

Bimmer, beemer, beamer
– how BMW got its
nicknames

“Bimmer,” “beamer” and “beemer” are all common nicknames for BMW vehicles. But where do they come from? Read on as we explain the origin of each nickname and what it all has to do with motorcycle racing.

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**BMW
EXPLAINED**

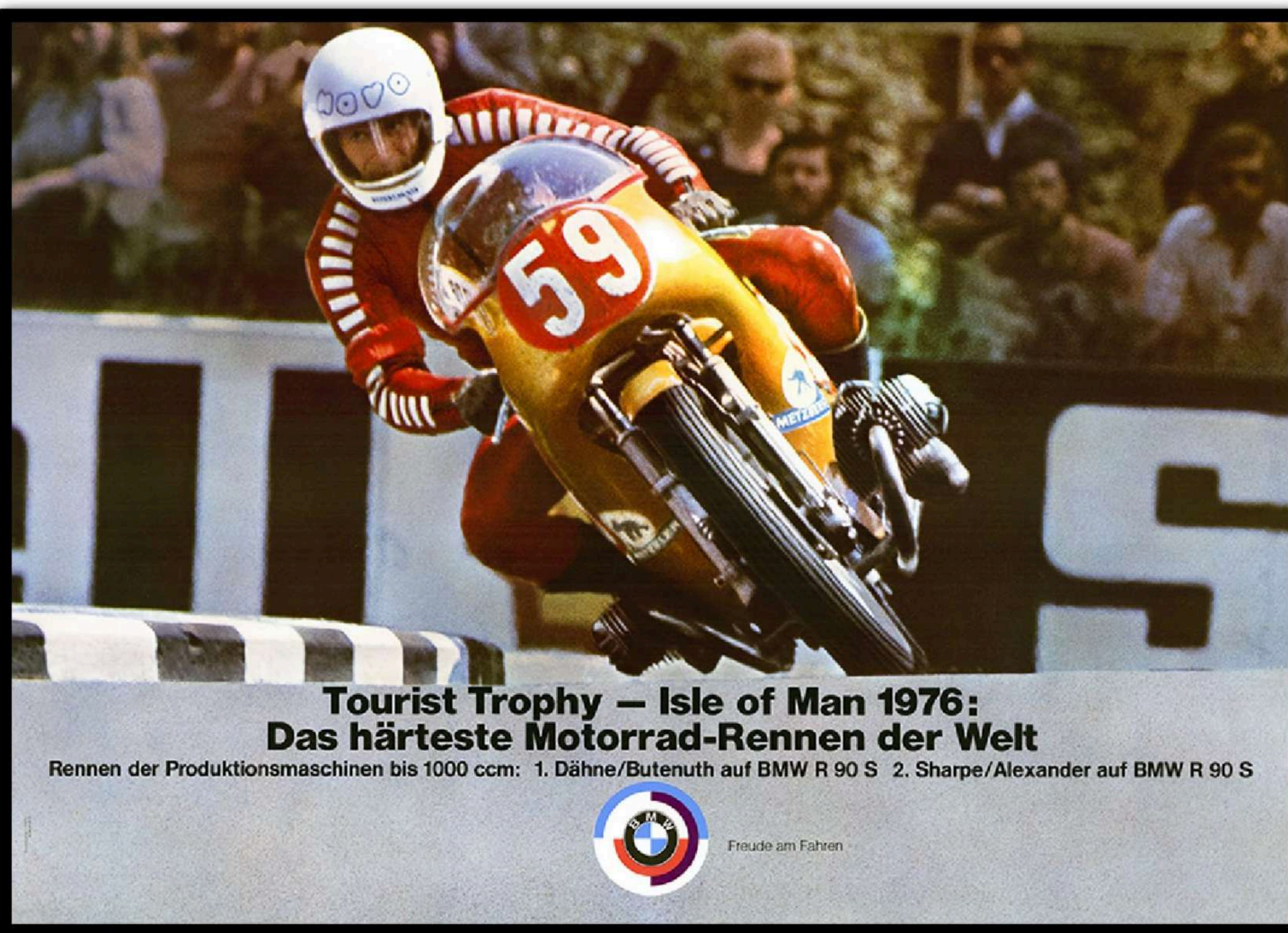
Long popular in the English-speaking world, in recent years the terms "beamer," "beemer" and "bimmer" have really caught on with petrolheads around the world.

