathered through our quantitative analysis. First, 90% of our survey's respondents said the ability to drive for long periods of time without charging a vehicle or filling a car up with gas was important to them. Second, 81.3% of participants said they were willing to sacrifice some personal comforts in order to better the planet. In other words, a vast majority of participants — more than four-fifths — are willing to give up some luxuries in exchange for greater sustainability.

Both of these findings are key because they are building blocks to make General Motors the leader in the electric vehicle market. Considering that many Americans are not aware of where to charge their vehicle or how accessible charging stations are to them, GM should consider communications strategies to show how widespread charging stations are in some areas of the country. It is important for GM to highlight where electric vehicle charging stations are located in the United States. GM already offers an app to show where charging stations are; however, considering that many people are still unaware of where to find these charging stations, they need to do a better job in communicating that app's existence, purpose, and versatility. This can be accomplished by advertising their app both on their websites, dealerships, and online.

Our survey data shows members of Generation Z are worried about managing and owning electric vehicles; therefore, it is important GM outlines all of the amenities electric vehicles provide, specifically environmental friendliness. 64.2% of respondents said they are willing to pay higher prices for goods and services if it would help protect the environment. As stated earlier, our research also shows many respondents are willing to sacrifice some comfort in their life if they know they are saving energy and cleaning the environment. We can draw implications from these findings that the environmentally friendly aspect of GM may be one of its biggest strengths when it comes to advertising. If they wish to attract a wider audience, they must first capitalize on their accessibility and their sustainability.

Evaluating the Optimal Public Relations Strategies and Plans for General Motors

Our most important task is to evaluate the proper means by which General Motors should use our research to make decisions about public relations. Using secondary analysis, content analysis, qualitative research, and quantitative research, this report summarizes what our team believes is the best path forward for the public relations department and division at GM.

Interpersonal Tactics

Interpersonal public relations tactics aim to engage an audience directly. It is one of the strongest methods used by major corporations to identify, understand, and achieve strong relationships with stakeholders.

Experiential Marketing

The Plan

Our plan is to create a hands-on, captivating experience for our target audience: female college students. By creating a face-to-face environment to alleviate the concerns of our target audience, we can expand General Motors's brand. GM should create a test drive experience that extends beyond the normal test drive experience one would have when they are looking to purchase an automobile at a dealership. This would be placed in an area of high foot traffic, where someone could stumble onto the experience and want to try driving the newest electric vehicle on the market.

These "pop-up" shows generally would feature two components: an experiential marketing hub and an exploratory exhibit hall.

Background

When someone is looking to purchase an automobile, they might go to a dealership with certain specifications for the car they wish to purchase: examples include price, type of vehicle, or the number of seats. But if, while shopping for groceries at a shopping center, someone saw a free opportunity to test drive a really cool, modern sports car, they would probably do it out of excitement.

GM can capitalize on this same phenomena. GM's electric cars are a new look for the company, whose history is more industrial and traditional. It wasn't until recently GM's image shifted to a cleaner,

more modern look. With their new electric cars, GM could expand their brand by creating temporary “pop-up” show events throughout the country.

In our quantitative analysis, nearly 84% of participants said they have grave concerns about the future of our planet. Therefore, an exploratory exhibit hall could demonstrate the difference in environmental impact between traditional gas vehicles and other modern, electric vehicles.

An experiential marketing strategy as a conduit for interpersonal communication could also alleviate concerns surrounding charging. There could be exhibits dedicated to how charging an electric vehicle overnight is easier and less time-consuming than filling up a car with gas each week.

Budget

Experiential marketing and interpersonal communication strategies of this type can be expensive, sometimes ranging in the millions of dollars. Marketing of this type would probably amount to an average of \$80,000-\$100,000 for each pop-up show, assuming it travelled to at least ten cities. Therefore, the budget would probably be near \$1 million dollars for a ten-city tour.

Expected Results

We expect it to expand GM’s brand awareness among the target audience, and more specifically, increase the association of GM as an automobile company focusing on the future of electric vehicles and the environment. The goal is to put the GM brand in front of as many people as possible. Additionally, the goal is to encourage our target audience to consider electric vehicles in the future in general; however, it is also to expand GM’s brand so they consider a GM when they purchase their next vehicle, electric or not.

