



Brand Strategy and Ideas for Porsche



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Background

- Porsche was founded by Ferdinand Porsche in 1931, with its headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany
- It is a legendary sports luxury car brand from Germany – the only one in its class
- The brand has as its symbol a prancing horse on a shield in the German flag colours, along with antlers symbolizing Wurttemberg
- Being a luxury car brand, it does compete with other German luxury car brands such as Mercedes-Benz and BMW, though its customer profile would be quite different from those of the others
- It is part of the Volkswagen group and the two brands share a history as well, with Ferdinand Porsche having designed the first Volkswagen engine in 1935
- Porsche as a luxury sports car maker has been reporting a good set of corporate earnings for the past few years, from what I have read in the news
- The Porsche brand epitomizes excellence in engineering – in the true German sense of the word – and yet it has to embrace new technologies of the future such as electric, connected and autonomous.

How well will it manage this transition and how does it need to position itself for the future? That is what we will be exploring in this brand strategy and ideas document.

The Porsche product line-up

[Porsche](#) has many cars in its product range, starting with the iconic Porsche 911. Over the past many decades, the company has added more models to its range and broadly, they comprise the following:

Porsche 911 – sports coupé

Porsche Panamera – executive sedan

Porsche Cayenne – off-roader SUV

Porsche Macan – compact SUV

Porsche Taycan – electric sport saloon

Spyder and Targa as used as variants within the Porsche range, and the Carrera too is a variant of the Porsche 911.

Apparently, there is a logic to the naming and numbering of Porsche's car models, which their owners and fans are quite aware of and keenly follow, so I might need to be corrected in my understanding of the Porsche product range.

Porsche target customer

The target audience and customer for Porsche would be quite different from a Mercedes and BMW customer.

I think the Porsche target audience is mostly male, between 25 to 55 years of age, and is the kind of person who would love to drive his Porsche himself. He leads an active lifestyle and spends time driving out on weekends, for his own sport and fitness activities, as well as on holidays.

He is a wealthy and successful person at whatever he does for a living, and the Porsche is certainly not his only car. He might well drive a Merc or BMW to work, but the Porsche is clearly his favourite because of the kind of car it is. If he has a round of golf planned after work on a Friday, well, the Porsche is what he will drive. He drives it for its tremendous reserves of power, its sporty performance and road handling capabilities, its responsiveness to his commands and its smooth, powerful acceleration, whenever required.

Not many luxury sports cars match up to it.

Competition for Porsche

If at first it seems that Porsche sits in a class all by itself, it is almost that way in reality.

Let us put the German luxury car brands down first as Porsche's competition:

- Mercedes-Benz, especially the AMG range of vehicles
- BMW, notably the M-variant of the 3,5 and 7 series models
- Audi

I think the real competition for Porsche, however, are the British and Italian luxury sports cars brands.

- Aston Martin, McLaren, Jaguar
- Ferrari and Lamborghini

While the Italian car brands are comparable to Porsche in image terms, they are clearly in the supercar segment. Even Aston Martin and McLaren are mostly represented in supercars and have very few models that are priced in the same segment as Porsche.

Which leaves Jaguar as the chief, direct competitor for Porsche (I had already said in my [brand strategy for Jaguar](#) on my blog, that I consider Porsche to be its main competitor, so we have an interesting correspondence here!)

Porsche brand associations

The Porsche brand has many image associations that come to mind, when one thinks of the brand. I am listing down a few of the most important ones that have implications for Porsche's brand strategy:

- Powerful performance
- Sporty with superb road-handling at top speeds
- Excellent stability thanks to Porsche's suspension system
- Contemporary and sporty in imagery
- 911, Porsche's instantly recognizable model that has come to almost symbolise the brand
- Enjoys large fan following globally and a somewhat cult-status

Janis Joplin famously sang in the 1960s: "Oh Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes-Benz, my friends all drive Porsches and I must make amends."

She obviously didn't have the competitive framework right, but as luxury cars and as symbols of German engineering, they are both coveted brands.

Danger alert! Individual sub-brands larger than the whole

While it is true that the Porsche brand enjoys a bit of a cult following, there is a danger that the brand must recognize and mitigate against. And that is that each individual sub-brand of Porsche (each model), has such a different product and driving experience offering, enough to make each of them a brand on its own.

While the fact that each model is so differentiated from another is a good thing, the danger is that each acquires its own distinctive brand personality over time and that makes each a separate brand. In order that the actual main brand Porsche is not overshadowed, the company must take the right steps in brand communication.

