

MULTICHANNEL

## Mercedes inspires consumers with social media contest and campaign

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*Mercedes -AMG C-63 Coupe*

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German automaker Mercedes-Benz is campaigning on social media for consumers to never stop challenging.

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The brand has launched a social media campaign encouraging users to submit photos with the promise that the most liked image will feature on the Mercedes-AMG global Web site and on social media pages. Soliciting user-generated content has the potential to spread awareness by going viral and also foster sentiment and loyalty among participants.

"By tapping into an existing social dialogue, and asking fans to share photographic stories from their childhood, Mercedes' is able to link their customers' past to the brand's future with a level of authenticity driven by user-generated content," said Matt Langie, chief marketing officer of [Curalate](#), Philadelphia. This is especially powerful in automotive, given that the majority of the buying and consideration process takes place before ever walking into a dealership.

Never stop challenging

For the Never Stop Challenging competition, consumers are being asked to share photos of a time that, as a child, they overcame a significant challenge. Examples given include scoring a soccer goal for the first time, the first piano recital or skiing for the first time.



*Mercedes-AMG C-63 Coupe*

Photos can be uploaded directly on Mercedes-AMG's Web site, or posted to Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Photos

must be tagged with #NeverStopChallenging and Mercedes AMG's official account for that network to qualify.

User-generated content campaigns appeal to consumers because they allow them a hand in co-creating or shaping the image of a brand that they normally do not have. Brands, meanwhile, appear as more authentic because recommendations, testimonies and other records of enjoyment come from actual consumers rather than in the form of direct advertisements.

Accompanying the campaign is a similarly themed television commercial for the Mercedes-AMG C-63 Coup. The full, 95-second spot is set to "Vltava" by Bedich Smetana and shows a child putting on makeshift helmets and making a car, climbing a tree and swinging from a rope as his mother accompanies him or treats his cuts.

Crosscut with the images of the child are shots of a man getting into and driving the Mercedes-AMG C-63 Coup, which he drifts along a narrow street. A voiceover opines, "This is your life," "Nobody can stop you," "Listen to your heart," and other inspirational sound bites, including "Never stop challenging."

*Mercedes-AMG C 63 S Coup: "Never Stop Challenging" - TV Commercial*

The juxtaposition of adventure and freedom with the Mercedes driving positions the brand as one that embraces childlike wonder and creativity and is able to recapture the joy of childhood. Such a technique will likely appeal to a significant portion of viewers as childhood nostalgia is an emotion shared by most consumers.

Although the commercial is for a specific model, the broadness of its themes and the social media contest will broadcast Mercedes' brand values to a much larger group of consumers than an advertising campaign heavily focused on one vehicle would.

Hand-in-hand

Other automotive brands have also taken note that going directly to the consumer and allowing for co-creation and build stronger relationships.

In November, Toyota Corp.'s Lexus got close to consumers with the reveal of its LF-FC concept model.

The brand used social media to solicit questions and post videos of the vehicle. By going directly to the consumer from the start, assuaging doubts and granting requests, Lexus helped build anticipation and loyalty early in the product lifecycle ([see story](#)).

Some brands in other sectors have become especially proficient at leveraging the loyalty and sentiment elicited by user-generated content and brand co-creation.

According to a senior executive from Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts at Luxury FirstLook: Strategy 2016 on Jan. 20, consumers will also have a clearer idea of the brand if they help to create it. Accordingly, Four Seasons displays user-generated content in the form of photographs on the homepages of more than 60 of its hotel's Web sites ([see story](#)).

In addition, the brand solicited UGC with a new visual education series.

"Focus on Four Seasons" offers tips to take the perfect photograph and curate the best images captured at Four Seasons hotels by professional photographers and the average Instagramming consumer alike. Meeting consumers on a platform they enjoy in a rewarding fashion helps keep a brand visible and attractive to consumers ([see story](#)).

"Image-driven social channels like Instagram are changing the way consumers discover and form affinities for brands," Mr. Langie said. "The beauty of these communities is that conversations are frequently led by consumers."