

MOBILE

Lexus introduces virtual reality experience via mobile app

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Lexus RC F virtual reality app

By KAYSORIN

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus is giving consumers the chance to enjoy its fastest vehicles from the comfort of their homes with a virtual reality experience.

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The new experience will give viewers the thrill of driving a Lexus RC F on the Ascari racetrack in Marbella, Spain. Creating this virtual reality experience allows Lexus to reach consumers around the world and form intimate connections with those who might not ordinarily have access to its products.

"At Lexus we are determined to push the boundaries in everything we do, whether that's in the design of our cars or the way we market our products to customers," said Spiros Fotinos, head of european marketing, **Lexus**, Brussels, Belgium. "For the RC F we have created an amazing virtual reality experience that can be enjoyed and shared by anyone, anywhere – without the traditional hardware limitations."

Real talk

Lexus' latest virtual reality experience is being offered as a smartphone application that will be available for iOS and Android. It will also be accessible via YouTube's virtual

reality streaming function, so viewers can watch on desktop computers.



The app will be compatible with various devices to enhance immersion

The application will be compatible with Oculus rift headset and Google Cardboard VR viewer, so users can enjoy an even more immersive experience if they want. Partnering with the latest technologies will make Lexus' virtual reality easier for consumers to obtain.

"For some, virtual reality will be as close as they come to owning this vehicle," said Jeff Hasen, a Seattle-based mobile marketing strategist. "For others, the sensation just might tip the scales and give them reason to check out the RC F more closely.

"Lexus is wise to provide multiple ways to engage - often, the killer app is choice. Of course, there is nothing new with the idea of having consumers 'experience' a vehicle virtually. In fact, it's table stakes"

Lexus first launched this RC F virtual reality experience at the Geneva motor show in March. Targeting affluents at a popular event likely helped the automaker garner excitement about the new release.

In order to create the experience Lexus filmed its RC F on the world famous Ascari racetrack in Marbella, Spain. Cameras both inside and outside the car were used to capture the experience as comprehensively as possible.



Lexus' virtual reality app will feature the RC F

The 360 degree visuals create a fully immersive experience with viewers having the option of taking a smooth or urgent driving style to further personalize the experience. Giving viewers some element of control allows them to connect more intimately with the car and perhaps form a more meaningful relationship with the brand.

Lexus intends to expand the app in upcoming months to include different driving routes around the world. The automaker promises to offer a virtual reality experience for many more key events in Europe this summer.

Taking consumers to exclusive events or unique locations around the world makes the virtual reality experience even more appealing. It is helpful for Lexus to connect with consumers who would not ordinarily have the opportunity to drive its cars.



Virtual reality has the potential to engage consumers around the world

In the works

This is not Lexus' first exploration into the world of virtual reality. In fact, the brand has experimented with a variety of initiatives in recent years.

For example, in 2014 Lexus attempted to give fans a clear sense of its NX and RC lines with virtual reality apps.

Rudimentary virtual reality apps are becoming the norm among automakers that want to accommodate the research tendencies of prospective consumers. When looking for a

new car, consumers scour the Internet, and brands are doing what they can to tip the search in their favor ([see story](#)).

Earlier this year, Lexus even introduced a similar virtual reality experience that also highlights the RC F. The automaker worked to generate interest in the 2015 Lexus RC F with a motion-controlled driving simulator.

Interested consumers could receive an authentic sense of the model, while also engaging with Oculus Rift technology for perhaps the first time. As virtual reality technology becomes more widespread, automakers will likely implement the technology in showrooms and dealers everywhere ([see story](#)).

This new virtual reality application takes Lexus one step further.

"The combination of realism, multi-platform availability and YouTube 360-degree video streaming makes it truly a world first," Mr. Fotinos said.

Final Take

Kay Sorin, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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