

THE **EV** REVOLUTION IN AUTOMOTIVE EVENTS



THE CHANGE **ISN'T**
JUST WHAT'S UNDER
THE HOOD.

noble
events

Electric vehicle (EV) sales in the UK in July 2023 were up **90%** from the same month in the previous year. SMMT estimate that an EV is purchased in the UK every **60 seconds**.

Although petrol cars still account for the majority of new car sales overall in the UK, it's undeniable that the global shift towards EVs is gaining momentum as countries and car manufacturers push towards a more sustainable future, framed by looming ESG targets.



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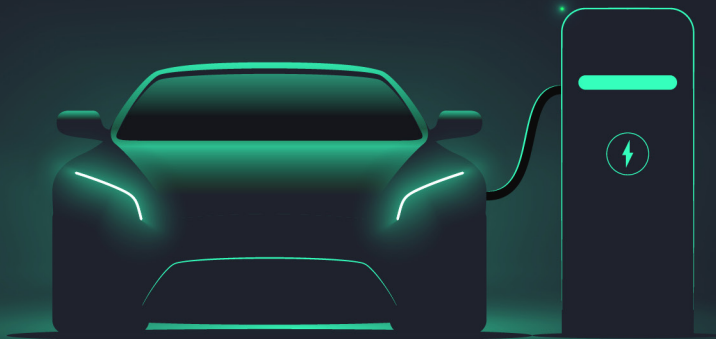


EV event clients and the evolving customer journey

For events agencies, two very different types of clients exist in the race to dominate the EV passenger car market. The legacy OEMs with established success in building combustion engine vehicles, and the new, all-electric challenger brands. Both represent significant opportunity for events and experience marketing agencies, yet often have very different approaches to customer engagement, and face complex and subtle challenges.

Legacy OEMs have the challenge of attracting already committed EV drivers and embracing a new, zero emissions narrative whilst trying not to alienate their existing client base and, whilst still in production, not cannibalising their own sales in combustion engine models. In the meantime, new all electric challenger brands have taken the opportunity to redesign the whole experience of car purchase and ownership. Some referring to "users" rather than drivers, many offering a solely online purchase experience and positioning themselves more as consumer technology brands than traditional automotives. The industrial estate clusters of car retailers on city outskirts are going head-to-head with lifestyle-orientated brand experience hubs in exclusive and highly central areas. Forecourts packed with tightly parked vehicles are being replaced with elegant, single car interior displays and touchscreens for booking test drives online from a choice of locations. And after the purchase, the ownership experience is also being reinvented, supported by lifestyle apps, members club-style access and online communities.

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For automotive events, customer experience drives the shift regardless of the audience

Car launches (whether to a media, retailer, or consumer audience) remain a coveted business segment of the UK events and experience marketing industry. Regardless of the audience, the strategy, experience, and messaging behind EV launches remains driven by the consumer. Equipping the retailer with the understanding of who to sell to and how, and demonstrating to the media why the car is simply perfect for that target demographic, via a series of typically exclusive and creative lifestyle experiences.

For the retailers, considerations like combatting range anxiety, ease of charging and battery life require a deep understanding to effectively reassure consumers. For the media the comfort and pleasure of the drive is reliant on something other than the rev of the engine, shifting of gears or the exhilarating moments waiting for the torque to kick in. For the supercar and performance car manufacturers, the sound of (almost) silence is replacing some of the loudest and attention-grabbing engines in the world.

A deep understanding of the purchase motivators, customer journey and evolving techniques that established and new car manufacturers use to promote and sell EV models is an essential asset for events agencies in order to deliver live experiences that are consistent with the client's wider objectives and positioning in the EV space. For example, some brands with long enduring “petrol head” customers may seek to adopt a softer, more inclusive approach to promoting EVs in order to avoid alienation of their existing and loyal supporters and to bring them on the journey.

For the events agencies launching these cars, the logistical challenges of finding suitable charging infrastructure at the perfect 5-star hotel venue AND the Michelin star lunch stop in the Cotswolds can be challenging to say the least. However the real challenge is in understanding the consumer and the nuanced challenges the client faces in securing their advocacy.