Strictly speaking, it's incorrect to talk about a "beamer car" (or "beemer car"). The correct term for a BMW automobile is "bimmer" – "beemer" and "beamer" actually only refer to a BMW motorcycle.

The origin of the nickname "beamer"

The nickname "Beamer" comes from Great Britain – and originally served to distinguish it from a British manufacturer* whose motorcycles bore the nickname "Beezer". But BMW motorcycles also achieved great success on the British racing scene, including the "Isle of Man TT Races".

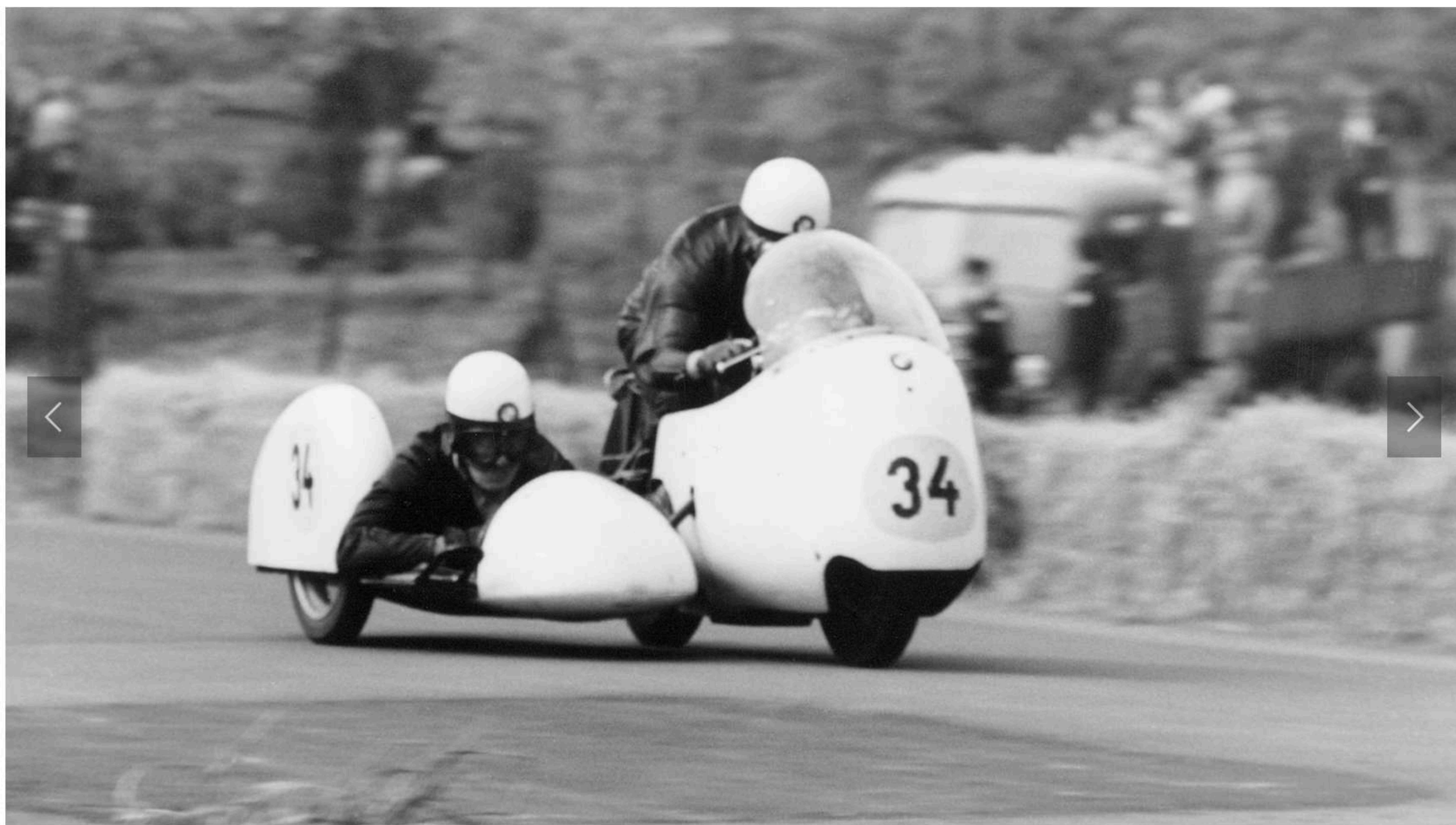
Georg "Schorsch" Meier, for example, was the first non-British racer to win the prestigious Senior TT, with the BMW 255 Kompressor in 1939. He was followed in the post-war years by a long list of winning BMW teams. All in all, other drivers such as Walter Schneider, Max Deubel, Siegfried Schauzu or Klaus Ender won the race 26 times on a BMW, until the end of its World Championship status in 1976.



