

Rolling in luxury: Top-end carmakers spin wheels of bespoke experience

From drifting and slaloming on sheets of ice to bending laws of motorsport physics, auto majors curate thrills beyond the road

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Earlier in October, owners of Mercedes-Benz cars in India were soaring over the Sahyadri mountain range (Western Ghats) in a Cessna aircraft at Aamby Valley City, a township near Pune. The company had reserved the airstrip at Aamby Valley and also organised a watch assembly session with Swiss luxury watchmaker IWC Schaffhausen.

“The enthusiasts completely disassembled and then reassembled the IWC watches,” said Santosh Iyer, managing director and chief executive officer of Mercedes-Benz India. He added that they had recently completed multi-city dinners with Michelin two-star chefs from Milan for customers of top-end vehicles (TEVs) of Mercedes-Benz.

“These customers own



multiple Mercedes-Benz cars. I recently met someone who has nine Mercs in his garage. They are looking for curated, exclusive experiences;

something money cannot buy,” Iyer said.

Not only Mercedes-Benz India but also its German peers, Audi and BMW, are in the business of attracting discerning customers with curated experiences.

From music festivals such as BMW Joytown, to immersive chef cooking experiences like Audi’s recent event featuring chef

Prateek Sadhu, showcasing sustainable cooking with local ingredients, luxury carmakers spare no effort in engaging their customers.

These experiences extend to thrilling driving adventures in foreign

RUSH HOUR

Automakers are pouring ₹1.85 trillion into their factories to produce many more vehicles than they now do. One reason for the rush is that automakers do not want to miss the bus on electric vehicles, a market on which each of them has placed ambitious bets with investments and new models.

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countries, like Audi’s trips to Finland and Austria where customers could test their skills on thin sheets of ice, as well as prestigious golf tournaments such as the BMW Golf Cup 2023 and adrenaline-pumping racing events like BMW MotoGP. In every endeavour, these brands ensure their customers are captivated and connected, leaving no wheel unturned in the pursuit of ultimate luxury and excitement. Turn to Page 6 ▶

Development capital increase, to avoid the situation of an unfunded but enhanced mandate for the bank.

While looking forward to the finalisation of the new World Bank Scorecard, Sitharaman said there was a need to acknowledge that there was an increasing feeling that the implementation of bank-financed projects had become slow, cumbersome, and expensive for client countries.

Top-end carmakers...

The focus on TEV customers is understandable.

TEVs (those priced above ₹1 crore) now account for 25 per cent of Mercedes-Benz India's overall sales and are growing at a much faster rate than its overall portfolio. In the first nine months of this calendar year, TEV sales have grown by 22 per cent compared to the 11 per cent growth of its overall portfolio. Mercedes-Benz India sold 12,768 new cars between January and September this year.

The AMG G63 Grand Edition was launched a few days ago.

"We said that we would sell these units at ₹4 crore, and only to existing Merc customers. Within six minutes of going online with the car, it was booked. More than 90 customers want the car now, but they are on the waiting list," Iyer said.

Most of the buyers of high-end vehicles are understandably repeat customers, and Iyer says that many of them are second-generation owners as

young as 30 years old who are diving straight into super-luxury cars.

A spokesperson for Audi India said that the company organises an array of exclusive and fascinating experiences that enable customers to 'live luxury'.

"As a brand, we want to redefine luxury beyond cars with curated, tailor-made events for our customers, thus celebrating the diversity of luxury experiences. So far this year, we have already conducted more than six custom-made events for our customers in nine months. In addition, we also give our top-end S/RS and electric car owners the chance to experience the Audi Ice Experience in Austria and Finland, a one-of-a-kind experience that involves training, driving, and drifting on sheets of ice," the spokesperson said.

In the first nine months of 2023, Audi's performance and electric cars have grown by 42 per cent, and the company is confident that this growth will continue in the coming months. Audi India posted an 88 per cent growth in retail sales in the first nine months of this calendar year, reaching 5,530 units, thanks to its sport utility vehicle line-up. Audi India has already surpassed its 2022 sales by 1,343 units.

BMW, too, has sold 5,867 units between January and June 2023, its highest-ever half-yearly sales.

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