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Geneva '08 Preview: BMW ConnectedDrive allows unrestricted in-car Internet

MICHAEL HARLEY • FEB 22, 2008

BMW is touting itself as the world's first car maker to offer completely unrestricted in-car access to the World Wide Web. It's all part of "ConnectedDrive," BMW's own so-called intelligent network that connects the driver, the vehicle and their surroundings. Although innovative, this isn't entirely uncharted territory for BMW as you may recall they introduced limited access to [online Google features](#) last May, and [Google navigation and RSS features](#) in December.

The German automaker chose EDGE (Enhanced Data Rates for GSM Evolution) technology for the internet hook up because it's available on a broad scale (Apple uses it in the iPhone) though slower than what's known as a 3G connection. The user interface within the vehicle will be [BMW's iDrive controller](#) (*please, refrain from making snappy comments until after we are done with the presentation*). With unrestricted Internet access, users will be able to input URLs to surf the web, check e-mail, and BMW claims you can even complete online banking transactions while on the go. Realizing that surfing the web while driving a car isn't in the best interest of public safety, the web access will only work when the car is parked. Of course, BMW points out that if the vehicle is fitted with the optional DVD entertainment system, users in the rear seats may continue to surf while the vehicle is in motion.

As of right now, like most pioneering things in the automotive industry, BMW's in-car Internet access is only available in Europe. It appears, for now, that us Yanks will have to continue to focus on driving (and sipping Big-Gulps) while in our cars.

[Source: BMW]

PRESS RELEASE:

World Debut for Unrestricted Use of the Internet:

BMW ConnectedDrive Brings the World Wide Web to the Car Display in a BMW.



Sheer driving pleasure and the joy of surfing. BMW combines the thrill of mobility and unrestricted use of the internet. As the world's first car maker, BMW allows unrestricted access to the World Wide Web in the car's display.

Offering this outstanding innovation, BMW ConnectedDrive gives the driver and his passengers the option to surf the internet while travelling, calling up any random internet site either by entering the URL address through the iDrive control system or via a personalised list of favourites, and then presenting the website on the central display in the instrument panel.

This system developed in the context of BMW ConnectedDrive is the consistent enhancement of the intelligent network connecting the driver, the car and their surroundings. Following the highly beneficial features already offered by BMW Online and the option presented in summer 2007 to use the Google online search machine and its various categories in the car, BMW ConnectedDrive now for the first time offers genuine internet in a BMW.

As in the case of BMW Online with direct access to Google, BMW is now once again taking on the leading role in providing online services in the car. Again, therefore, the world's largest manufacturer of premium automobiles is proving its competence in the area of vehicle electronics.

As a special offer by BMW ConnectedDrive, internet surfing in the car will be available as an optional extra in BMW's production models straight from the factory in the course of 2008. The version presented at the 2008 Geneva Motor Show is a prototype very close to series production.

Also when using the internet: Maximum convenience thanks to BMW iDrive.

BMW ConnectedDrive brings the complete World Wide Web into the car on the display, offering more functions all in one go than the driver will usually enjoy on the internet in his office or on his PC at home. This is made possible by the unique BMW iDrive control system activating and masterminding all telecommunication, entertainment, navigation and air conditioning functions via the Controller on the centre console and the centre display in the dashboard.

In using the internet, the BMW iDrive Controller acts in the same way as a conventional computer mouse: Moving the Controller in various directions, the user is able to move the mouse on the internet site shown in the display. Then, pressing the Controller, the user clicks the mouse on the PC to select links or specific items in the menu. By turning the Controller, finally, the user scrolls up and down to the appropriate internet site.

The display presents internet sites in high resolution, an additional function serving to enlarge specific sections on the display by a factor of 1.5 or 2.

The presentation of internet sites on the display is only possible for safety reasons with the car at a standstill. As with the configuration of TV and/or DVD functions available as an option on cars with BMW iDrive, the internet site disappears as soon as the vehicle exceeds a speed of 5 km/h. But on models equipped with an optional DVD system in the rear, the internet function might also be added, allowing passengers on the rear seats to surf the net also when driving at higher speeds above 5 km/h.