Selling EVs in the UK landscape

Although significant development and investment is underway, the charging infrastructure and regulatory landscape in the UK has not been the most conducive to a rapid uptake in EV, in comparison to other more developed EV markets such as Norway.

In rented accommodation, for example, landlords were not obliged to grant tenants permission to install charging points for electric vehicles (causing a notably slower uptake for the UK's Uber driver workforce, amongst others, with an extended reliance on hybrid models). Whilst grants are now in place to support landlords in carrying the up-front costs of installing charge points, such initiatives have been slower to get off the ground than in other countries.

Off-street parking scarcity in many residential areas and an absence of some of the more attractive and significant regulatory incentives (such as discounted parking costs and toll fees or a VAT reduction on the purchase price of new EVs) have been somewhat absent from the UK landscape, in fact both the purchase grant and home and workplace charging schemes were removed by the UK Government in 2022 in favour of a fleet-focused series of schemes. These conditions mean that UK passenger EV manufacturers need to work harder to enable their prospective customers and to reassure and convince them that the transition, and the car itself, is worth it.

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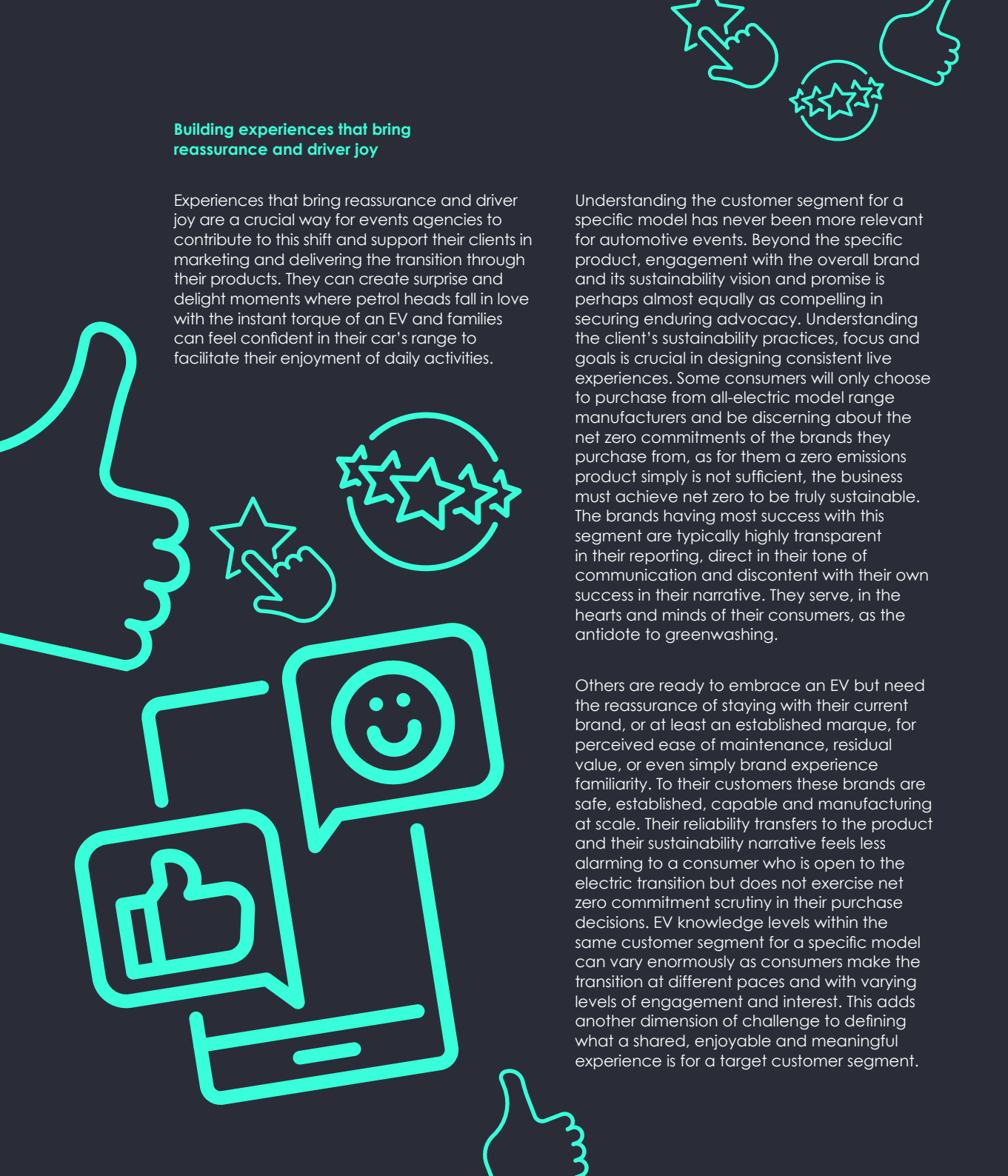
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Building experiences that bring reassurance and driver joy

