MOBILE

Mercedes chooses app-per-line for digital brochure experience

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By RACHEL LAMB

German automaker Mercedes-Benz has chosen to promote its E-Class coupes and cabriolets with an iPad application dedicated to the line of vehicles, similar to the tactic it has taken with other models.

The brand has previously launched similar apps for its CLS, SLK and SL lines. The app is available for free in Apple's App Store.

"I believe it's a smart, albeit counterintuitive, move for Mercedes to release one app per line," said Simon Buckingham, CEO of Appitalism, New York.

"The apps would be less simple and straightforward with multiple product lines," he said. "The app is primarily designed for dealers, who are showing off one product at a time.

"Users often search by a specific model they saw advertised, and more keywords is always good."

Mr. Buckingham is not affiliated with Mercedes, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Mercedes was not able to respond before press deadline.

The Mercedes E-Class Cabriolet is 302 horsepower with a 6.3-second 0-60 miles-per-hour accleration. The two-door sedan comes with a soft-top option and starts at $57,720.

The E-Class Coupe starts at $49,800 and has a 6.1-second 0-60 miles-per-hour acceleration. It is also a two-door sedan with 302 horsepower.

E to the T

The E-Class app was launched July 29.

The app focuses on luxury-specific features of the model and allows consumers to view them in their entirety.

Similar to other apps of models such as the CLS ([see story](#)), users can take a virtual tour of the E-Class models.

Cabriolet virtual tour

The app features sections that have small white dots on specific areas of the vehicles. Tapping on a dot will reveal more detailed information about that specific part.

For instance, if a customer wanted to learn more about the E-Class cabriolet wheel beds, he would simply click on the white icon located on the wheel beds.

The app also incorporates special videos that take consumers through the interior and exterior of the vehicles, or the users can opt to browse through at their own leisure.

Consumers can customize their own E-Class models by choosing a specific color of interior, paint, type of top and other specifications.

Tops for E-class vehicles

"Instead of bombarding the user with text and images, the app actually demonstrates the features," Mr. Buckingham said.

"The user can watch the Parktronic automate parallel parking, see the Distronic Plus adjusting the driver's cruise control and experience a slow-motion sequence of the Pre-Safe system locking down the car when an accident threatens," he said. "It's incredibly compelling."

Driving to download

Although the app may work well for consumers solely interested in the Mercedes E-Class, the size and content of the app may be a little cumbersome for consumers.

For instance, each of the Mercedes apps have video and rich-media content and come in at about 300MB.

Downloading one app takes more than 15 minutes with WiFi and much longer over 3G, per Mr. Buckingham.

"Users can't download an app that they don't have space for," Mr. Buckingham said. "A user has a higher chance of having 400MB free than 2GB."

Additionally, the one-app-per-line concept dismisses all other models from the consumer's mind.
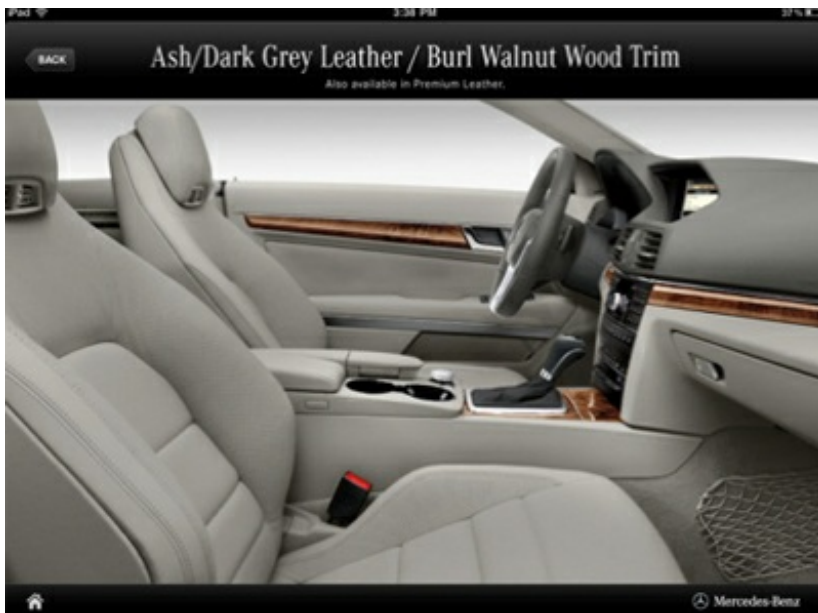
Interior of E-Class models

The consumer can pay attention to one line at a time using this technique, but consumers who are not familiar with other Mercedes vehicles do not have access to them unless they download another app or visit another destination such as the Mercedes mobile site or Web site.

Nonetheless, this does seem to be a popular mobile strategy with other luxury brands.

For instance, British automaker Rolls-Royce released separate apps for its Phantom and Ghost models (see story).

Moreover, Mercedes does highlight certain vehicle-specific features so that its apps are not all identical.

"The app is unique because it's essentially the sales brochure for the iPad generation," Mr. Buckingham said. "The E-Class app was designed for Mercedes dealers and then released on the App Store, and it shows how a high-end retailer can use the iPad in a sales setting.

"It's critical for an automaker app to invest in interactivity," he said. "A car is a fundamentally interactive object that the driver is encouraged to customize and intimately handle.

"Carrying these principles over into an app can give the user a taste of ownership and become a strong incentive."

Final Take

Rachel Lamb, associate reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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