High-resolution presentation, fast data transfer.

Apart from high-resolution presentation of web contents on the display, fast transfer of data is also guaranteed, with data transfer based on EDGE technology (Enhanced Data Rates for GSM Evolution), which, unlike third-generation telephony, is already available on a broad scale and is three to four times faster than GPRS mobile connections.

A special BMW server quickly transfers internet sites into the car and ensures optimum presentation on the

display. It also optimises flash animations and other so-called applets with extremely high data volume, which might otherwise slow down the fast transmission rate required. In this way, therefore, BMW ConnectedDrive ensures improved data transfer for comfortable surfing within the car.

A further option is to receive and send e-mails straight from the car, with additional applications such as online banking also being conceivable in full in future.

Using the existing BMW Online portal in the internet, BMW is already the first car maker to offer, through BMW ConnectedDrive, the option to transmit navigation destinations generated by Google Maps into the car from any PC. Then the address data may be used directly in the car as navigation and telephone dial destinations. In the near future, therefore, the BMW Online portal in the internet will allow the configuration of web addresses shown in the car as favourites on the car's internet starting page.

Over and above the activation of links on the internet sites shown in the display and the choice of web addresses as favourites, BMW also allows the direct selection of new contents simply by entering a URL. To do this, all the user has to do is enter the URL in the browser's address field, also using other entry fields on internet sites. The entries are made via a selection of letters which, in their function, correspond to the entry of addresses in BMW navigation systems, with convenience and ease of operation being optimised once again.

Whenever the car is used by several drivers one after the other, personalised starting pages may be installed without problems. In that case each driver is able to retrieve the starting page he requires by making his personal registration in the system.

Surfing the internet in the car's display will be available before the end of this year as a new offer from BMW ConnectedDrive installed directly at the factory and provided together with an unlimited data flatrate.

BMW ConnectedDrive: optimum mobility, maximum comfort.

Offering internet on the car's screen as an outstanding innovation, BMW is once again making a pioneering breakthrough in the area of intelligent networking, bringing together the driver, the car and the world around them and consistently enhancing the wide range of internet-based services already offered since 2001.

BMW combines such individual online, assistance and service systems in the car under the general term "BMW ConnectedDrive" referring to services which may be used directly through the navigation system or over the telephone in the interest of significantly enhanced comfort and safety.

One example is BMW Assist which, apart from providing an emergency call function and the latest traffic information, also offers a personal enquiry service. Data requested on restaurants, cinemas or hotels may, for example, be fed directly into the BMW navigation system as the driver's destination. Internet-based services such as stock values, the weather report and free parking space, in turn, are covered by BMW Online. And BMW TeleServices, finally, registers the car independently and automatically with the customer's BMW Service Partner whenever service is required.

This wide range of internet-based services in the car and the technology involved has been consistently enhanced since 2001. Integrating such services completely in the car's electronics, BMW Online has a unique position in the market to this day. Such integration of services allows convenient access to local information in the car, BMW Online now also comprising mobility services such as looking for parking space and orientation by mobile phone and an e-mail account with an address directory, information on travel and leisure-time activities as well as hotels and restaurants, an enquiry service, news and weather, the "My News" (RSS feeds), as well as business news and the stock exchange.

In summer 2007 BMW became the world's first car maker to offer the Google search function in the car, allowing users throughout Germany to retrieve local information directly from the internet through the world's best-

known online search machine. The information obtained is then presented conveniently at the touch of a button in the navigation system and also goes to the user's mobile phone. The system detects the location and destination of the car independently and presents the results obtained in the area covered together with their address, telephone number and distance, enabling the user to search for names and addresses in a local directory, for example the addresses of restaurants, hotels, filling stations, banks, supermarkets, cinemas or local authorities.

The Google search function in the car consistently enhances the intelligent link of the car and the internet. Introducing the "Send to Car" function, Google and BMW already offered the possibility before to send search results from the Google Maps website directly to the car. And now the Google services search function provides direct access to the internet from the car itself as a further milestone in BMW ConnectedDrive.