Beat: Automobiles

3D Augmented Reality

Virtual reality

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USPA NEWS - Customer experience in a new dimension: 3D Augmented Reality App

Mercedes cAR and Virtual Reality goggles: Mercedes-Benz is accelerating digitalisation in Sales.

Mercedes-Benz Germany is pushing the digital transformation of its Sales forward. Two further components in the digitalisation process are being introduced with the market launch of the new A-Class: the 3D augmented reality app Mercedes cAR and the virtual reality set with data goggles. With the app, customers and prospective buyers can individually configure their vehicle of choice on a smartphone or tablet, and view it in every detail in a unique, three-dimensional resolution - both from inside and outside, and in surroundings of their choice. Like the new multimedia system of the A-Class, the Mercedes-Benz User Experience (MBUX), the Mercedes cAR app excels with intuitive control. Thanks to virtual reality, a visit to a dealership takes on a new dimension: Mercedes-Benz makes it possible for visitors to don virtual reality goggles and experience their vehicle of choice in all manner of configurations in real time, thanks to 3D technology. The brand is starting this virtual technology in the seven German Sales regions. The aim is to make the brand experience even more alluring and customer oriented with digitalisation during sales advice, sales and service.

"The virtual and the real world are not only blending together more and more with respect to vehicles and services, but also in marketing and sales. Digitalisation gives us fascinating new opportunities when addressing customers," says Britta Seeger, Member of the Board of Management of Daimler AG responsible for Mercedes-Benz Cars Marketing & Sales. With the sales & marketing strategy 'Best Customer Experience', the brand is increasingly taking new approaches in its marketing and sales, and aiming all its activities at customers and their wishes. "Thanks to digital technologies such as augmented and virtual reality, our customers can quickly and easily explore the variety of our vehicles. In this way our point of sale becomes a point of experience, and we can offer a premium brand experience in a totally new dimension."

Mercedes cAR: 3D vehicle configuration at home and on the move

With the new 3D augmented reality app Mercedes cAR, customers and prospective buyers can experience their vehicle of choice in a completely new way. In addition to choosing the classic configuration features, the app's scanning function makes it possible to realistically integrate the configuration into the desired surroundings. Moreover, the vehicle of choice can be virtually driven in the chosen mode, rotated by 360 degrees and positioned and scaled. This can also be done for the interior and an all-round interior view. Another highlight is the high-resolution depiction of all interior and exterior components. This means that e.g. the surface pores of fabrics and materials used on even the smallest parts can be realistically shown. The app guarantees a high entertainment factor thanks to intuitive, game-like operation. The doors can be opened interactively, for example, or the wheel design changed.

The app uses the latest Apple ARKitâ„¢ technology. Using the recording function, the configurations created with the app can be saved to a smartphone or tablet as a photo, and shared on social media. Alongside Configuration mode, the Explore mode of Mercedes cAR provides additional, clear information about the vehicle and provides links to short video clips with vehicle highlights on YouTube http://www.youtube.de/mercedesbenz and the Mercedes-Benz Online Configurator. The app also takes the customer directly to the Mercedes-Benz Online Store https://www.online-store.mercedes-benz.de/ , and to the dealer search, where e.g. a test drive can be booked.

Mercedes cAR will start with the market launch of the new A-Class. This is the first model to feature the Mercedes-Benz User Experience (MBUX), which allows intuitive operation and a completely new relationship with the vehicle, thanks to artificial intelligence, intelligent voice control and a comprehensive touch control concept. When the Mercedes cAR App goes live, it will be possible to configure the new Mercedes-Benz A-Class with the Style, Progressive and AMG Line lines in the app. Further configuration options and models will gradually follow. The Mercedes cAR app is immediately available in the German App Store for iPhone® and iPad® with iOS 11, and will also become available for Android devices in the coming months. The design and realisation of the Mercedes cAR app was in close cooperation with the agency antoni garage.

Two worlds at once: the virtual reality goggles

Mercedes-Benz customers and prospective buyers can already experience the real and the virtual world in a showroom with the help of digital technology: in the Mercedes-Benz Customer Center in Bremen and at the Mercedes me Store in Hamburg. Availability will be extended with the market launch of the new A-Class: in selected Mercedes-Benz own-retail outlets in Germany, virtual reality goggles will be introduced as a further digital feature that makes the vehicle experience even more varied and emotional. Once seated in the A-Class, customers and prospective buyers can have the car shown to them in all manner of configurations thanks to 3D technology, and experience it virtually through the data goggles.

This so-called "InCar Virtual Reality Experience" blends the virtual and the real vehicle together, so that not only the visual sense takes part in the customer experience with the VR goggles, but the senses of smell and especially touch are included to further heighten the experience. Visitors are able to decide whether to operate the system themselves or be assisted by the sales staff. As in an online configurator, all the vehicle configuration options are available. For example, it is possible to experience the interior of the vehicle in all of its colour variants, or virtually replace single-tone leather with two-tone combinations. During the configuration, and in fractions of a second, the customer can change his/her virtual position e.g. from the front to the rear seats, or from inside to outside. The doors, boot and glove compartment can be opened in digital reality, for example. The customer therefore experiences the vehicle in all its aspects and details even before delivery. This virtual technology will gradually become available for other model series and markets.

Digitalisation in Sales

Mercedes-Benz Cars Sales Germany is systematically expanding the digitalisation of all channels ““ both in customer communication and in sales and service. For example, Mercedes me enables customers to establish contact with Mercedes-Benz anywhere and at any time ““ by app, website or directly in the car. All existing and future, vehicle-related services and mobility packages are grouped on the online platform. This personalised access is already used by over 1.7 million customers in 37 markets. One of the new functions of Mercedes me is "Digital Anticipation". Since 2017 customers have been able to follow the production progress of their new vehicle in real time. This service is currently available for the A, B, C, E and S-Class, as well as the CLA, CLS, GLA, GLC, GLE, GLS, SL and SLC produced in the Sindelfingen, Rastatt, Kecskemét, Bremen, East London and Tuscaloosa plants.

Mercedes-Benz is also increasingly using digital formats when selling vehicles: since 2016 customers in Germany have been able to purchase their new car in the Mercedes-Benz Online Store. Since July 2017 the company has also sold used Mercedes-Benz vehicles by mouse click. The aim is to generate up to 25 percent of worldwide Mercedes-Benz car unit sales online by 2025.

Alongside the digital activities, the dealerships will continue to be irreplaceable customer contact points in the future. The Mercedes-Benz partner are and will remain the backbone of the sales organisation, and knowledgeable points of contact for customers. In 2017 the company started modernising the brand presentation of its retail outlets, both inside and out. In the dealership of the future, the advantages of the digital and analogue world will be systematically combined. New ways of addressing customers are also being implemented in After-Sales. For example, appointments can be booked online and service reception is a digital procedure. For Mercedes-Benz, the customer is always the focal point with his/her individual needs throughout the entire customer journey. In whatever form, every encounter with Mercedes-Benz is to be a special experience for the customer ““ a Mercedes moment, whether in the physical or digital world.

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