Experiences that bring reassurance and driver joy are a crucial way for events agencies to contribute to this shift and support their clients in marketing and delivering the transition through their products. They can create surprise and delight moments where petrol heads fall in love with the instant torque of an EV and families can feel confident in their car's range to facilitate their enjoyment of daily activities.

Understanding the customer segment for a specific model has never been more relevant for automotive events. Beyond the specific product, engagement with the overall brand and its sustainability vision and promise is perhaps almost equally as compelling in securing enduring advocacy. Understanding the client's sustainability practices, focus and goals is crucial in designing consistent live experiences. Some consumers will only choose to purchase from all-electric model range manufacturers and be discerning about the net zero commitments of the brands they purchase from, as for them a zero emissions product simply is not sufficient, the business must achieve net zero to be truly sustainable. The brands having most success with this segment are typically highly transparent in their reporting, direct in their tone of communication and discontent with their own success in their narrative. They serve, in the hearts and minds of their consumers, as the antidote to greenwashing.

Others are ready to embrace an EV but need the reassurance of staying with their current brand, or at least an established marque, for perceived ease of maintenance, residual value, or even simply brand experience familiarity. To their customers these brands are safe, established, capable and manufacturing at scale. Their reliability transfers to the product and their sustainability narrative feels less alarming to a consumer who is open to the electric transition but does not exercise net zero commitment scrutiny in their purchase decisions. EV knowledge levels within the same customer segment for a specific model can vary enormously as consumers make the transition at different paces and with varying levels of engagement and interest. This adds another dimension of challenge to defining what a shared, enjoyable and meaningful experience is for a target customer segment.

