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for the industry for the past 55 yrs.

Team Autoguide

CONTENTS

NOVEMBER 2020



Mr. Shashank Srivastava,
Executive Director,
(Marketing & Sales) MSIL

20

INTERVIEW



Mr. Rajesh Uppal,
Member Executive Board
(HR, IT and Safety) MSIL

22

17

MARUTI DIGITAL JOURNEY

MILESTONES

- 39 Maruti Alto celebrates two decades
- 40 SUV Vitara Brezza hits 5.5 lakh sales



29

TWO-WHEELERS

BMW launches the new G 310 R and G 310 GS

- 43 Hero Electric launches City Speed
- 43 Hero MotoCorp launches Pleasure+ Platinum
- 44 Hero MotoCorp kicks off Maestro Edge 125 Stealth
- 48 Ampere partners with Bounce

Digital Transformation In The Automotive Industry

8 COVER STORY

Digital drive gets COVID push



34 COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

Tata launches 5525.S

49 ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Ampere ties up with eBikeGO

Ampere kicks off 'Unlock Life' campaign

31 WOMEN POWER

MG launches 2nd edition of 'Drive Her Back'

All women workshop by M&M completes 1 yr

45 EXHIBITIONS

Autoserve 2020 (Virtual) from November '20

2nd India Auto Show Bombay-Jan 7-10, '21

ACMA Automechanika N.Delhi-April 22-25, '21

27 INAUGURATIONS

BMW launches new facilities in Chennai & Rajkot



28 LAUNCHES

First-ever BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe India launch

41 Mercedes-Benz starts 'new era' of future mobility EQC

42 Isuzu launches BSVI-compliant D-Max cabs

25 SALES

October sales bring more cheer



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Editor's viewpoint



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M.P. MALHOTRA



Executive Editor
SHILPA MALHOTRA

Of rising sales and digitisation thrust

REACHING you immediately post-Diwali, we begin with an earnest hope that the festival has been good to you in all respects! The automobile industry, thankfully, has been galloping on recovery path ever since the unlock process began and there is no reason why Diwali-month sales should not scale fresh peaks. But as we wait for the new numbers to come in, let's celebrate the healthy sales data that October yielded. The festivals-driven buying spree ensured that domestic sales were in the green for the passenger vehicle segment during the month. Although commercial vehicles, particularly M&HCV, are taking time to rev up, majority of segments did remarkably well. The lead performer, of course, was the market leader Maruti Suzuki, which clocked the highest-ever monthly sales of 1.82 lakh in the company's history. For many other manufacturers also, October was the

REPORTS REFLECT THE HEIGHTENED PACE AT WHICH THE INDUSTRY IS TAKING DIGITAL MEASURES TO CONFORM TO THE NEW NORMAL

month of record sales. Let's only hope the pandemic graph slides at a faster pace and the sales momentum picks up correspondingly!

Our Cover Story this month focuses on a positive outcome of the COVID-19 outbreak – the acceleration of the digitalisation process in the automobile industry. Though the process was initiated across operations by majority of auto players, the real push came with the

variety of new challenges that surfaced post-pandemic. Reports from across the country reflect the heightened pace at which the industry is taking digital measures to conform to the new normal. A status-check on the industry's digital journey, the roadblocks on its way, the long-term benefits and revenue implications are dealt with in the Cover Story of the month.

Since market leader Maruti Suzuki India Limited is also leading the digital journey of the automobile industry, we are carrying a special write-up on the company. It elaborates on the carmaker's digital thrust in the areas of marketing, branding, manufacturing shop-floor, customer-connect and last-mile experience – the dealerships. Accompanying this special piece are our interviews with Mr. Shashank Srivastava, ED (Marketing & Sales) and Mr Rajesh Uppal, Member Executive Board, HR, IT & Safety, MSIL. In an online interaction with us, the two top executives talk about the new areas which the company has digitised, SOPs being followed at the dealership-levels and increase in online inquiries being received by the carmaker.

Besides this special package, the issue covers news developments across the sector – launches of new or upgrade models, showroom-openings, exhibitions, milestones and study reports.

Enjoy reading!!!

Auto industry speeds up initiatives

DIGITAL DRIVE

GETS COVID PUSH

THE COVID-19 outbreak has presented a new set of challenges, as also opportunities, for the automobile industry. Besides pushing the need for exploring newer, and more innovative, business solutions, the pandemic has expedited the process of digital adoption across the sector. The digitisation had forayed into the industry a few years back and was also making steady progress, but the real, and stronger, push has come with the onset of the pandemic.

