

AUTOMOTIVE

## BMW taps Instagram for family reunion, M4 showcase

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BMW M4

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

German automaker BMW is bringing families together as it showcases its vehicles' full potential.

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The brand has launched a new Instagram account to tell the story of two brothers, Sam and Emile Hurly, who reunited after three years for a drive down the California coastline. Finding a new way to tell humanistic stories will likely resonate with consumers, making BMW a more likely choice as they shop for a car down the road.

"We know our BMW USA audience loves car photography and performance driving and this second channel serves as a storytelling platform in a way we haven't really used it before, said Peter Harmata, digital innovations manager at BMW of North America. "These kinds of stories can now live exclusively independent from our everyday feed while still providing a unique, compelling experience that our fans can easily follow and come back to whenever they want."

"The goal for the channel isn't necessarily followers," Mr. Harmata said. "Instead, it provides a canvas to spotlight the BMW-rich car community in California all through the driving experience of an M4.

"Most importantly, if a user toggles over to feed view, he or she can read the entire story front to back. In grid view, it's an easily digestible visual story mapped back to a book-like spine on the left."

### Family reunion

The BMWRoadTrip account follows the two brothers as they embark on their journey from San Francisco to San Diego in a Yas Marina M4. The account consists of 14 videos and 19 images, with captions that detail the story.



