

# Lexus Goes All-In For Passion, Diversity With New IS Campaign



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Cars & Bikes

*I am grounded in autos but range broadly.*



A scene from a new ad for Lexus IS in the "All In" campaign.

A big part of the U.S. upscale auto market is bifurcating these days between kid-toting millennial couples and consumers who, while sharing the general demographics of Generation Y, psychographically live on a different planet.

So while carmakers are trying to attract late-forming households of 30-somethings with an increasing array of huge SUVs, they're also attempting to corral other young buyers with sporty sedans that promise excitement and even provoke passion — while ignoring the question of roominess.

The latter is the approach being taken by Lexus in a new marketing campaign for its 2021 Lexus IS. Its IS 350 already boasts the youngest buyer in the near-luxury sports sedan segment with a median age of 48, Lexus says. Now, its new advertising campaign, titled "All In," targets the brand's youngest and most diverse audience yet by leveraging passion-referencing creative, online influencers and diverse media partnerships.

"IS already has the youngest and most diverse buyer in the Lexus family," Lisa Materazzo, vice president of Lexus brand marketing, told me. "We're very effective at attracting this strategically important young buyer."

And Lexus is stretching the definition of “young” beyond demographics to focus on psychographics, which for the IS target also envelope many Gen-Xers and even some boomers. The targets also directly include consumers who identify as Black,, Asian Hispanic and members of the LGBTQ community.

“Their psychographics are a very interesting and noteworthy thing about this buyer,” said Materazzo, who’s been promoted to head of marketing for Toyota this month. “They’re confident individualists who embrace challenge and growth. They seek to maximize their lives in all their experiences.”

Thus the ads feature eight “micro-influencers” rather than actors. The first spot, “Names,” moves quickly through people from different walks of life who introduce themselves by the identifying monikers they’ve earned — be it “sneakerhead,” “gamer” or “audiophile.” Another spot, “Vanity Plates,” demonstrates just how far these enthusiasts will go to show off the obsessions that define them.

“The way we’re approaching it with these micro-influencers is unique and speaks to the authenticity of Lexus as a brand and how we developed the vehicle, Materazzo said. “We have a long history in the sport-sedan segment and a diehard fan base that’s super-passionate” about IS.

In fact, Materazzo said, the near-luxury sedan segment where IS is a leader comprises about 400,000 units a year in the United States even though the market is “under pressure.” Particularly in this segment, she said, “there’s still opportunity” even though “there’s been a lot of talk about the demise of sedans in general.”

To underscore the passion point, Lexus online content will include a series with MotorTrend on a “race” between race-car driver Rhys Millen and downhill skateboarder John Neuman at speeds of more than 70 mph on Malibu’s legendary Deer Creek Road. Lexus also is partnering with Courageous Studios, CNN’s brand studio, to produce a documentary-style campaign that follows Ugandan-American photographer and renowned globetrotter Jessica Nabongo, who’s billed as the first Black woman to visit every country in the world — and who now has the goal of seeing every state.

“We’re going heavy on digital where young buyers pursue content, with unique placements and partnerships,” Materazzo said. “We’re going deep around lifestyle activities and passions.”

Lexus also is airing the IS spots during primetime, special events and sports including National Football League playoffs and National Basketball Association games.

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