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The BMW "beemer" was also successful on the British Isles.

Over the years, riders and motorsports fans coined the nickname "beemer" for BMW motorbikes, by analogy to "beezer." "Beemer" is a lot snappier and generally easier to say than BMW, especially as it cuts out the difficult long W sound at the end.



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1 / 3 Walter Schneider and Hans Strauss on the Isle of Man in 1958.

The name "beemer" quickly gained popularity in English-speaking countries as a nickname for BMW motorbikes. Over time, the alternative spelling "beamer" emerged – its resemblance to the word "beam" is believed to be coincidental. Incidentally, no separate nickname has ever been spawned in BMW's German homeland, perhaps because the name BMW trips off the tongue much more easily in German.

The nickname "bimmer" originated in the 1970s. At the time, BMW automobiles were enjoying something of a boom in popularity in the US. Americans had initially called BMW cars "beemers," like the motorcycles – with the exception of the Boston Chapter BMW club, whose newsletter has been called "Bimmer" since the 1970s. In the meantime, and entirely independently of the Boston Chapter, an identically titled magazine for BMW fans hit the shelves in the US, and "bimmer" won out as the preferred nickname for BMW cars (as opposed to "beamer" or "beemer" for motorcycles). The name has now been embraced by car fans around the world, even in Germany.



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When the third generation of the BMW 3 Series entered the market, the use of "bimmer" as a nickname for BMW automobiles spread across the globe.

Why the Chinese call a BMW a precious horse

In the 1990s, "bimmer" was joined by another nickname for BMW automobiles in China: "bao-ma" (bao rhymes with cow). Translated literally, this sobriquet means precious horse.

In Chinese culture, horses are regarded as sacred creatures of high value and signify a competitive advantage over rivals.

As the car has now largely supplanted the horse as a means of transportation, it has also assumed its value as a status symbol in Chinese culture. The BMW brand in particular is associated with prosperity and wealth.



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Bao-ma!

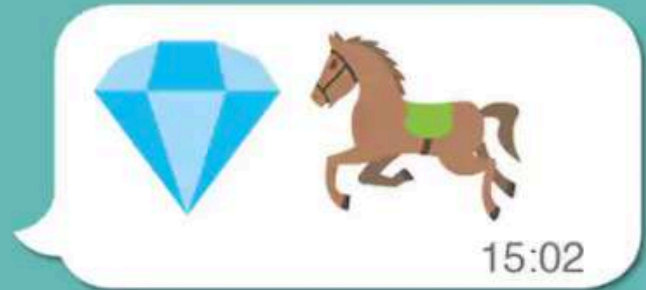
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*Unfortunately, we cannot name the company here.

Why is a BMW called a “bimmer”?

The nickname “bimmer” for BMW cars originated in the US. It was derived from “beemer” or “beamer,” names for BMW motorcycles that were first coined in the UK in the 1960s and later spread across the globe. A magazine for BMW fans and the newsletter of a BMW club from Boston, both bearing the title “Bimmer,” then appeared in the US in the 1970s.