- Correct badging on the car's boot, which Porsche is already doing a good job of
- Whenever a sub-brand is referred to, make sure it is prefixed with Porsche
- When writing about sub-brands' always focus on Porsche's contribution to the features, engineering, performance, etc.
- Never give the sub-brands a larger personality than Porsche's own.

The future that awaits Porsche

There is more that unites Porsche and Mercedes-Benz in my thinking; although one is sporty and contemporary while the other is a classic luxury car, both brands are known more for their engineering excellence than their motoring technology. A subtle, but important difference between them and BMW and Audi on the other hand, who are seen as German luxury brands that push the boundaries of technology.

In this sense, Porsche has a longer way to travel to meet future motoring technology requirements. Thus far, the company website doesn't say much about their transition to electric and autonomous vehicles. Porsche does seem to have developed hybrid and hybrid-EV variants of the Porsche Macan, but new technologies don't seem to be priorities from what I could see on their website.

This is quite in contrast with Jaguar which is paving the way to connected, electric and shared mobility in the future.

Why should this be so? Is powerful, sporty performance not compatible with electric and connected mobility? I think they are, and can go together, provided Porsche's engineers and designers orient their thinking in this direction. In fact, Germany's own regulatory requirements will make fossil-fuel vehicles redundant after 2030; many cities have already banned diesel vehicles.

The earlier Porsche adopts electric and connected mobility technologies, the better it is for the brand. Porsche might not want to go the way of shared mobility, preferring to stay an owner-driven private luxury sports car, which is perfectly fine. But the company must demonstrate their commitment to new cleaner, connected motoring technologies, as that is a requirement of every car company today.

Porsche's Core Brand Values

Looking at the Porsche brand architecture, I think it is perfectly possible to retain the brand's core values and adopt new technologies and still be relevant to the Porsche customer.

The brand's core value is powerful performance, and it is accompanied by sportiness, as well as the ability to handle the road adeptly at top speeds. These and fine German engineering define the Porsche brand.

To this architecture, we can add electric, clean and connected, and it won't change the Porsche brand very much. Of course, it means adding new layers of

technology to the brand, which brings in a new dimension and one that is relevant and will be welcomed by customers.

However, the core of the brand will still be Porsche and that is what will attract and retain customers. To that extent, Porsche should continue to maintain its product design philosophy and language which is quite distinctive and recognizable, even as the brand embraces new digital technologies.

Porsche brand positioning

The German luxury sports car for thrilling, power-packed performances.

Brand promise

Only Porsche combines the best of German engineering and the technologies of the future to thrill your journeys.

Tone and manner

- Authoritative and leader-like
- Contemporary sports car expert
- Sporty and energetic
- Teutonic conservatism (measured tone of voice, no overpromising, to-the-point, reserved)

How communication will build the Porsche brand for the future

I have seen some print advertisements for Porsche ages ago, mostly in books on advertising, and I think they almost all came from the US, which used to be its biggest market. Nowadays, according to the Porsche website, it is China, followed by the US and Europe.

I don't recollect any great TV adverts, though, which is a pity since the Porsche brand is made for visual drama, as a luxury sports car. That said, the Porsche brand needs to be in both media, as well as in digital, because of the kind of relationship it has with its audience.

Customers (existing and prospective) will derive great thrill from TV adverts, and can pore over product details in the print medium, since they are sports car enthusiasts and the Porsche brand talks both to the head and to the heart. In the digital medium, Porsche ought to use Twitter as a PR medium only to announce new launches, product tests, events, new technologies, etc.

What communication ought to do is to elevate the Porsche brand to the numero uno position in the luxury sports car category. Without any hesitation, customers ought to think of Porsche first when considering a luxury sports car.

And, in a slight change from the past, Porsche communication will now feature new and emerging motoring technologies without letting them overshadow the brand.

Strapline for Porsche, based on the recommended brand positioning:

German for adrenaline

Creative Idea for the Porsche brand campaign

The creative idea for the communication for the Porsche brand will be about dramatizing its superior power-packed performance, in ways that engage and surprise.

In TV adverts, the creative idea is to tickle the envy and covetous admiration that people have for Porsche cars, in order to say that Porsches are really meant to be enjoyed from the inside-out.

In print, the idea establishes the leadership of Porsche in luxury sports cars in a truly German way, making the reader look at the brand in a new light.

TV advert #1 (Inside-out):

Film opens on the side of a highway – an autobahn – somewhere in Germany one fine afternoon. We have quick cuts of cars whizzing past, both left to right and in the opposite direction. It's all a blur, to the sound of sports cars driving past us.

Dissolve now to a quiet scene outside a golf clubhouse. We hear birds chirping among the trees outside. A picture of tranquility. We are in the parking lot and we see golfers going in and out of the clubhouse.

