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Feature Post

Putting a Price Tag on Tesla
By Vitaliy Katsenelson, CFA

Vitaliy is CIO of Investment Management Associates

Throughout my analysis, I have compared the Model 3 to the iPhone, Tesla to Apple, and Elon Musk to Steve Jobs. What I am struggling with is this: Can Tesla become as successful as Apple, and can Tesla cars turn into an iPhone-like franchise, taking EV market share from nothing to 10% to 30% of the ICE car market?

Tesla has many advantages. It is not burdened by assets from the previous domain (gasoline cars). It is incredibly focused. Going back to our Cortés analogy, it has no boats waiting for it. If this electric thing doesn't work out, it is done; there is no Plan B. Its vertical integration may work to its advantage, as it is competing against companies that have to rely on their suppliers and their messy alliances.

Tesla's first-principles approach will allow it to be constantly years ahead of the competition. Despite its zero advertising budget — its advertising department is an army of one, Elon Musk, with 27 million Twitter followers — Tesla has one of the most iconic global brands. It is run by a relentless founder who is willing to put in hundred-hour weeks and sleep in the factory when needed. Tesla is years ahead of the competition on battery development (I am not 100% certain about its exclusivity, though) and software. And then there is self-driving (with 1 billion miles of data), which may provide Tesla a lead that will be difficult for its ICE brethren and even Google to catch....

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