Case Studies: Experiential Marketing

Coca-Cola: “The King of Experiential Marketing”

The Coca-Cola Company is one of the largest companies in the food and beverage industry; they are listed on the S&P 100 Index. Most notably, however, their strategic marketing and public relations team is one of the best in the world. The company is the king of experiential marketing. There are multiple instances of these efforts.

“Share a Coke” Campaign

For ten years, the Coca-Cola Company watched a continuous downturn in the consumption of Coca-Cola, their flagship soft drink. The downturn likely occurred for a few reasons. First, there was a nationwide effort in place to increase the consumption of healthy beverages, of which Coca-Cola is plainly not included (Burros and Warner, 2006). Second, it coincided with the Great Recession of 2008, which in turn decreased the sale of many retail, luxury items such as sugary beverages (Tong, 2009).

Coca-Cola first introduced the “Share a Coke” campaign in 2011 in Australia. The goal was to increase the personal connection between consumers and the company. Most bottles of Coca-Cola were printed with “Share a Coke with” and then a name (for example, “Share a Coke with Sara” or “Share a Coke with Nate”). Names were printed at random from hundreds of common names. The goal, according to the company, was to start “talking to them at eye level” (Moye, 2016).

The campaign eventually extended to the United States, where it hit a long stride. It generated significant consumer interest in the United States; as part of the campaign, Coca-Cola eventually created an experiential marketing element to the campaign. They sent special vending machines around the country to major markets (such as New York, Seattle, Chicago, and Indianapolis). The vending machines were placed in areas of high foot traffic to ensure significant interest. The vending machines allowed customers to customize the name placed on a small can of Coca-Cola, a neat way for consumers with less-common names to participate in the campaign. Consumers waited in long lines to get the opportunity to print their names on a small can of Coca-Cola; it expanded Coca-Cola’s brand, and it is commonly recognized as one of the most recognizable brands in the world.

The campaign, which ran for multiple years, “helped reverse more than 10 years of decline in Coke consumption in the U.S.” (Mattila, 2019). Additionally, sales of the drink increased by 2% by 2014; the company credits the public relations and marketing campaign with that increase (Esterl, 2014).

“Sprite Showers” Campaign

Coca-Cola introduced another example of experiential marketing in Brazil and Australia. Sprite is a soft drink owned by Coca-Cola. Because the soft drinks are typically served cold, they are often sold

along beach fronts across the world. Sau Paulo is no exception to that rule. During the hottest months of the year, temperatures hit 80 degrees Fahrenheit (Climate Data, n.d.a).

On one particularly hot weekend in 2012, the company went into action. They introduced huge showers in the shape of Sprite fountain drinks. It was a place for people to cool off after sunbathing on the hot beach sand. It was part of the company's outdoor media campaign in the country.

Near the fountains, employees of the company walked around and "handed out ice-cold cans of sugar-free Sprite Zero," the product the company was promoting with the event (Coca-Cola Australia, 2015). Why do this? It's because it created mental associations with the soft drink. Just giving someone a cold beverage on a hot day will make them happy; however, if you pair it with an experience, "they're much more likely to associate that brand with a positive feeling" (BMedia, n.d.).

The campaign was so successful that it was eventually expanded to Sydney, Australia, where the hottest months of the year average around 80 degrees Fahrenheit as well (Climate Data, n.d.b).

Shared Media Tactics

Shifting Social Media Content to Interactive Strategies

General Motors maintains strong social media presences on most of the major platforms, notably Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. However, our quantitative analysis suggests there are methods by which to improve the content pushed on those platforms.

The Plan

The social media platforms used by General Motors do a good job emphasizing the corporation's electric vehicle strategy. However, it could do a better job of using interactive content with its user base.

Therefore, one of our shared media PR plans is to increase the use of interactive content. Some examples of interactive content include live video. Live video is an exceptional approach to engaging users on social media. Users are often notified of live video, and it often is boosted by social media algorithms.

Additionally, GM could find use in other interactive strategies on social media, such as online contest entries to engage users with the GM social media accounts. GM could also engage users by

creating a calculator discussing how much consumers would save if they switched to an electric vehicle from a traditional gas vehicle.

