

EVENTS / CAUSES

## BMW hosts winter-themed driving events to drive sales

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By GISELLE TSIRULNIK

BMW and K2 Skis teamed to host a variety of driving events this winter, claiming the one thing they have in common is their incredible performance in the snow.

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From January until March, events are taking place at exclusive mountain resorts across the country, where consumers can test drive the BMW X3. Everyday BMW is giving away a grand prize package: a pair of limited-edition K2 Aftershock skis and a BMW ski bag.

“In general, driving events are the best way to showcase our vehicles, and whenever we are launching a new vehicle, we give consumers that opportunity to get behind the wheel,” said Stacy Morris, marketing communications manager at BMW North America, Woodcliff Lake, NJ.

“The BMW X3 debuted in January,” she said. “It is a new SUV, completely redesigned and smaller, that was built in America and so we felt the mountain resorts were a great market for us to show the vehicle.

“Letting people test drive the X3 gives a great brand experience and also shows consumers the competitive advantage of the car.”

The new X3 will be on display for skiers to experience and **BMW** experts will be available

for demonstrations.

For consumers that take a new X3 out for a test drive at a mountain, they can also demo a pair of K2 skis for the day.

Driving events

Driving event such as this one are not new to the automotive sector.

Automakers understand the look and feel of a product is an important factor of the purchase decision.

Letting consumers get behind the wheel of a car gives them a first-hand experience of the product features and benefits exponentially better than a video, static image, text or audio could. In-person driving events can better drive sales.

One-to-one events that allow customers to become acquainted with a brand and the products it sells are some of the best ways to establish meaningful and personal relationships with these prospects.

According to Robert Ross, automotive consultant at [Robb Report](#), New York, drivers of premium automotive brands like to feel a personal connection with their cars and the companies that make them.

“The added value, I suspect, comes from the buy-in gained through conversation, camaraderie and the opportunity to experience a new BMW from behind the wheel,” Mr. Ross said.

Become acquainted

The X3 is priced as an entry-level product in BMW’s SUV lineup.

A test-drive program affords the opportunity for prospects who may not think they can afford a new BMW to experience one first hand, and become acquainted with products up-stream of the X3, per Mr. Ross.

Because the X3 is a relatively accessible and affordable vehicle, it is possible for BMW to bring an entirely new group of customers into the "BMW family," then retain and up-sell them as they become more mature and affluent customers.

Some best practices when holding events for luxury cars; organize small groups of customers with dedicated sales professionals who can answer questions and more important, establish a one-on-one relationship that goes deeper than the quick-sell.

“Such events should inculcate core brand values, reference history and the significance of the brand and its innovations,” Mr. Ross said. “Brands like BMW can stress their competition roots and the technology that makes them a market leader.

“Getting a prospect behind the wheel to personally experience the attributes of a particular model is key to the sales process,” he said.

“Having competitors' products for comparison is a complicated and provocative move,

but asserts BMW's faith in their own product and gives the customer an opportunity to make an unbiased comparison.”

BMW, like other upscale brands, is focusing its efforts to bring new and younger drivers into its customer base with products like the X3 and 1-Series.

Maintaining the core attributes – quality, technology, driver experience – of BMW across an entire model line is the challenge. BMW is aiming to prove the company is up to the challenge.

“BMW is a driver’s car and once consumers get behind the wheel they can see and feel how it drives, and you can’t show that in just traditional ads,” BMW’s Ms. Morris said.

“Experimental marketing really works for us.

“And since this is a redesign, you can see how the interior is used, more versatility, more space,” she said.

Final take

BMW X3