A plethora of issues that came to the fore post-pandemic have goaded various segments of the industry to adopt digital solutions expeditiously in their key operations. Large-scale migration of workers coupled with health and safety concerns at manufacturing shop floors had impacted output. Regular functioning in various other departments also got affected due to Government-mandated employee limits and the recently-mushroomed WFM culture. These were among the primary factors that opened an opportunity before the industry to hasten digitalisation, and it has grabbed it rather well.

The digital thrust has also been necessitated by the transformed nature of vehicular purchase journey, more so after the pandemic. With most consumers now shunning physical visits to a showroom and placing greater importance on online and digital channels, the industry needed to reinvent its sales paradigm. And on this front too, its response has not been lacking. Dealerships are also contributing immensely

AS DIGITAL BECOMES PRIMARY TOUCH-POINT FOR PROSPECTIVE BUYERS, AUTOMOBILE BRANDS AND DEALERSHIPS HAVE HEIGHTENED THEIR ONLINE PRESENCE TO BE PART OF CONSUMER'S CAR-PURCHASE JOURNEY.

to the digitalisation process so as to sustain the sales momentum.

The heightened pace at which auto players are adopting various digital measures is borne out from media reports during the past weeks. A top Maruti official was quoted as telling a news agency towards the end of July that the company had digitised as many as 21 of the 26 touch-points in a car-purchase journey. Besides, the carmaker has a slew of digital initiatives to boast of across different areas of its operations. **(A comprehensive report on the digital world at Maruti Suzuki India Limited is being published alongside.)**

Earlier, Hyundai Motor claimed to have launched the "next revolution" in online automotive retail with 'Click to Buy' unlocking the true potential of digitalised era. The new version, said the company, is the country's first and only end-to-end online car-buying platform. In September, Honda Cars India launched a virtual showroom as part of its digital plans. The platform enables customers to discover and engage with



Digital financing

Virtual conferences

Digitised deliveries

Robotised manufacturing

Online CRM



Honda's entire range of models in a seamless digital experience from the comfort of their homes.

Domestic auto giant Mahindra & Mahindra has introduced a new set of touch-less payment options for its customers. It extended these special offerings for accessories, extended warranty and workshop-related payments for its entire range of vehicles. These unique features enable customers to make payment through various payment options.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor has recently come up with an official Whatsapp service which allows customers and the general public to reach the company for any inquiry or feedback by giving a missed call or SMS. The new app will create a "seamless and omni-channel customer experience", claimed the company.

Pre-owned luxury car player Big Boyz Toyz also launched an app which has features like car booking, 360-view of cars, videos of the inventory available, BBT merchandise and payment gateway. Big Boyz Toyz put themselves in the global map by becoming India's first

automobile digital platform to turn into a global digital encyclopedia for all the car lovers in the world.

Proclaiming that digitalisation is "transforming our world and is now becoming an integral part of the overall customer journey", MINI India launched shop.mini.in, which it touted as an online shop. The site allows people to explore the entire MINI range, configure a car of their choice, locate the nearest dealer, request for a test drive or quotation, calculate EMI as well as book their vehicle.

In the two-wheeler segment, India Yamaha Motor introduced a new user-friendly website with online sales facility while tyre-maker CEAT Tyres came up with new services offerings, which include contactless pick-and-drop service, appointment-based service and in-shop measures undertaken at the Shoppe.

While these reports underscore the recent digital initiatives on the retail side, the overall status of the automobile industry's digital transformation process has been well captured in a report by global consulting firm

EACH AUTO MANUFACTURER WOULD NEED TO IMMEDIATELY UNDERTAKE A STAGE-WISE APPROACH TO ACHIEVE DIGITAL MATURITY AT A FASTER PACE IRRESPECTIVE OF ITS SIZE AND SCALE.

Ernst & Young. The report says that though still at a nascent stage, digital adoption on manufacturing shop floors in India may gain momentum with more and more vehicle producers and auto parts makers embracing it for competitive reasons.

Saying that it is important for firms to expedite a well-planned roadmap to manage the crises posed by the pandemic, the report also highlights a discomfiting fact that only 23 per cent of the large manufacturing firms in India have a clear digital strategy. Each auto manufacturer would need to immediately undertake a stage-wise approach to achieve digital maturity at a faster pace irrespective of its size and scale of operations, emphasised the report.

Explaining the findings of another research report by Frost & Sullivan, a senior executive of the firm said, "Digital transformation will affect the entire automotive value chain, including design, production, distribution and retail, reshaping the traditional automotive business model."

Yet another report by Google India and Kantar details the digital influence on automobile buyers and the opportunities it provides for the industry. Talking of the digital transformation in the auto industry, it says that over 90 per cent of the buyers across new cars, used cars, and new two-wheelers buyers research online and over 90 pc of new and used-car buyers and 81 pc two-wheeler buyers rely on search engines to read vehicle reviews and get access to information on aggregator websites.

