

BMW Group to show car tech detecting hand movements

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BMW Group @ CES 2016, Vision Car Interior and User-Interface of the future

The many advances of networking technologies linking driver, car and

environment will be in evidence at the CES show in Vegas. BMW like other car companies are seriously looking for special footing in the marketplace with their various offers of smart tech in cars. Chances are quite good that those attending will hear the buzz phrase "seamlessly networked vehicles" more than once.

BMW Group in turn is aiming to make some noise with technology that makes driving possible without having to grope with a bunch of dials and switches. The answer is in something called AirTouch and it will show what driving life will be like with contactless touchscreens, thanks to AirTouch gesture control tech.

Andrew Collins in *Jalopnik* wrote how "sensors built in to the front of the car detect hand motions from the [driver](#) or passenger in certain menu screens, allowing people in the front seats to swipe through things by doing some funky sign language in front of their faces."

Also, "An OK button would be tucked into the rim of the [steering wheel](#), with another in the passenger's door sill area for easy item-selection." He said that "AirTouch is a pretty exciting development in human-machine interfacing."

The CES presentation by BMW will involve the "Vision Car" interface, which essentially will work with simple hand gestures calling up functions. No contact with a surface for that purpose will be needed. *Hot Hardware* said, "AirTouch allows you to control navigation, infotainment, and communications features using your whole [hand](#)."

Sensors are installed in the area of the instrument dashboard. These respond to hand movements and permit three-dimensional control.

Automotive editor Jonathan Gitlin in *Ars Technica* wrote that AirTouch uses "sensors embedded in the dash near the car's main information

display that pick up three-dimensional hand movements, allowing the driver to interact with the infotainment system as if it were a touchscreen—without ever [leaving](#) their fingerprints on the LCD."

BMW Group's news release also discussed a concealed AirTouch button on the rim of the steering [wheel](#). "It is on the left and easy to reach with the thumb, and it lights up when a menu or icon can be activated. One tap is sufficient to activate the desired program or change a setting. The passenger also has a button like this positioned on the side sill in the door area. Passengers are therefore able to use one hand to navigate through the menu and the other hand to confirm inputs very quickly."

BMW will promote an Air Touch advantage of requiring less steps to make a selection. If activating the phone pad, the system automatically brings up contacts or call lists to the top select level so that a call can be made with just one further action. AirTouch recognizes which selection and control steps are required next and displays them in advance. That way, said the release, the driver can concentrate on the road ahead.

Reader reactions? Interestingly, some reactions praised [voice commands](#) as a suitable interface, rather than hand commands. A *Hot Hardware* reader reaction asked, how does any of this work better than voice commands? He said infotainment manufacturers should be focusing on voice command interfaces. A *Jalopnik* reader recommended "Some buttons for basic controls and simple voice commands for anything else. If it's too complicated to make it a voice command, then it doesn't belong in a car."

More information: [BMW press release](#)

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