

INTERNET

Bentley returns to roots with Continental heritage video

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Bentley Continental GT (left) and R-Type Continental (right)

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

British automaker Bentley Motors is using its heritage to promote and underscore the evolution of the Continental line.

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A short film released by the automaker and posted on YouTube and to social media accounts shows the history of its Continental vehicle, which date back 63 years to the 1952 R-Type Continental. After recent efforts to extend its brand both geographically and in product offerings, the video serves as a reminder that today's Bentley remains intrinsically tied to the Bentley of years past.

"Heritage is the backbone of a luxury brand," said Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#), Miami. "The narrative of a luxury brand's past validates its future."

"In luxury the brand comes first," he said. "The product, in this case the Continental, is the manifestation of Bentley's DNA."

Grand tourer

The video begins with a close-up of a hand opening up the door of a vehicle, which a cut reveals to be the R-Type Continental from 1952.

A voiceover informs the consumer of the vehicle's history: The vehicle is described as the first grand tourer, as it was designed to cross continents along the Route National and Autobahn, justifying a top speed of 120 MPH and providing the name "Continental."

The voiceover also describes the simple but sleek design, recognizable by its "striking powerline, muscular rear haunches and swooping, fast roofline," which the visuals show off as the vehicle races along the highway. Also noted is that the R-Type's 120 MPH top speed made it the fastest four-seater at the time.

At this point, the video shifts to the present-day Continental GT, which tops out at 206 MPH and maintains the same cross-continental capabilities. To emphasize the connection between the vehicles, the same shots and backgrounds are used as both vehicles drive on the road. The repeating visual elements create a link and showcase the importance of heritage in Bentley's modern design.

Bentley R-type Continental: The Evolution of an Icon

The video represents a shift in strategy compared to recent Bentley initiatives. Recent promotional campaigns have focused on the new Bentley Bentayga, the brand's first SUV ([see story](#)). Such campaigns included innovative technology and creative marketing initiatives ([see story](#)).

"From loyalty and elegance to speed and style, the video reinforces the desirability of the Bentley brand and Continental," Mr. Ramey said. "Luxury brands market to create desire. Desire is essential because you don't sell to the affluent; they choose to buy from you."

"Iconic luxury brands include their narrative in everything they do," he said. "In some cases, such as this video, it's the entire reason for its existence."



Bentley R-Type Continental

By emphasizing innovation while discussing the Continental in the video, Bentley creates a unifying brand identity across its heritage models and new vehicles such as the Bentayga. Doing so also helps to show consumers not interested in purchasing an SUV that Bentley has not forgotten them.

Additionally, luxury brands often rely on heritage to create an aura of desirability and suggest a tradition of quality. The video does not actively promote the newer model, suggesting that instilling such values and highlighting brand consistency across its line are primary goals alongside Bentayga promotions.



Bentley Continentals

Bentley has also been expanding its presence in new markets of late ([see story](#)). A heritage video shows that the brand has not forgotten where it came from even as it finds new places and creates new products.

Blast from the past

Competing automakers have also recently steered consumers to recognize heritage when considering the brand.

For example, British automaker Rolls-Royce Motor Cars rolled into the next generation with its all-new Dawn convertible model.

For the first time, the BMW-owned brand unveiled online a new model whose name and design recalled the earlier Silver Dawn model, launched in 1949, eschewing the traditional car show and other regular festivities. Unveiled at the Frankfurt Motor Show but streamed online, the Dawn Rolls-Royce convertible targets a younger, active audience ([see story](#)).

Likewise, other automotive brands are also looking for ways to incorporate heritage into innovative new models. German automaker Porsche is showcasing a pair of hybrids in Canada to recover forgotten heritage.

On Nov. 20, Porsche Cars Canada launched an E-Performance mobile display at Yorkdale Mall in Toronto that will travel around the country to show off a racing and a road-built hybrid. Having vehicles and product specialists on-site will help consumers understand Porsche's environmental ties and assuage any potential worries about too-strong a shift in brand identity ([see story](#)).

"It's particularly true in the automotive industry that luxury brands have an inherent conflict with their dealers," Mr. Ramey said. "While the brands are the caretakers of the brand, the dealers primary concern is to move product. This conflict reinforces the need for brand marketing that's louder than the dealers' sales promotions."

Final Take

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