

MOBILE

BMW pushes product line to consumers on the Late Shift

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BMW i8

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German automaker BMW is raising awareness with prime product placement in a new kind of movie.

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"Late Shift," created by CtrlMovie with new technology that allows the viewer to make decisions that influence the course of the story, prominently features the BMW i8 and BMW X5 M, with appearances by other vehicles. Having a big part in an innovative creation helps BMW assert its own success on those fronts.

"Late Shift is an innovative project, which is unmatched so far," said Bernhard Ederer, spokesperson marketing and BMW Welt for **BMW Group**. "Innovation is also a part of BMW's brand DNA; therefore, this cooperation fits very well to the brand.

"Especially, the revolutionary plug-in hybrid sports car BMW i8 is perfect for Late Shift. Both are forging a new path with their unique concepts," he said. "And of course, as innovators we are always happy to support other innovators from other fields. We are happy to help a small, but accomplished and bold production to break through."

Car heist

In Late Shift, Matt, for whom the viewer can make more than 180 choices throughout the film, is forced to take place in an unsuccessful robbery of a London auction house. Depending on choices the viewer makes, the film can last anywhere between one hour and 90 minutes and conclude with any of seven different endings.



Image from "Late Shift"

In the beginning, Matt, a math student, takes the train to his job as a security guard in a parking garage. A woman asks him for keys to a Maserati that isn't hers, and shortly thereafter, Matt is forced to drive either the i8 or the X5 M, depending on choices made.

Multiple makes and models of vehicles are featured throughout the film, which is available on mobile devices. Positioning BMW as the hero's car helps boost the brand over competitors in a subtle way.



BMW X5

"From a marketing perspective, product placement in film can be viewed as the genesis of modern native advertising," said Scott Forshay, senior mobility strategist of mobile product strategy and innovation at IBM, Austin, TX. "While certainly an established strategy for brand marketers to more organically highlight product within the context of a movie storyline to influence audiences, attaching the brand to the right vehicle, so to speak, is often tricky.

"BMW has cooperated with the film industry successfully on numerous occasions, weaving its products into the storylines of films that attract seemingly more affluent audiences to advance its commercial interests," he said. "This endeavor, however, takes this strategy to a new level by associating product innovation with innovation in film.

"This strategy positions BMW as a partner in innovation with a new breed of filmmaking targeted at a younger, more tech savvy audience. Additionally, given that the film can be viewed and engaged with multiple times with alternate storylines, the brand will achieve significantly greater messaging reach and frequency than with a traditional film product placement strategy."

The film, shot in London, was directed by Tobias Weber from a screenplay collaboration with Michael R. Johnson, who wrote the 2009 "Sherlock Holmes" film directed by Guy Ritchie.



BMW i8

BMW is promoting the film heavily on its social media channels. By aligning itself with a technological innovation, BMW reinforces its own status as a technological leader, stating that its i8 vehicle and Late Shift are both creating new pathways in their respective fields.

The novelty of Late Shift makes it more likely to be shared among social media users, meaning that BMW can highlight its role in the project not only to reinforce values to current consumers but also to show new prospects the range of its creativity.

New ways forward

BMW has previously given agency to its fans with new media.

In October, German automaker BMW used mobile streaming application Periscope to have fans "choose [their] own destination."

BMW turned to Periscope to launch its M2 model, and then used the platform to debut its first-ever live-action adventure, #X1WhatsNext. The adventure allowed enthusiasts to control movements and decisions via Periscope live voting throughout the day on Oct. 28, 2015 ([see story](#)).

Other automotive brands have also capitalized on new forms of storytelling in order to captivate an audience.

For example, Toyota Corp.'s Lexus highlighted the carefully crafted nature of its 2016 RX with a "bespoke performance" in London.

One hundred guests were invited to the Mondrian hotel on Feb. 10, where they assumed the role of star in their own unique show, creating a live theatrical interpretation of the television spot "Live the RX Life" starring Jude Law. While the surprise performance may have only been witnessed by a select few, Lexus captured the event via 360-degree filming techniques including hidden cameras, and the footage will be shared with viewers at home ([see story](#)).

"Thanks to numerous co-operations with the film industry, the BMW Group has become an established player and reliable partner for projects in the global entertainment business," Mr. Ederer said. "Through this, millions of cinema-goers around the globe are able to see products of the BMW Group in exciting movies.

"At BMW Group we understand that a brand does not only live through its products but also through a strong image," he said. "A brand only stays relevant when people talk about it, especially online.

"Here entertainment and popular culture are key topics, which are highly discussed and viewed. To participate here is a key target of the entertainment marketing of BMW Group."