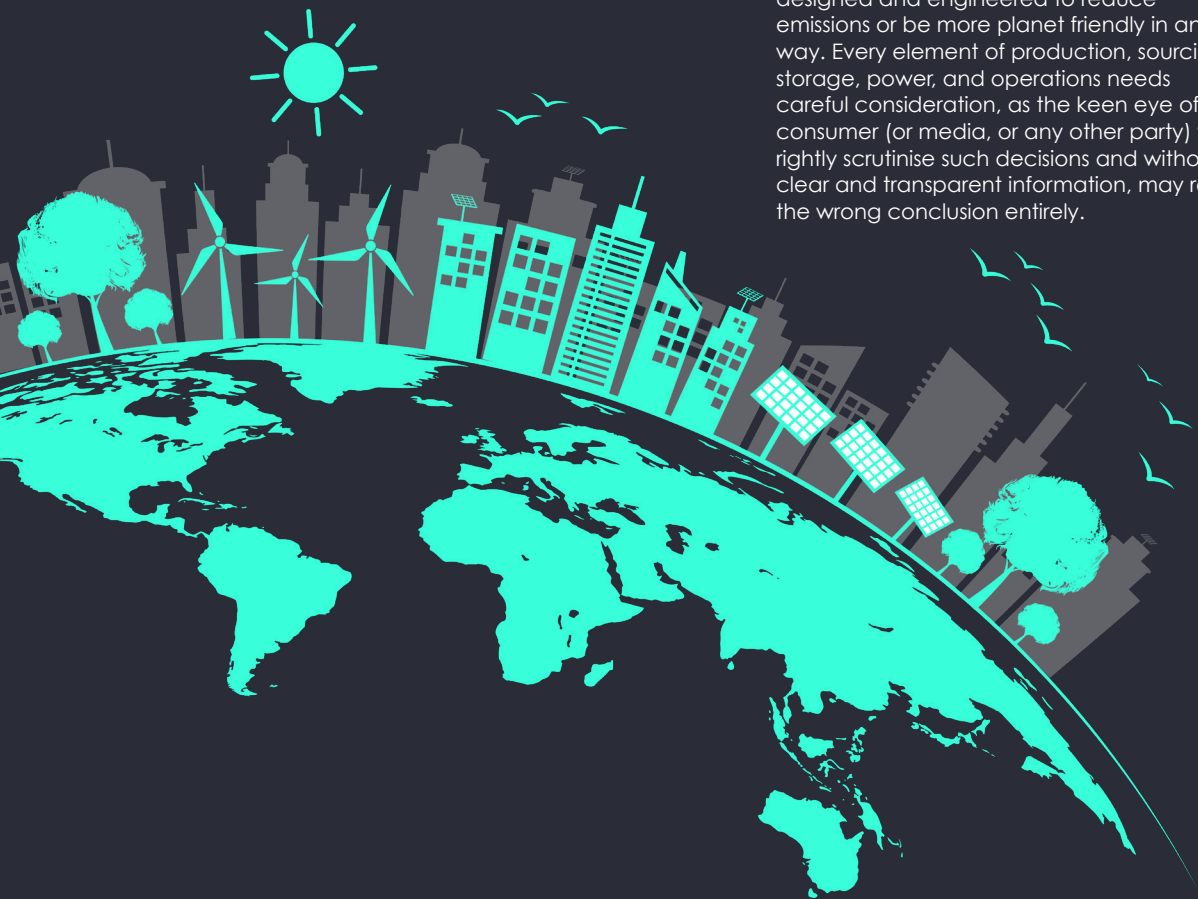


Delivering sustainably

Prioritising sustainable solutions in the events industry applies to all events, irrespective of client industry, product, location and audience. Whilst huge progress has been made across the board in this space, with reliable event-specific carbon measuring platforms and reputable, sustainable suppliers available in almost all categories, in more global locations than ever before, there are still numerous challenges in gathering groups of people together to promote the production of EVs.

The narrative around the sustainability of the event will naturally be guided by the client's tone of voice, but transparency and accurate, clear information is essential. Misconceptions and misjudgements about an item being unsustainable when in fact it is made from recycled material, repurposed, and stored locally in a low emissions facility, are easy to reach unless agencies and host clients are bold and transparent in their communications about the sustainability operations of the event itself, not just the product and the manufacturer.

It is also fair to point out that the event sustainability expectations around EV activity are higher, as with all products essentially designed and engineered to reduce emissions or be more planet friendly in any way. Every element of production, sourcing, storage, power, and operations needs careful consideration, as the keen eye of the consumer (or media, or any other party) will rightly scrutinise such decisions and without clear and transparent information, may reach the wrong conclusion entirely.





Conclusion

While challenger brands and legacy OEMs alike look for ways to make the customer journey more user friendly, seamless and accessible, events agencies need to follow suit with their approach to delivering the events that support these brands and their activities.

Strategic insights and deep understanding of customer segmentation add more value to clients than ever before. Agencies must be thoughtful, well researched and able to stay on top of the ever-changing market and regulatory landscape to really understand the mindset of the consumer and market conditions faced by the client.

Noble Events is a trusted partner for automotive clients seeking to maximise the potential of their EV brands and model lines. We excel at curating immersive and informative experiences that showcase the unparalleled advantages of EV technology and help reframe driver joy. By constantly staying at the forefront of industry trends and advancements, our dedicated teams in the UK and Dubai ensure our clients receive innovative solutions tailored to their needs worldwide.

Further Reading from Noble Events

*Putting sustainability at the heart of your event
What does luxury mean to you?*

Noble Events strengthens and expands Dubai team

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