Finally, General Motors should focus their interactive content on Instagram, as it is seemingly the most-used platform for our target audience.

Background

Our quantitative analysis was based on the results of a survey, of which the majority of respondents were members of our target audience. 16.7% of respondents said they primarily used social media to obtain information. This suggested social media should be more interactive than it should be based on facts and simply information.

Additionally, in our qualitative analysis, some of our interviewees suggested they wished to see more awareness surrounding electric vehicles on social media. This is a crucial element as it suggests our target audience wants to be more engaged with content and are not interested in only facts without an overall context provided.

In our quantitative analysis, we also learned our target audience's most-used platform was Instagram, followed by Snapchat. More than half of respondents said Instagram was their most-used platform. Therefore, GM should focus on Instagram as the conduit for interactive content.

Budget

General Motors already invests in social media marketing. They already have a full team dedicated to social media content. Therefore, changing the strategy would likely not be expensive. There may be a few additional costs if GM were to host contests on their social media platforms, but other than that, it would not be an expensive endeavour.

Expected Results

We expect that an increase in interactive content would correlate to an increase in views and engagements on social media. We also expect it would, among our target audience, increase the positive perception of GM toward environmentally friendly issues.

Increasing Corporate-Charity Partnerships

The most important element of shared media is finding the most effective ways to best increase engagement across social media platforms. Social media platforms are great for public relations and marketing because it allows them to share information that will spread rapidly. The key for General Motors is to find ways to make sure that content gets in front of as many eyes as possible.

The Plan

As an automobile company trying to position itself as a leader in environmentally friendly transportation, GM is in a great position to ally itself with environmentally friendly not-for-profit organizations. There are multiple approaches to these partnerships. Most notably, earning the “endorsement” of these organizations is key to a forceful and steadfast shared media policy.

There are a few tenets to this plan, and it works as a multi-step process. First, GM needs to work with these organizations and make them a partner in their environmentally friendly policies. Following that, GM needs to promote their partnership on social media. GM and pro-environment organizations have a symbiotic relationship; in this case, they share either an end goal or a strategy. Therefore, it is to both of their benefits to promote their partnership on social media.

This partnership can include, but is not limited to, events co-hosted by GM and the non-profit organization or social media content produced by the two organizations. Whatever they choose, GM can promote this partnership in an attempt to gain more engagements on social media.

Background

Our quantitative research was clear: Generation Z cares a lot about the environment. 64.2% of participants said they are willing to pay higher prices for goods and services if it helps us protect the environment. Additionally, nearly 84% of participants said they have grave concerns about the future of our planet. By partnering with pro-environment organizations and creating coalitions, it will show a commitment from a historically anti-environment company that they are buying into an environmentally friendly future. Additionally, it would likely increase engagements on social media, ensuring a strong shared media strategy.

Budget

General Motors is already equipped with the necessary tools to make agreements and partnerships with pro-environment organizations, so it would not take too much of an investment from the company. However, it would take some time from the social media and marketing team at GM to ensure these partnerships are properly publicized.

Expected Results

We expect these partnerships to establish General Motors not just as a participant in the fight for the environment, but as a leader in their industry. The automotive industry's history toward the environment is incredibly negative; GM, however, now holds the opportunity to counter those historical decisions.

We also expect these partnerships to increase engagements on social media, and we expect it to expand GM's followers on social media to include those who identify as more environmentally friendly.

Earned Media Tactics

Non-paid Influencer Relations

The Plan

In order to increase the knowledge and purchases of General Motors, we want to highlight examples of individuals who have purchased GM vehicles. This is a variation of influencer relations that falls outside of paid media, because these are not actors, but actual consumers who used the vehicle. The connection they have with the company is genuine, and they will actually show their passionate support because they want to, not because they are being paid to do so.

One method of doing this is sending recognizable individuals samples of our products and highlighting their experiences in press releases when we pitch reporters. Additionally, we hope they'll post about it on social media sites, such as Instagram. Since this relationship is not technically paid, we would not *compel* them to post about GM products; however, we would have confidence they would promote our products. This would increase major awareness of our company and show potential customers that the influencers they may heavily see online genuinely like our products.

