The EV ads of Super Bowl 2022: Did they score or fumble?

By Bill LeBlanc
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The stakes were high this year for EV advertisements during Super Bowl LVI with costs of up to $6.5 million per 30-second spot and awareness that EVs are attracting a lot of attention and investment. This is all with the backdrop of knowing that front runner Tesla doesn't advertise (at least in the traditional sense) but still blows away all other EV sales combined.

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E Source knows your customers and their EV preferences. Learn more about how we can help you perfect your EV messaging.

In this blog post, I offer my opinion about whether the ads hit the mark this year using a variety of factors. Sure, there was a robot dog, Dr. Evil, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and a lot of money spent, but did the final ads score a touchdown or did they fumble?

Super Bowl 2022 EV ad showdown

I made my ratings by considering three questions:

- Was it a good branding ad for the company?
- Did it allow people to see themselves driving an EV (lifestyle)?
- Did it make people more comfortable with charging, the biggest hang-up beyond first cost?

We identified the latter two in our national market research studies as key barriers to adoption. Let's see how the ads fared.

BMW iX: Zeus & Hera

Arnold Schwarzenegger and Salma Hayek play retired Greek gods, Zeus and Hera, living in Los Angeles. Zeus has the power to charge electric devices such as golf carts and garden tools by shooting

lightning from his hands. But he can't control his lightning very well and causes a power outage in the entire LA basin. Funny stuff!

- *Branding*. This was just OK for an EV with a starting price of $83,000. Arnold has done several other EV ads that were California-centered, but most national consumers wouldn't know that.
- *Lifestyle.* For the California rich and famous? Maybe. For regular people? Not so much.
- *Charging*. Very confusing. Lightning seems to be the only way to charge things in Zeus and Hera's life.

Overall score: C−

Kia EV6: Robo Dog

Not a celebrity in sight in this one, just a cute robotic dog that seems to be chasing a shiny but generic car around a big city. The dog finally catches up to the car and leaps off a building. If you watch closely, you can see a signal on the dog that indicates low battery, and it ends up dead on the sidewalk. Lucky for the robo pup, the driver spots him and resuscitates him with a charge from his Kia EV6.

- *Branding*. The dog may very well be nominated for a Clio advertising award, but I worry that the brand message was too weak and only truly shows the power of an EV at the end of the ad.
- *Lifestyle.* The ad includes nothing about how EVs can fit into someone's life. There's a guy driving the EV in an urban setting. So what?
- *Charging*. The ad shows the stereotypical streetside charger at the beginning, which reinforces people's fears that they don't know what these things are and where to find them. It then shows the two-way flow capabilities for charging … a small dog? A tiny percentage of the population might see this and think, Hey, I bet I can run my house during a power outage! Which, I think, might have been the point.

Overall score: C+

Polestar 2: Simplicity

This ad by the Volvo subsidiary was a sleek, minimalist approach with no celebrities, callbacks to the past, or direct humor. Instead, the ad uses the word "no" as the start to its series of no-frills messaging that the Polestar is a new vehicle that should be taken seriously. There was a direct hit on Elon Musk's Mars adventures and a nod to Greta Thunberg's "blah blah blah" statement about what politicians do when faced with an epic climate crisis.

- *Branding*. Polestar is an unknown brand name in the US and may have made a bit of a splash by simply showing up in the Super Bowl lineup.
- *Lifestyle.* Kind of neutral here. The ad didn't show a person in the car (or the car going anywhere at all), but it may have intrigued people enough for them to follow up and find out more.
- *Charging*. There was no positive or negative element regarding charging.

Overall score: C+ (partly because the company saved money on delivery and did it in an intriguing way)

GM #EVerybodyIn: Dr. EV-il

Everyone recognizes the characters from the Austin Powers movies, so bringing the gang back together with a new Baby Me is clever and fun. Front and center to the message is climate change, basically the key theme, which I really appreciate. Nuts and bolts to help move the market today? Not so much. I think GM could have found a better way to show off its vehicles.

- *Branding*. This is a quintessential branding ad for GM. Will it work for consumers? The jury is still out. The automaker promised 25 EV models in a bunch of years from now.
- *Lifestyle*. There wasn't a lot of car footage, so no one could really *see* themselves in a GM EV.
- *Charging*. No charging, and no message about what to do next.

Overall score: B−

Chevy Silverado: New Generation (The Sopranos)

In another nostalgia play, Chevrolet shows its plug-in Silverado driving from Manhattan to a fish market in New Jersey. At least, I think that's what was happening. To be fair, I didn't watch the Sopranos so I didn't quite get it. But according to Sopranos fans I know, Chevy did a good job. But now I'm wondering how many bodies the truck bed can carry. At least in the end, you knew it was an electric truck because Meadow Soprano plugged into a streetside charger.

- *Branding*. Probably OK. At least viewers could figure out this was an ad for a Chevy truck.
- *Lifestyle*. Based on these Super Bowl ads, it seems like average people don't get to drive an EV, but the car did get some perks on the drive out of the city, like a pass through the tollbooth and a prime parking spot.
- *Charging*. The ad showed public charging in an urban setting, so, once again, we're not seeing how easy and accesible charging is for regular people.

Overall score: B−

Nissan: Thrill Driver

Nissan has had one of most stable and affordable EVs since 2014 with its Leaf model. This ad pushes forward with Eugene Levy transforming from an unexciting Johnny Rose from Schitt's Creek into an international man of mystery while he drives the new model Z, which is a gas-powered sports car. Brie Larson and some other cameos add intrigue to the storyline. The good news: the 2023 Ariya, the all-electric crossover is kind of featured at the end.

- *Branding*. This was a strong brand ad, although it didn't lead with an EV message.
- *Lifestyle*. Fine, if you want to transform yourself into James Bond anytime soon.
- *Charging*. Nothing to see here, folks.

Overall: C− for EVs, B+ for Nissan

Honorable mention: Wallbox

The ad for Wallbox, a home EV charger, featured a fellow who had problems with electricity. In the opening sequence, we see security camera footage of him getting struck by lightning. Many people probably found that visual disturbing—I know I did! After the intentionally shocking start, we quickly figure out that the ad is a parody. In the end, the man discovered that in spite of his past bad experiences with electricity he could get along quite well with Wallbox. Imagine that!

Overall: B (the ad actually highlighted the convenience of charging at home, but, for such an unknown brand name, Wallbox took the long route to get to the punchline)

Final score

It was great to see so much attention on EVs this year, and, as they say, there's no such thing as bad press. Unfortunately, the ads failed at the core function of allowing people to see themselves as EV drivers in their daily lives or even to show how much simpler charging is than people think.

If you don't trust my opinion or want to know what real people think about your ads before you launch them, E Source has teamed up with Immersion, a distributed neuroscience software platform that directly measures, second by second, when consumers are emotionally connecting with content or an experience. Using the smartwatch they already own, Immersion discovers the unspoken barriers of adoption and identifies content and messaging that breaks through the noise with a wide range of consumer groups.

We can use our science-based analysis tools to discover how your ads, photos, videos, and messages resonate with your customers before you spend money on the final placements. There's a huge difference in wants and needs among customers, and our data can pinpoint those customers most ready to go electric. Using these tools, we can boost adoption and overcome barriers that are so persistent around EV charging, costs, and models. Send us an email so we can start working together to provide real education and outreach with the right messages to the right people who are ready and willing to drive an EV.

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