As digital becomes the primary touch-point for prospective buyers, automobile brands and dealerships have heightened their online presence.

The bigger picture that emerges now is that of an automobile industry that embarked on the digitalisation path well on time and treaded it at a steady pace till the corona push made it gather speed. The fact that it has done so commendably is evident from the slew of digital initiatives witnessed across the sector during the past few weeks. The fast-paced digitisation process is now well underway.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

IN THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY



Self-driving cars
equipped with AI



Digital marketing and
VR to help customers
evaluate vehicles



Automated
manufacturing
controlled with AI and
IoT



Use of AI and
analytics in creating
new vehicle designs



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**SOAR
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BIRD**

Google Kantar Study

Auto industry riding a digital wave

GOOGLE India and Kantar on October 7 released the findings of a report, titled 'Auto Gear Shift India 2020', which captures the digital influence on automobile buyers and the opportunities for the industries.

Focusing on the change in consumer journey of new car buyers, two-wheeler buyers, and used-car buyers and sellers in India, the comprehensive study captures consumer behaviours across a wide variety of segments like hatchback, sedan, SUV, scooters, entry bikes, deluxe bikes, premium bikes and used cars with inputs from unorganised dealers and organised dealers.

The report calls out the digital transformation that is underway in the auto industry, as the consumer purchase journey is changing across the country. With the consumer placing a much higher importance on online and digital channels - search engines, online videos and dealer's websites have become the three most important touch points for the buyers - leaving behind traditional media platforms.

Over 90 per cent of the buyers across new cars, used cars, and new two-wheelers buyers research online (95 per cent new car buyers, 94 per cent used-car buyers, and 90 per cent two-wheeler)

Over 90 per cent of new and used-car buyers and 81 per cent two wheeler buyers rely on search engines, to read vehicle reviews and get access to information on aggregator websites

With online video growth in the country, YouTube has emerged as a critical platform for buyers to find independent and credible videos that solve their queries.





Diving further into the influence of online videos, the report finds that videos act as 'buyers' consulting zones and online video plays a significant role in the purchase journey of an automobile shopper with nine out of the ten buyers doing one follow-up action triggered by the video. It allows buyers to experience cars and two wheelers from different and unique angles such as vehicle features, design (walk-around interior, features and technology), in-action (vehicle safety tests, VR content, performance videos), reviews and ads (testimonials, third party reviews or comparison tests). Sellers who sell through organised channels in Tier-2 and Tier-3 use more videos.

As digital becomes the primary touch-point for prospective buyers, automobile brands and dealerships have heightened their online presence to be a part of the consumer's car-purchasing journey. The report states that 72 per cent of the new car buyers, 70 per cent of the used-car buyers, 70 per cent of the used car sellers and 54 per cent of two-wheeler buyers searched for dealership online.

Commenting on the report, Mr Nikhil Bansal, Head of Industry - Auto, Google India, said: "The auto industry is undergoing a digital transformation and many leading brands have already digitised their consumer touch-points. With the consumer preferences shifting to digital across categories, we will see more brands find new ways to engage consumers on digital platforms. The report



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MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA LIMITED

Vanguard of digital journey

It should surprise none that Maruti Suzuki India Limited (MSIL), the country's largest player in PV segment, is also the auto industry leader in digitalisation process. The carmaker has been at the forefront of digital technology which has turned into a wave post-pandemic.

Way back in 2005 when it launched a centralised server-based Dealer Management System, it was almost unheard of in the industry. MSIL was also the first company to implement robots in paint-shop and welding-body shops.

Over the last few years, MSIL has embraced digital in its marketing initiatives in a holistic manner. In 2014, it launched the first integrated website. Next year, the company launched a digitally-inspired channel, Nexa and in 2017, it came up with digitally-enabled

channel Arena.

According to a company note, it grasped long back that digital is not only a marketing investment but a critical unit in the organisation to engage with customers and drive business. With this in mind, MSIL set up a social media command centre Ignition in 2015 "to make sure that we are listening to what our consumers say in real time."

Maruti's investments in marketing technology through its partnerships with Sitecore, Google, and Sprinklr have been driven with the intent of personalising its communication on the digital medium. It is working on connecting offline and online touch-

DIGITAL
MARUTI

MSIL grasped long back that digital is not only a marketing investment but a critical unit in the organisation to engage with customers and drive business.



Maruti clocks highest ever sales in company history (1.82 lakhs)- 4 new cars in every minute.

points to provide a seamless customer experience, and for this purpose it has set up a Customer Data Platform.

