BMW drops plan to charge a monthly fee for heated seats



BMW owners can now warm their buns with peace of mind, knowing they won't have to pay a ridiculous monthly fee for the pleasure of a toasty backside during those cold winter months. BMW has dropped its plans for an $18 a month heated seats subscription after customers balked at the idea of paying extra to unlock existing functions in their cars.

"We thought that we would provide an extra service to the customer by offering the chance to activate that later, but the user acceptance isn't that high," Nota told *Autocar*. "People feel that they paid double – which was actually not true, but perception is reality, I always say. So that was the reason we stopped that."

People first noticed that BMW was trying to lock heated seats behind a paywall when the feature began popping up in the company's digital stores in various countries. Depending on the region, a monthly subscription to heat your front seats was roughly $18, with options to subscribe for a year ($180), three years ($300), or pay for "unlimited" access for $415.

Heated seats and steering wheels are likely still going to cost extra — but only as an optional package at the point of purchase for customers at the dealership. Other features, such as advanced driver-assist capabilities and adaptive suspension, are still being offered in some regions as subscriptions.

The heated seats subscription never came to the US, a spokesperson confirmed, but it certainly appeared in BMW's digital stores in countries like the UK, Germany, New Zealand, South Korea, and South Africa. A subscription for heated steering wheels was also removed from the company's ConnectedDrive store, the spokesperson added.

This wasn't the first time that BMW dabbled unsuccessfully in subscriptions. The company tried to charge an annual fee for customers who wanted to use Apple's CarPlay in their cars, first as a one-time $300 option and then later as an $80 a year fee. The vast majority of car companies offer CarPlay as well as Android Auto for free.

Still, subscriptions are growing increasingly popular in the automotive space. Companies are experimenting with new services for monthly or yearly fees, entranced by the possibilities for over-the-air software updates to open up new ways to get money out of their customers.

In general, people seem willing to pay for things they might not otherwise have had, like active safety features. But when you start charging to unlock functions that they have come to expect as standard — or at least pay a one-time fee — you're going to get embarrassing headlines like this one here.

https://www.theverge.com/2023/9/7/23863258/bmw-cancel-heated-seat-subscription-microtransaction