Background

According to our quantitative analysis, 67.1% of people said influencers did not have a meaningful impact on their decision to purchase something. Oftentimes, influencers posts on social media are so obviously for financial gain and not for genuine purposes. This type of marketing does not convince people to buy products because the consumer doesn't know how strong of a product it really is; the consumer only knows the influencer is getting paid to market it. This is why General Motors needs to utilize an unpaid influencer marketing strategy by sending individuals our products to provide an opportunity to create content; for example, this creates the opportunity for content creators to review products on Youtube. This will create a genuine connection between the influencer and the company and encourage people to purchase our products.

In our qualitative analysis, a lot of our participants mentioned that when they first think of electric cars they think of Tesla, and thereby Elon Musk. This makes it very evident that people do not get a lot of exposure to GM from influencers. In order to fix this, we need to implement the unpaid influencer marketing plan.

Budget

This would require an enhanced budget to send products to a group of individuals. Additionally, it could be on an invited basis where General Motors gives a certain group of influencers the opportunity to test drive a car early and make a Youtube video about it, for example. Luckily, General Motors holds the team in place to do this kind of outreach.

Expected Results

We expect this strategy to increase the recognition of the General Motors brand, and in turn, increase sales. Another goal is to better our reputation as a leading manufacturer of electric cars specifically, rather than simply an automotive company. GM should aim to be the company people think of when they are asked about electric cars.

Targeted News Pitching

The Plan

The importance of news coverage cannot be understated. Consumers and our targeted audience will better respect earned coverage because it shows credibility in the press. General Motors should shift their strategy toward outlets with a presence on social media; these outlets more often align to our targeted audience's interests. For example, NowThis is a digital outlet whose viewership mostly consists of younger, college-aged audiences. They also hold prominent placement on Snapchat.

When pitching to journalists, we can give special care to these outlets and to the issues they cover, which often includes environmental issues. We can move away from the traditional press release model to a system of personally pitching reporters at these outlets to earn coverage that will affect our targeted audience. Additionally, when we pitch, we can pitch about specific issues — such as the environment — to help generate more interest in these outlets.

Budget

Luckily, General Motors already invests in a media relations team; this would not require any additional investment; rather, it would require a reevaluation of how the team works. It could, if GM really wanted to invest in digital, potentially mean expanding the team to include a member of the media relations team that operates specifically within the digital sphere.

Expected Results

We expect this plan to increase our presence in younger, digitally oriented outlets which previously has not covered the automotive industry. This means it would expand our media reach to younger audiences, such as those covered in our targeted audience.

Paid Media Tactics

Targeted Social Media Advertising

The Plan

General Motors is an organization with the means to increase knowledge of its environmentally friendly campaigns and vehicles. In order to execute a successful targeted media advertising campaign,

GM must select more popular channels upon release. We recommend investing in a digital advertising campaign showing how far a family can travel in their GM electric vehicle. They would be released over the span of a few weeks to maintain interest in the campaign over a period of time. If GM were to announce a six-week marketing campaign on Instagram and TikTok, they would relate to a large selection of their target audience.

This shared media tactic can be presented in video format on both Instagram and TikTok as advertisements while scrolling. These are common social media apps that our quantitative research analysis found to be popular among our targeted audience. More than half of our survey respondents said Instagram is their most-used platform, a common application used by members of Generation Z. If relevant celebrities or influencers were featured in these videos, we are confident GM would generate more audience members toward their environmentally friendly and electric organization.

Background

In the interest of gaining a wider customer base and increasing interest in the company's mission, it is crucial General Motors puts this plan in place.

Our quantitative analysis found that about 90% of respondents find it important to be able to drive for long periods of time in between recharging or filling their car up with gas. It may be difficult to capture this ideal but a six-week marketing campaign will enable the company to have enough time to visually stress its mission and products. This statistic is strong and important to keep in mind when discussing new social media campaigns. Launching videos following different groups such as a family, group of friends, or couple in their electric vehicle traveling long distances without charging would draw attention to a solution to the issue while putting GM in the spotlight. They can show this by having the families pass charging/gas stations without stopping and mark their distance on a map. This would clearly address one of the main concerns found from our quantitative research while reaching a wider net of people.