To provide personalised experience, the company has set up a Content Management System through Sitecore. "It helps us to personalise communication to each customer depending upon the digital signals in their purchase journey with MSIL, and provide them the best experience", said company the note.

Staying connected with the customer throughout the year is a priority for MSIL and to ensure that, it follows an 'Always On' approach for campaigns across channels like Search, Display and Social.

Regarding its learning from the digital experience, the company says the biggest strength of digital is

DIGITAL MARUTI

that "it's TIME- and GEO-agnostic." One can reach out to customers whenever they are active in the online space. This is not possible in other forms of media. The biggest benefit of digital, according to MSIL, is that one can hold one-to-one conversation with customers.

Most of the digital insights received by the company help it in designing content marketing strategies to engage with its customers. An example of this is its content creation initiatives on Nexa Music

As far as its impact on sales are concerned, digital contributed to 5 per cent of inquiries received by MSIL in FY 18-19 which increased to 13 per cent in FY 19-20. And expectedly enough, post-COVID the carmaker has seen an instant acceleration in this. Today, digital

is contributing to nearly 35 per cent of the inquiries. "During the lockdown period especially, we saw more than 45 per cent of our inquiries coming from digital channels only", according to the company.

Presently, MSIL is working on a PHYGITAL model, where there is a balance between digital interface and actual dealership showrooms.

Talking about the digitalisation of the car-buying process, the company says 21 out of 25 touch - points in an auto customer's journey today are digital. "In fact, 90 per cent of customers search online before buying a car today", it says.

Despite betting big on digital, Maruti is also convinced that dealership or the last mile is an important experience point because when a customer is ready to buy, he is looking for a dealer. Dealers too, it feels, need to be present online to meet the customer needs and to reach out to them proactively.

Citing recent research reports, the company says that post-COVID, customers would continue preferring to research online but at the final deal closing they prefer to do it at the dealership. Hence, PHYGITAL, the company's attempt to strike a balance between online and dealership

Digital contributed to 5 pc of inquiries in FY 18-19 which rose to 13 pc in FY 19-20. Post-COVID, the carmaker has seen an instant acceleration in this.

experience for the customer.

MSIL also informed us that nearly one-fourth of its marketing budgets are dedicated to digital. At the same time it stressed that investments are not a necessary indicator of focus on digital, which has to be a part of the organisation's fabric.

For Maruti, it is not so much about one medium becoming more or less important but using all of these mediums judiciously and effectively. The company

is realistic enough to say, "With the business impact of this crisis, our spends will also have to be prudent. We will keep evaluating where the consumer is and which medium he is consuming."

DIGITAL MARUTI



Maruti ED in conversation with Team Autoguide

Fully digital finance soon



Mr. Shashank Srivastava, Executive Director (Marketing & Sales),
Maruti Suzuki India

As part of its digital thrust, Maruti Suzuki India has launched a digital marketplace that assists a customer in car-buying process, Mr. Shashank Srivastava, Executive Director (Marketing & Sales), informed Team Autoguide. Over next few months, it aims to provide fully digital financing options, he said. Mr Srivastava also elaborated on a range of initiatives taken by MSIL on digital front.

Team Autoguide: *Maruti Suzuki has taken the lead in adopting digital processes in customer-facing activities. Will you please elaborate which new areas have been digitised after the COVID-19 outbreak?*

Shashank Srivastava: Given the current sentiment, robust digitalisation steps are being administered. We have digitalised 21 out of 26 touch-points in the consumer purchase journey including documentation and payments. Further to this, we have launched a one-of-its-kind finance digital marketplace that assists a customer in the car-buying process by providing easy digital finance. Over the next few months, we aim to provide fully digital financing options. However, there are certain steps which cannot be digitalised such as car delivery and test drives. Hence, we are currently looking at a 'phygital' approach wherein we seamlessly blend the limited physical touch-points with maximum digitised touch-points to strike a balance.

TAG: *Contactless delivery of vehicles is the new norm post-pandemic. To what extent are Maruti dealerships following it and has the company mandated it for them?*

SS: Strict SOPs are mandated across all our dealerships. These SOPs offer the highest level of sanitisation and hygiene to our customers as well as the employees. Customers can explore the entire product portfolio and electronically personalise cars. All the documents for vehicle purchase can also be submitted digitally. As for test drives, the dealerships are carrying out complete sterilisation of the test-drive vehicles before aligning it for customers.

TAG: *In respect of financing, how are you operating in the new environment? How supportive have been the banks and your other collaborators?*

SS: Post-COVID consumers are looking for tailor-made schemes like step-up schemes or balloon EMI schemes or option to skip some EMIs. We have closely worked with different banks and NBFCs to formulate and implement such financing schemes.