The funny thing is that as people walk by, they keep turning back to look at something. Some of them watch others do the same and chuckle, amused, as they walk past.

We then notice that it's a gleaming Porsche 911 Carrera that is drawing so much attention. The sunlight glints off its metalwork. As we admire it, a man in his late forties, looking dapper in his tee-shirt, chinos and golf shoes, walks towards us.

Cut to a young man in his late twenties standing by and admiring the Porsche. He then decides to click a selfie of himself posing with the car. He notices the older man approaching, and smiles wryly to himself ruing the fact that it will soon drive away.

The older man sees the young chap, and while stowing away his golf kit, asks if he needs a ride somewhere.

Porsche owner: Can I drop you somewhere?

The young fellow's eyes light up at the prospect of actually being able to drive in a Porsche.

Young man: Yes, if you're going towards... (voice trails off)

The older man asks him to hop in, and they drive off.

We are now inside the Porsche 911 Carrera, driving through beautiful German country. The young man reclines back in his plush seat to relax and get a better view of the blue sky and tree-tops whizzing past across the windscreen. He is clearly enjoying this.

MVO: Most people spend an eternity trying to glimpse a Porsche.

To truly appreciate one, however, you must experience it in motion. Inside-out.

The road winds through deep, dark forests and hits an autobahn, where the car takes a turn to join it. The young man sees the Porsche owner step on the gas, and looks at the speedometer, his eyes agog. He whistles silently to himself, as if to say wow!

Dissolve to a spot where the young man alights from the car and thanks the older gentleman.

Young man: Thank you. I've never driven in anything like this.

The older man smiles and tells him to wait for his time.

Porsche owner: Wait till you get behind the wheel of one. It's worth it.

The Porsche 911 Carrera drives off into the distance.

Super: Porsche

German for adrenaline

TV advert #2 (Porsche baiters)

Film opens on a busy city street during the day. A youngish man in his mid-thirties hails a taxi and gets in in a hurry. He tells the cab driver to follow the Porsche car ahead of them.

Man (excitedly): Follow that Porsche!

Driver: If you insist.

We are in the midst of heavy city traffic right now.

Dissolve to a scene in another town. We see a youngish lady in her early-to-mid-thirties get into a cab and tell the driver to follow a Porsche pulling out of the kerb and joining the busy lanes of traffic.

Lady (excitedly): Follow that Porsche! Hurry, we can't lose it.

Driver (grins into rear-view mirror): Relax, lady. If I drive any faster, the Porsche will be following us!

Dissolve to a scene on the outskirts of town in what looks like a peaceful suburb. Not as much traffic, but a man in his fifties standing by the side of the road sees a Porsche drive by. He flags down the very next car he sees and asks for a ride.

Man hops in and immediately orders the driver to follow the Porsche that just went by.

Man: Follow that Porsche!

Driver: Why, anything the matter?

Man (pleading): It's a Porsche, that's why.

Driver: You're in a Porsche, by the way.

Man (in delight and amazement): What?! You following a Porsche too?

We are driving through beautiful countryside, on a cloudy but pleasant day.

Driver (laughs, amusedly): How did you guess? We have a Porsche rally today.

Cut to expression of joy mixed with resignation on the man's face.

MVO: The things people do to get a better glimpse of a Porsche.

If only they knew how it feels to actually drive one.

They reach their starting point, where a whole lot of Porsche cars and their owners have already gathered.

The man in his fifties, steps out of the Porsche and thanks the owner for the ride. The Porsche driver, on the other hand, invites him to join the rally.

Man: Thanks. This made my day.

Driver: Be my guest. Why don't you join us?

End on an aerial shot of a convoy of Porsches all making their way up a winding hill road.

Super: Porsche

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TV advert #3 (Talking to me?)

Film opens on a restaurant sit-out scene on a fine and sunny day. There are people seated at various tables set under garden umbrellas, enjoying a drink and lunch.

We cut to a lady in her mid-thirties seated at one of the tables looking out towards the street to one side, as if she's waiting for someone. She has a glass of white wine in front of her.

Suddenly, she waves to someone in the distance.

A youngish man who is approaching camera thinks she is waving at him. He points to himself and asks, "Me?"

She waves him to one side, and when the man does move away, she smiles and takes a sip of her wine.

Almost immediately, a couple walk towards her, and the lady waves again.

They wonder if she's gesturing to them. When she waves again, they step aside, a little puzzled.

The lady gives them a thumbs up sign and smiles.

We now see that the object of her attention is a Porsche, parked right where the restaurant begins.

The waiter comes to take her order.

Lady: Still waiting for my friend. Who does that Porsche belong to?