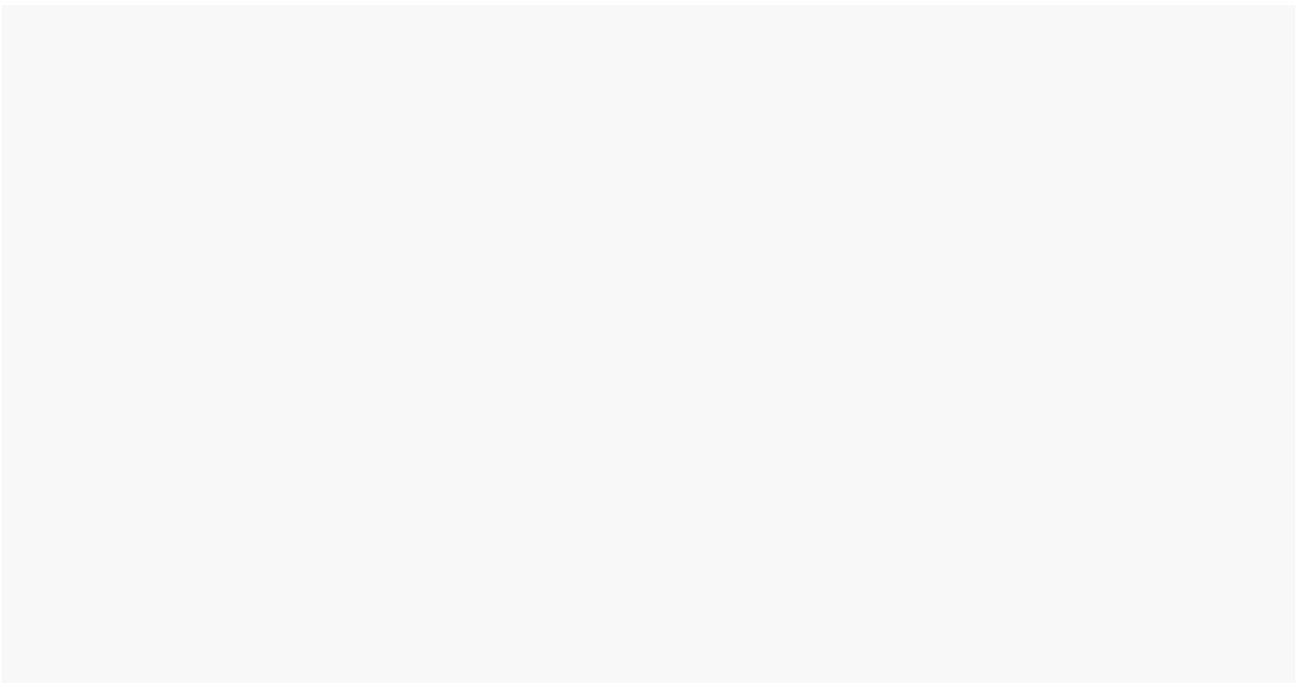
### *BMWRoadtTrip Instagram*

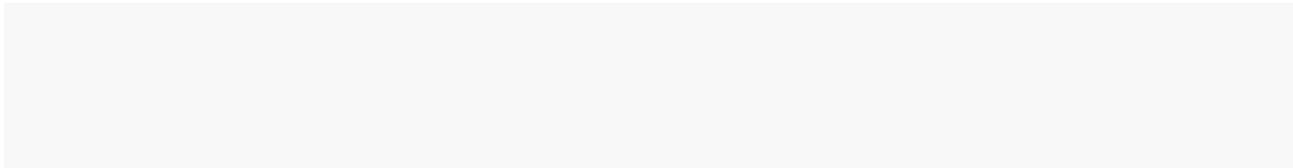
As consumer expectations shift, the Instagram story is a way of allowing consumers to engage with the brand for more than the length of an individual post or ad.

The captions tell the story in Emile's voice, beginning with the inception of the project. His brother had established himself a photographer of cars who grew a sizable social media following, leading BMW to take notice.

BMW asked Sam to shoot an M4 in a location of his choice and allowed him to bring a driver. Sam picked California for the location and, because Emile had lived in California for three years, his brother as the driver.

In San Francisco, Emile discusses the feeling of driving the M4 on the steep hills, while Sam's photos depict the M4 amid some of San Francisco's most breathtaking cityscapes, including one from Twin Peaks.