TAG: *Has Maruti Suzuki witnessed an increase in online inquiries post-COVID? How significant has been the increase and what has been the conversion rate of such leads?*

SS: Digital inquiries which contributed up to 5 pc in FY 18-19, increased to 13 pc in FY 19-20. Post COVID-19, we have witnessed an

instant acceleration in this. Today, digital contributes to more than 45 per cent of the inquiries.

TAG: *Do you think going more digital will hamper your engagement with the customers? How much of digital focus has been enhanced in your marketing strategy and what are your new CRM initiatives?*

SS: Gone are the days when precise targeting and segmenting customers could get you results on digital. Consumers today do not want to engage with push advertising, no matter how targeted it is. Hence, Maruti Suzuki follows a strict 'Always On' approach for its consumers. Our focus is on a connected Digital + CRM experience. Focused social media marketing, insightful content creation and immersive AR-VR experiences are some of the new-age tools that are

being utilised effectively.

TAG: *What specific steps have you taken, of late, to push digital means for selling used vehicles on your True Value platform?*

SS: To avoid physical contact, customers are encouraged to adopt digital platforms such as e-mails, phone, video calls, company website and a dedicated mobile application. Through these options they can search and shortlist their preferred pre-owned cars.

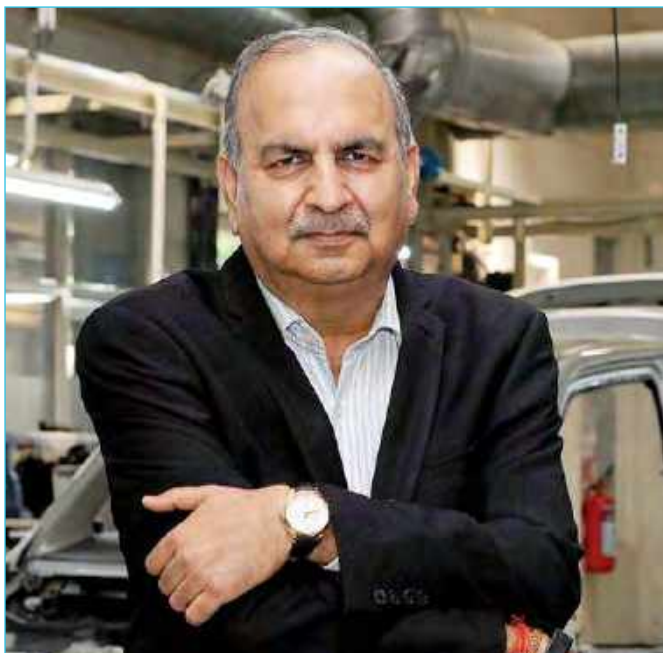
TAG: *It was only last month that Maruti introduced its subscription programme in Delhi-NCR. What is your outlook for coming months?*

SS: We aim to offer Maruti Suzuki Subscription in 40-60 cities in the next two-three years. Over the next five years, we expect to garner nearly 3-4 per cent of our car sales in these cities through our subscription programme.



An online interaction with top IT official at Maruti

New digital paradigm



Mr. Rajesh Uppal, Member Executive Board (HR, IT and Safety), Maruti Suzuki India

An altogether new digital paradigm has evolved to meet the challenges that surfaced post-pandemic, said Mr Rajesh Uppal, Member Executive Board (HR, IT and Safety), Maruti Suzuki India Limited. In an online interaction with Team Autoguide, Mr Uppal said the prevalence of digital culture in MSIL's entire ecosystem contributed substantially to the carmaker quickly restarting operations and implementing contactless practices. He also spoke about various other digital initiatives. Edited excerpts:

Team Autoguide: What are the fresh challenges you are faced with on the digital front post-pandemic?

Rajesh Uppal: The primary challenge was to have business continuity and financial wheels running while ensuring everyone is healthy. WFH brought its own set of challenges like infrastructure requirement and connectivity amongst others. Another key challenge was to track employees' health, managing gate-entry process for multiple staggered shifts and adherence to SOPs. Additionally, an important task was to review all operations to be contactless, whether the shop-floor, or with customers. All this gave rise to an altogether new digital paradigm.

TAG: Which way did Maruti's digital preparedness help the company in coping up with the corona outbreak

RU: The most indispensable part which helped was our robust IT architecture. The availability of strong collaboration platforms helped us in swift transition to WFH. We already have prevalence of digital culture in the entire ecosystem including suppliers, dealers, etc. which substantially contributed in quickly restarting operations and implementing contactless operations.

TAG: Please list some recent digitisation measures.