Waiter: I don't know... somebody who works in that building. It's always there.

She looks admiringly at the car again. And then looks up at the tall building.

MVO: That a Porsche attracts attention anywhere it goes is well-known.

Few actually go anywhere in one, however.

Cut back to the lady speaking to the waiter.

Lady: Thanks. I already like this restaurant, then.

Film ends on the lady sipping her wine and almost about to wave someone away again when she stops midway, realising it's finally her man friend walking towards her.

She laughs at herself.

Super: Porsche

German for adrenaline

Print Campaign for Porsche

Visuals in all print adverts depict a Porsche car whizzing past.

Advert #1:

Headline: The reason Germans invented the autobahn.

Body Copy:

The Porsche luxury sports car was born in 1931.

The German autobahn quickly followed.

And they have had a great relationship ever since. The tarmac is inspiration for Porsche engineers to design better cars each time. Faster than the fast lane is used to. Smoother than any chicane allows. And responsive, the way only race drivers know.

Porsche has seen over 90 years of power-packed performances. Why do you think?

Sign-off:

Porsche

German for adrenaline

Advert #2:

Headline: Good thing, autobahns don't have speed limits.

Body Copy:

They are the reason Porsche engineers design better cars, with each new model and variant.

Porsche's top speeds range between 200-230 kmph.

Why would anyone want to put a limit on it?

Besides, Porsche cars can be as disciplined and self-restrained as their owners. Which is why we thoughtfully design all the controls they might need. 8-speed transmission, Porsche's legendary suspension system, unparalleled road-handling and cornering at high speeds.

When it comes to creating luxury sports cars for the future, the sky is the limit.

Sign-off:

Porsche

German for adrenaline

Advert #3:

Headline: 0-100kmph before you can say Nurburgring Nordshleife.

Body Copy:

We know, it sounds like a Wagnerian opera.

The thrills experienced on this once legendary race track can be quite Wagnerian too.

Looping along 20.8 km, around 73 turns and 300m of inclines and descents, the Nurburgring Nordschleife is every Porsche engineer's ultimate test.

Little wonder Porsche cars are powered for climbs. Smoother than any chicane allows. And responsive, the way only race drivers know.

90 years of power-packed, heart-thumping action, all in operatic luxury.

Sign-off:

Porsche

German for adrenaline

Advert #4:

Headline: The dreaded 911, you'd want to know.

Body copy:

Before the horrific 9/11 event, 911 used to be a dreaded sports car coupé on the road.

Dreaded. But loved and admired as well. It's instantly recognizable torpedo-shaped body with a sloping rear hood hinted at a mean machine.

It became a new design standard in sports cars. Including for us, at Porsche.

The Porsche 911 went on to create many legends. On the race track and off it. It is still the standard-bearer of what our sports cars are all about.

And it's still dreaded by competition who have a hard time keeping up.

Sign-off: Porsche

German for adrenaline

Advert #5:

Headline: For 90 years, people have called us electric.

Body Copy:

The Porsche luxury sports car was born in 1931.

Since then, we have put the most powerful engines and the finest controls in sports car drivers' hands.

Each time, they have called us electric.

We follow strict emission guidelines, by the way. And we have a range of gasoline and hybrid options in Porsche Panamera and Porsche Cayenne.

Now, we are determined to go all-electric, as can be seen with the new Porsche Taycan.

With all the power, range and speed that you would expect from a Porsche.

After 90 years of power-packed performances, what's electric?

Sign-off:

Porsche

German for adrenaline

Use of other media and communication disciplines

While Porsche's main brand campaign will focus on TV and print media, the company must use the digital medium to full advantage, given that many sports car enthusiasts will be present there.

The first is to create a database of Porsche customers – in case the company doesn't have one – and communicate with them on a one-to-one basis

regularly. This doesn't mean bombarding them with emails every day, but communicating with them, whenever there is anything new and significant to share with them.

Direct response or direct marketing is the best way to keep customers engaged with the Porsche brand and to strengthen the brand's relationship with them. This is best done through forming a club of Porsche owners and rewarding them with new experiences.

- One way of doing this is that Porsche owners earn points on the number of miles they have clocked in their cars which they can redeem for bespoke Porsche luxury merchandise
- Reward them with luxury motor-sport experiences around the world, where they get a chance to meet other Porsche owners and participate in unique motoring events.

The other important way to use the digital medium is as a PR tool. On Twitter and on Instagram, Porsche can share news of the company's latest developments, corporate news, new product launches, product tests, events, etc.

Here's hoping that Porsche will go 90-100 with a new brand-focused strategy and communication in the decade ahead.