

INTERNET

BMW searches for the “millions” of brand stories around the world

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#BMWStories post from fan

By JOE MCCARTHY

German automaker BMW is unifying owners around the world with a global campaign that celebrates driver stories.

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The brand is weaving together stories from fans, professional drivers and important figures in the company to give a full sense of what it means to be a BMW driver. Today's campaigns seem inadequate without a strong user-generated content component, and many brands are responding to this development by leveraging the voices of followers.

"The buzzword in the marketing community is 'The consumer owns the brand,'" said Al Ries, founder and chairman of [Ries & Ries](#), a Roswell, GA-based marketing strategy consultancy. "Oddly enough, that is true.

"Brands are names that exist in consumers' minds," he said. "If your brand is not in very many minds, it isn't worth anything.

"But that's always been true. So there's nothing new and different about brands today. Yet, many marketing people think that everything about branding is turned upside down. The

only way to reach consumers is by exposing them to what other consumers think about your brand. Hence, the BMW campaign and many others like it."

Mr. Ries is not affiliated with BMW, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

BMW was unable to comment by press deadline.

Individual experiences

The campaign casts a wide net to include as many BMW drivers as possible.

Fans are encouraged to post what their BMW means to them and how it has affected their life. Whether that means a one-time event, fond memory or a routine experience is subjective.



BMW Facebook post regarding campaign

BMW released a video to emphasize the subjectivity of the campaign, declaring that there are millions of BMW stories out there.

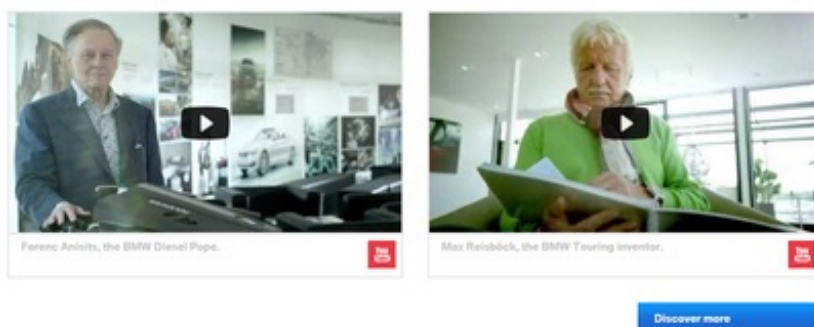
Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/oY1jX50HymQ](http://www.youtube.com/embed/oY1jX50HymQ)

There are millions of BMW stories. What's yours?

The Web page for the campaign reflects this diversity. Beginning with the campaign video, the page leads to a collapsible section that highlights the brand's claim to innovation.

Videos and other content explore the i8 model, racing events and some of the minds behind BMW.

PIONEERING STORIES ON YOUTUBE.



From BMW stories page

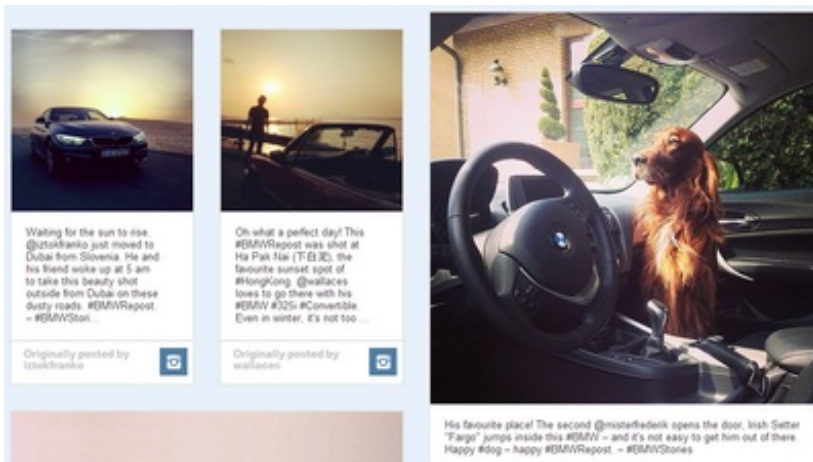
The rest of the page deals mainly with user-generated content. The first fan area

highlights "pioneering" stories including first-drives of the BMW i3 model.



#BMWStories post from fan

The next section displays a wider range BMW stories and relevant content.



#BMWStories content

Currently, the content is available in English and German. The brand will launch a United States-focused version of the campaign in the near future.

All together

Several automakers have rallied around the notion of unifying fans.

For instance, Audi of America gathered fan tales of adversity and resilience for a live-stream event in Santa Monica, CA, directed by creative figures such as artists, designers and musicians.

The massive community-driven initiative was an extension of the "Paid my Dues"

campaign that heralded the debut of the A3. As Audi repositions its entry-level vehicles to appeal to a broader audience, tapping the universal theme of overcoming obstacles will likely resonate ([see story](#)).

Also, Mercedes-Benz USA honored dedicated fans by showcasing the stories behind their passion for the brand and how they became owners on its Facebook page.

The “Owner’s Stories” profiles vary in formats ranging from question and answer to brief anecdotes and personal histories. Mercedes demonstrated its commitment to fans and will likely fortify brand loyalties by going beyond fleeting social-media interactions to delve into the lives of consumers ([see story](#)).

"In truth, using customer stories is only one way to build a brand," Mr. Ries said. "And it's probably not a particularly effective way.

"When you publish many different stories from many different customers, you tend to lack a coherent theme," he said. "And without a coherent theme, the advertising isn't very memorable.

"The BMW brand was built around a singular idea, The ultimate driving machine. I think they should stick to this slogan and make it an inherent part of everything they do."

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/hVK2iHt4FoI](https://www.youtube.com/embed/hVK2iHt4FoI)

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