RU: There are many digital initiatives taken by the company to cope up with the pandemic outbreak, such as a new mobile app (named Wellness Mitra), which was built to track employee's health. We also built an app for contractual employees, suppliers and dealers. A plethora of digital initiatives were taken for implementation of smooth WFH.

TAG: Maruti was, perhaps, the pioneer in digital adoption. What are the key operational areas which were digitalised over the period?

RU: At Maruti Suzuki, digitalisation has been done

through value-chain, starting from product development, process design, production-to-supply chain, logistics, sales and service. We have also enabled our suppliers and dealers to adopt digitalisation, thereby building a digital ecosystem.

TAG: In which particular operational area MSIL has a lead over others in terms of digitalisation?

RU: We are a pioneer in multiple digital initiatives and have implemented these initiatives ahead of others. Some of these initiatives include customer journey management and digital factory etc. Our Just-In-Time inventory management system has been an industry benchmark.

TAG: How are the employees' adapting to the digital thrust of the company? What steps have you taken for their reskilling?

RU: Robust digitalisation steps are

being administered and employees have been quite positive in adapting to these. Leaders, managers and employees; all have been responsive in exploring and implementing these digital initiatives. For reskilling of employees, we have our Training Academy (MSTA) and in-house Learning Management System platform (e-Gurukul).

TAG: Where does Maruti Suzuki stand in terms of digital adoption on manufacturing shop-floor? Is Industry 4.0 implemented in all processes?

RU: All our production shop-floors are connected and integrated with our IT system. We have a Vehicle Tracking system (VTS) which is integrated with production planning and all line operations; from start to finish and quality check. Our systems are also well integrated with suppliers for traceability of components. Industry 4.0 is a journey. We are now

on a journey of getting or scaling big data and analytics platform to manage manufacturing.

TAG: How significant is the role of robotics, IoT and ML tools in the manufacturing process?

RU: It is quite significant, especially given the current sentiments. We have connected our production shop-floors and tracking systems to track each and every component.

TAG: To what extent have the dealerships adopted digitisation? Which way is the company helping them do it?

RU: We have continuously upgraded ourselves in the digitisation journey. We strive to become the enablers for consistent digital adoption across our dealers. Dealers have also adopted digitisation in many of their processes to ensure smooth running. Because of this, customers get consistent experience across our dealerships.



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Oct sales bring more cheer

Healthy rebound seen across segments



THE ongoing festival season brought further cheer to the automobile industry with most PV manufacturers reporting healthy sales numbers in October while Maruti Suzuki posting a double-digit growth for the fourth month in a row. In the two-wheeler segment, Bajaj Auto witnessed its highest-ever monthly sales. Commercial vehicles, however, displayed a mixed bag during the month.

The country's biggest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India Ltd saw an uptick of 18.9 per cent in its total sales (domestic + exports) at 1,82,448 units. The company's sales of mini cars, comprising *Alto* and *S-Presso*, declined marginally to 28,462 units as compared to the same month last year. However, sales of compact cars like *WagonR*, *Swift*, *Celerio*, *Ignis*, *Baleno* and *Dzire* increased by 26.6 per cent

to 95,067 units. The sale of utility vehicles also rose 9.9 per cent to 25,396 units as compared with 23,108 units in the year-ago month.

Hyundai Motor recorded its highest-ever domestic monthly sales of 56,605 units. While the company's domestic sales rose 13.2 per cent to 56,605 units, its exports fell 10.1 per cent to 12,230 units. The total sales of the carmaker rose 8.2 per cent to 68,835 units. "The October month sales performance has set a positive tone for overall business environment," said Mr Tarun Garg, Director, Sales and Marketing, Hyundai Motor India Ltd.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor announced that the company sold a total of 12,373 units in October, which is an increase of 4.3 per cent over 11,866 units sold in

Wholesale (Month on Month)			
Manufacturer	Sep-20	Oct-20	Change in %
Maruti	1,47,912	1,63,600	10.6%
Hyundai	50,313	56,600	12.5%
Tata	21,200	23,600	11.3%
Kia	18,676	21,021	12.6%
Mahindra	14,663	18,600	26.8%
Toyota	8,116	12,373	52.5%
Renault	8,805	11,005	25.0%
Honda	10,199	10,836	6.2%
Ford	5,765	7,084	22.9%
MG	2,537	3,750	47.8%
Volkswagen	2,050	2,054	0.2%
Skoda	1312	1,421	8.3%
Nissan	780	983	26.0%
Fiat	554	832	50.2%
Total	2,92,882	3,33,759	14.0%

the corresponding period of the last financial year. Commenting on the performance, Mr Naveen Soni, Sr. Vice-President, Sales & Service, TKM, said, "The month of October has been our best month so far since March 2020. The festive season has proved to be bullish as we witness demand surging, month on month. This has been true of our retails too as order flow has been smooth, from the very beginning."