The use of influencers or celebrities in this campaign is important as well. Our qualitative analysis research results show that people generally associate electric vehicles with Elon Musk and his

company Tesla. Putting popular and well-respected people on the face of GM will draw in a much wider audience base. Additionally, the relationship between social media usage and purchase intentions gathered from our quantitative research shows that “social media influences [the respondent’s] decision to purchase something.” This is a reasonable plan because it accounts for the research collected and provides a feasible strategy that will highlight the benefits of GM’s objectives.

Budget

Filming and paying influencers or celebrities to take part in this campaign will be expensive. In order to release a well-produced social media advertisement campaign, GM will have to invest in their final product. It may cost anywhere between \$150,000 to \$200,000 to create the campaign’s content. Compensation for the influencer ranges based on popularity, the more popular they are the more they are owed. Film costs are based on the crew needed, equipment, and editing in post-production. This may be the most expensive aspect of the targeted social media advertising campaign at about \$1,000,000. You also have to take into account the costs per install (CPI) against the application itself, in our case Instagram and Tik Tok.

Expected Results

Once this targeted social media advertising campaign is put in place we expect General Motors to generate an increase in awareness and following. More potential supporters will find interest in the relevancy this campaign provides. They will also gain interest in their selection of electric vehicles which will aid in a rise in sales. Our goal as the videos are released steadily throughout the six-week duration is that the audience will continuously be exposed to the campaign and the company’s objectives. Exposure through paid social media advertising is an investment the company is sure to get positive results from.

Targeted Product Placement

The Plan

A natural and simple way to advertise General Motors’s new electric vehicles is through a specific channel of film and television. Product placement is a beneficial investment for both GM and their consumers. This tactic produces a creative environment for GM to promote their vehicles while their

audience develops a stronger connection with the product in a neutral setting. GM would benefit most from placing their products on the screen.

The only difficult part of this tactic is choosing the correct channel for GM to place their products. For film and our chosen audience, GM should place their vehicles in blockbuster movies with famous actors/actresses. Our targeted audience at 18-24 years old, makes up the largest segment of age that still attend movies in theaters. The highest grossing movies that are attracting the widest audience should be the goal of GM's product placement. For example, the highly anticipated *Spider-Man: No Way Home* would be a smart motion picture to place one of the new GM electric vehicles. This action film attracts large audiences and the high intensity storyline would be perfect for the new 2022 GMC Hummer EV to make an on screen appearance.

Background

The product placement plan is crucial for General Motors's current marketing strategy of electric vehicles. In order to spread awareness of their electric vehicles, GM must show their vehicles to the public. The plan of film product placement will achieve this goal for the organization.

In our quantitative analysis, nearly 60% of respondents said they believe electric vehicles are a type of "luxury car." Some might think how a futuristic look gives a vehicle an image of luxury. If the GM vehicles are placed in a fictional "futuristic" film, it could entice consumers to become part of that future by spreading awareness of the future electric vehicles.

GM placing their vehicles on the big screen would take a step that major electric vehicle brands like Tesla have not. Tesla grew its name through their founder and executive Elon Musk. GM does not have an A-list celebrity and businessman to market their product; therefore, screen placement would differentiate their brand. This product placement would reach their targeted audience and increase brand awareness.

In our qualitative research, one interviewees said they "think electric vehicles are the future of automobiles." Placing a GM electric vehicle in a futuristic movie would show viewers GM is looking

toward the future and ahead of other automobile companies. Being ahead of the curve and showcasing the new electric vehicles by GM is crucial for success.

Budget

For a big ticket blockbuster film, product placement of a General Motors vehicle would be expensive. However, such product placement might be worth it, especially if the film was considered a box office hit. From looking at large blockbuster movies and the prices of vehicles and automobiles, the price to place a GM electric vehicle in film would range in the millions. Luckily, GM has the means and money to make this type of transaction with a film production in order to market their vehicle.

Expected Results

If this paid media is implemented correctly, we would expect to see an increase in the brand awareness of General Motors. In turn, this would hopefully create an increase in the sales of General Motors of electric vehicles.

We would also expect more awareness of the vehicle. Effective product placement can be very successful for corporations. The goal of this specific strategy is to show that the future is electric cars, and more specifically, GM.

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