

Automakers in top gear ahead of festive season

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AT LEAST TWO malls in Kerala were decked up to play host to a mini auto expo in late August, looking to cash in on the pre-festive cheer ahead of the state's biggest festival Onam later this month.

Desperate automakers had lined up their best and latest offerings, hoping to give the festive season a positive start and reverse the trend of subdued growth seen since the start of the year.

"We have decorated vehicles that roam around creating curiosity, generating sales leads. Besides malls, we have started events in residential apartments. People get enticed by offers like lucky draws for winning gold coins, laptops, etc. There are heavy discounts that we offer too. Besides, we also motivate sales staff by offering generous incentives," a dealer of Maruti Suzuki said.

In addition to rolling out new

EYEING A STRONG START

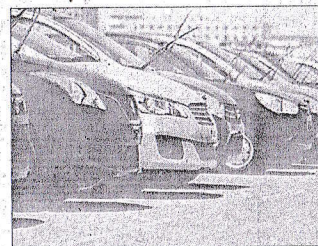
■ Carmakers aggressively pushing for consumer engagements via several local events

■ New showrooms being inaugurated, especially in states where festivals have kicked off or are around the corner

■ In April-August, PV segment fell by 1.1% against same period last year

■ July and August despatch numbers also lower than same months last year

■ The festive season, which begins with Navratri and ends on Diwali, typically generates 10-15% of total annual volumes



cars in the showrooms, car and SUV makers are aggressively pushing for consumer engagements through several events held at the local level. These events are tied to the pre-festive cheer, ahead of Onam and the Ganesh Chaturthi festivities, which begin on September 7.

Showrooms are being inaugu-

rated, especially in states where the festivals are celebrated with fervour. Tata Motors recently opened two electric vehicle-exclusive retail stores in Kochi. German car brand Volkswagen opened six touch-points in Kerala, besides launching the 'Onam edition' of its Taigun and Virtus models.

"We expect the festive season to

be as good as last year. We enter the season with a strong enquiry pipeline. We have already launched a new nameplate Curvv and introduced a new, aspirational and premium body style of the SUV Coupe with it," a Tata Motors spokesperson said.

Besides the Curvv, the market saw the launch of the Mahindra Thar Roxx. JSW MG Motor will launch a new model Windsor next week, while Hyundai launched a facelifted Alcazar.

Honda Cars India has rolled out its vehicle discount scheme, 'Great Honda Fest'. The scheme, which will run till November, will have the biggest discount offers from the Japanese auto brand.

With the growth in new car demand staying muted for five months in a row, manufacturers are pulling up their socks to make the most of the upcoming festive period.

The festive season is significant for the predicted FY25 growth of

3-5% for the passenger vehicle segment, as in the April-August period, the segment fell by 1.1% compared with the same period last year. July and August despatch numbers have also been lower than the same months last year.

Typically, according to the Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA), the festive season, which begins with Navratri and ends with Diwali, generates 10-15% of the total volume for the year. Other festivals generate additional volumes, pushing the overall figure to around 20%.

Partho Banerjee, senior executive officer (marketing and sales), Maruti Suzuki, said, "We are seeing good traction in the market and the first example was the Onam and Chingam in Kerala, where we have the upside to the booking to the tune of 7%. Onam is the time when maximum sales happen. This is a very positive sign. During the festive season, we are going to see a revival in sales."