Honda Cars India reported an 8.3 per cent increase in domestic sales to 10,836 units. The company had sold 10,010 units in the domestic market in October 2019. Exports stood at 84 units last month. "We have seen positive sales momentum in line with market sentiment and our October results have been as per our plan," said Mr Rajesh Goel, Senior V-P and Director (Marketing & Sales), Honda Cars India Ltd.

Tata Motors reports sales data quarterly. However, it retailed 10,887 units during the Navratri period this year, an increase of 90 per cent over 5,725 units last year.

MG Motor India saw its monthly sales rise 6 per cent in October to 3,750 units. The carmaker sold a record 3,625 units of its flagship *Hector* during the month while its latest offering *Gloster* has seen over 2,000 bookings.

Bucking the trend, Mahindra & Mahindra reported a 14.52 per cent decline in its total sales to 44,359 units

in October. The company had sold 51,896 units in the same month last year, M&M said in a statement. In the domestic market, passenger vehicle sales were up 1 per cent to 18,622 units last month compared to 18,460 units in October 2019. In the commercial vehicles segment, the company sold 3,118 vehicles as against 7,151 units in October 2019, a drop of 56 per cent.

In the two-wheeler segment, largest seller Hero MotoCorp, recorded total sales of 8,06,848 units, which it claims to be the highest-ever sales in any single month. Bajaj Auto's two-wheeler sales rose 18 per cent in October to 4,70,290 units from a year ago. This is its highest ever sales recorded in a month, according to the company's regulatory filing. TVS Motor Company's sales grew by 22 per cent year-on-year, registering 3,94,724 units in October. Eicher Motors Ltd., the maker of Royal Enfield motorcycles, saw its sales decline 7 per cent to 66,891 units.

Unlike passenger vehicles and two-wheelers, rebound in the CV segment is happening at a slower pace. Due to various factors, LCVs are making better sales than heavy & medium commercial vehicles. At 9,989 Units Hinduja Group's flagship firm Ashok Leyland reported 1 per cent increase in total commercial vehicle sales in October. It had sold 9,862 units in the same month last year.

Tractor major Sonalika Group registered deliveries of 19,000 tractors and sold 10,018 rotavators in October, making it the highest-ever retail across the country, according to the company. It also clocked the highest-ever production at 15,218 tractors in a month.

Two-wheelers sales - Domestic Dispatches

Manufacturers	September 2020	October 2020
Hero MotoCorp	6,97,293	8,06,848
Honda Motorcycles	5,00,888	5,27,180
Bajaj Auto	2,19,500	4,70,290
TVS Motor	2,41,762	3,01,380
Suzuki Motorcycles	65,195	76,865
Royal Enfield	55,910	62,858
Yamaha	63,052	60,176

BMW opens facilities in Chennai and Rajkot

CONTINUING its network expansion, BMW India opened two new facilities in the recent weeks. While on October 14 it announced the opening of KUN Exclusive's new facility in Ambattur, Chennai, another facility by Gallops Autohaus was opened in Rajkot on October 19.

Based on the latest BMW Facility NEXT concept, the new showroom in Ambattur offers immersive brand experience along with a dedicated BMW Premium Selection (BPS) section, said a company press release. The dealership is headed by Ms. Vasanthi Bhupati.

The state-of-the-art workshop at Rajkot comprises nine service bays (including mechanical, body and paint) and is well-appointed with the latest tools and equipment. Mr. Tanuj Pugalia heads Gallops Autohaus in Rajkot.

Mr. Vikram Pawah, President, BMW Group India, said at Ambattur, "We are delighted to open up yet another showroom in Chennai with our long standing partner – KUN Exclusive. The showroom will play an instrumental role for our brand in offering customers a personalised, emotional and premium brand experience."

At the Rajkot opening, he said, "Gujarat has always been a very important market for us and has immense growth potential. Gallops Autohaus has been a strong BMW partner in the region and today, we strengthen our relationship further by appointing them as a dealer partner in Rajkot."

Ms. Vasanthi Bhupati, Dealer Principal, KUN Exclusive, said, "Our partnership with BMW Group India has flourished over years



Chennai facility



Rajkot facility

and we are proud of the growth we have achieved together since inception. The new world-class showroom in Ambattur will continue the tradition of offering the ultimate luxury experience across the entire ownership period."

Mr. Tanuj Pugalia, Dealer Principal, Gallops Autohaus said, "We are delighted to represent BMW with an innovative BMW Facility NEXT in Rajkot. This unique format, strategic location and our expertise in the premium automotive market will help us offer customers and prospects in Saurashtra region an unrivalled BMW ownership and service experience."

