

'Most of Audi's EVs are sold even before they arrive in India'

bl. interview

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With an uptick in demand and sales of electric vehicles (EVs) among luxury carmakers in India, Audi's India head, Balbir Singh Dhillon, spoke to *businessline* on the company's strategy, localised car assembling, changes in purchasing pattern and growth of its preowned car business.

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What is Audi India's gameplan for EVs and development of infrastructure in the country?

Over the next 10 years, one will mostly see manufacturers selling EVs. We are open to ideas on investing and improving customers' lives by installing chargers on highways.

We have installed 100 EV chargers, including high-speed chargers in 65 cities and 70 chargers in dealerships and workshops. We first install the charging points at customers' houses or offices before the delivery of the product.

Highways with charging points and high-speed chargers need to come up, which is also being pushed by the government.

How is the response in India to Audi EVs?

We launched five electric cars last year and most of the cars are pre-sold before they arrive in India. There is a positive momentum in terms of consumers, most of whom we speak to use the car within the city.

The confidence in using electric cars intercity has to go up and that will come as charging points are installed along with high-speed chargers.

When will Audi manufacture its electric cars in India?

There will be a transition in the next 10 years but at what point in time is a question that we are asking ourselves.

Globally, Audi has decided to become a fully electric car company by 2033. We need to be reasonable in making our business cases as we require a certain minimum threshold volume.

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BALBIR SINGH DHILLON
Head of Audi India



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What are your plans to increase the assembling of Audi cars in India?

The demand today is much stronger in the higher segment than the entry-level luxury segment, which is pushing us to get more cars from the headquarters. However, in that segment, with the current duty and tax, the manufacturing will always re-

main domestic. About 80-90 per cent of the assembling will be done based on the demand and availability of the product. As we move ahead towards electric mobility, there will be a transition phase for 1-3 years wherein the import percentage will go up but we will be making electric cars in India.

What are the key consumer patterns the luxury cars segment is seeing?

In the luxury car segment, we sell more emotions than products; there is a lot of physical engagement with customers, which is shifting to digital mode.

In the general purchase process itself, digital research by the customer has increased. We are seeing a big uptick in consumer booking services.

Another key pattern is that, with travel restrictions

due to Covid-19, there has been an increase in the number of people buying luxury cars within India. Consumers have moved their spending behaviour from travelling internationally to domestic travelling. The strengthening of infrastructure and intercity travel has helped us in improving our sales.

How is the pre-owned Audi car business going, and what are the plans for expansion?

In 2020, we had only 7 showrooms of Audi-Approved Plus and by the end of 2021, we had 14. We are hopeful that there will be 22 showrooms by the end of this year. In the first nine months, the business has grown 73 per cent.

Most of the business is under the unorganised sector but is slowly getting organised. The organised sector of the preowned car business is growing strongly.