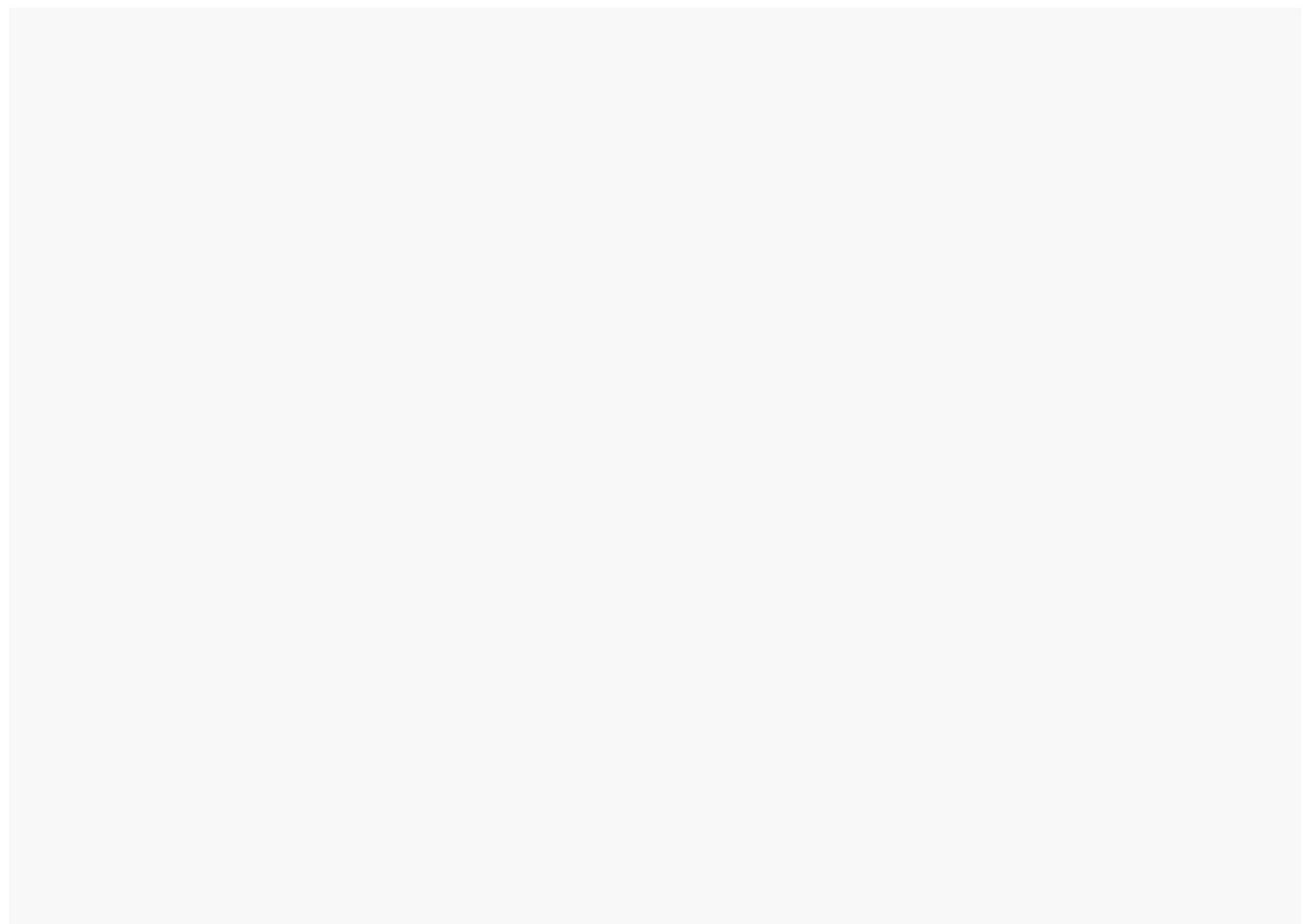


San Francisco is often called the City of Views, and Twin Peaks provides the best one. Sam wanted to get a few shots of the M4 there, and its winding entrance let me start testing her out. "Faster!" Sam would yell from his hillside perch as I rounded the corner. "I want there to be a blur in some of these! Go faster! It'll hug the corner, just trust me." On my next go, I punched it up the hill. Turns out, Sam was right.

A photo posted by BMW Road Trip (@bmwroadtrip) on Jul 29, 2016 at 10:44am PDT

While they drove the switchbacks up the mountain, Emile recalls Sam urging him to drive faster so he could get pictures with proper blurring, leading to an 80mph stretch that showcased the vehicle's handling.

As the pair ventures further along the Pacific Coast Highway, a video shows the vehicle driving through the autocross, a timed racecourse. As they reach Los Angeles, they rendezvous with a professional driver, whose own skills including performing donuts around Sam as he takes photos are showcased on Instagram.



Next up, we handed over the keys to professional driver Emile Bouret (@ebouret) and watched as he burned rubber, conjured smoke and spewed donuts. "You guys picked a great car," Emile said of the M4. "Every pro driver gets excited when he gets to drive a BMW. They build drivers' cars. They are a true joy to have, especially for the people who most enjoy driving."

A video posted by BMW Road Trip (@bmwroadtrip) on Jul 29, 2016 at 8:45am PDT

As they meet with other car enthusiasts along the way, all remark upon the BMW brand's consistency and excellence. While such words might ring hollow if spoken from brand to consumer, allowing regular people to advocate for the brand on its behalf creates trust with the consumer.

The account can be viewed [here](#).

"Car photography has a strong presence on Instagram, and BMW USA's fans use this platform to share their love for the brand.

"As it's an incredibly visual platform, Instagram allowed us to showcase BMW's performance in a 'show don't tell' manner," Mr. Harmata said. "It supports photo, video and captions in way that allowed us to highlight Sam's talents, the Hurly's story and the car's performance in one location."

"By creating a second handle, we turned it into a microsite that can be natively accessed from the @BMWUSA main channel but can also be viewed on mobile and on desktop from the rest of the BMW USA channels."

#### Insta-telling

Other automakers have capitalized on Instagram's storytelling capabilities, hoping to trigger repeated engagement to create desire.

Last year, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars used Instagram as a place for prospective buyers to get ideas for bespoke requests and cultivate their enthusiasm via storytelling content.

The brand leveraged the platform's committed community to build excitement for an upcoming bespoke model unveiling that occurred the following week. As the reveal approached, the brand strung together a compelling narrative with Instagram content ([see story](#)).

Instagram's storytelling capabilities have democratized luxury in other sectors as well, according to panelists at the Cond Nast International Luxury Conference April 20.

With such high potential for storytelling and awareness building, Instagram's resistance toward seamless ecommerce via shoppable links has complicated the platform's advantages. During the panel, conference host and Vogue International editor Suzy Menkes asked how marketers could drive consumers from Instagram into stores ([see story](#)).

"BMW has passionate fans whose lives revolve around their love of the drive and, ultimately, their BMWs," Mr. Harmata said. "By spotlighting these enthusiasts, their stories and connections with their vehicles, we can highlight BMW's engineering, innovations and features in a natural way.

"Our goal is to educate consumers and convey the enjoyment of driving a BMW in a more authentic way that hopefully comes across more as a story than a sales pitch."