First-ever BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe launched in India

BMW India has launched the first-ever BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe in the country. Locally produced at its plant in Chennai, the car is available in diesel variant and the petrol variant will be launched later, said a company press release.

Mr. Vikram Pawah, President, BMW Group India, said, "The first-ever BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe brings BMW's successful four-door coupé concept into the segment for the first time. The car injects a fresh dose of individuality, aesthetic appeal and emotional engagement to everyday usability."

He said the car will attract newer target groups who aspire for a stylish and luxurious entry into the world of BMW and value performance and quality above all. "This car is an irresistible choice for individuals who live life to the fullest", he added.

The company press release said the first-ever BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe perfectly blends the comfort of a sedan and the sportiness of a coupe. The stylish design stands out with an elongated silhouette and frameless doors. The spacious and sophisticated interior suits all kinds of travel. The powerful engine ensures best-in-segment performance and acceleration.



The first-ever BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe adapts perfectly to a dynamic lifestyle and also to personal taste. This is visible through a choice of attractive design variants – the *Sport Line* and *M Sport*. Each variant has distinguished exterior and interior design elements creating an individual personality.

The Gran Coupe is available in two diesel design variants which are locally produced. While the BMW 220d *Sport Line* has been priced at ₹39,30,000, BMW 220d *M Sport* will cost ₹41,40,000.

It is available in four colours - Alpine White (non-metallic) and in following metallic paintworks – Black Sapphire, Melbourne Red and Storm Bay. Sport Line is exclusively available in Seaside Blue colour also.

The first-ever BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe seamlessly transfers the elegant aesthetics of its larger stable-mates. The exterior embodies a modern and athletic design with precise lines and sculpted surfaces creating a fascinating interplay of light and shade. The standout characteristic is its stretched silhouette, four frameless doors and prominent shoulders with side taper which gives it a sporty, low and broad-set stance.

Despite its sporty appearance, the interior is designed to accentuate cabin spaciousness and the driver-focused cockpit with exquisite material.



BMW launches G 310 R and G 310 GS in a new avatar

BMW Motorrad India launched the new G 310 R and G 310 GS in the country on October 8.

The new BMW G 310 R and BMW G 310 GS have been developed in Munich, Germany by BMW Motorrad and are locally produced as per BS-VI standards in Hosur, India, by cooperation partner TVS Motor Co.

Mr. Vikram Pawah, President, BMW Group India said, "Globally, BMW Motorrad has created a distinct position for itself in the fast-growing sub-500cc segment with both BMW G 310 R and BMW G 310 GS. For thousands of riders and enthusiasts, the BMW G 310 R has redefined pure urban motorcycling for everyday life. For those looking for adventure and fun, BMW G 310 GS has provided the perfect reason to take the off-beat track. In their new avatar, both motorcycles feature striking design modifications, new technology and enhanced riding dynamics."

The new BMW G 310 R and BMW G 310 GS now feature a full-LED headlight and LED

flashing turn indicators and LED brake lights for increased visibility in traffic.

The new bikes have a BS-VI engine. It is a 313cc water-cooled single-cylinder four-stroke engine with four valves and two overhead camshafts with electronic fuel injection. With an output of 34 hp at 9,500 rpm and a maximum torque of 28 Nm at 7,500 rpm, the engine is an ideal partner for dynamic riding pleasure.

The newly introduced 'Ride by Wire' system passes on the rider's commands directly from a sensor on the twist grip to the engine control system resulting in even finer control and improved throttle response.

Both, the clutch lever and the handbrake lever are now adjustable in four stages. In both bikes, the engine housing covers for the alternator, clutch and water pump are finished in new Titanium Grey metallic colour. In the BMW G 310 R, this further extends to the footrest plates and rear grab handle, enhancing the modern look.



Mr Vikram Pawah,
President, BMW Group



BMW India Foundation set up as non-profit co

A non-profit company, BMW India Foundation, has been registered to plan, implement and oversee all corporate citizenship projects of BMW India, BMW India Financial Services and BMW India Leasing.

The Foundation will go beyond the current programmes to generate greater awareness and promote the causes through various partnerships and associations.

Mr. Vikram Pawah, President, BMW Group India said, "The BMW India Foundation will dedicatedly work on several priority areas which are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. Programmes successfully initiated by the Foundation have already benefited thousands of people from underprivileged communities. Committed towards creating a positive and measurable impact, BMW India Foundation will keep on increasing its outreach steadily."

A press release said BMW India Foundation's vision is to create a world where everyone believes they have the power to progress. Its mission is to act as a catalyst for enabling, empowering and enriching individuals to reimagine a better future.

Ms. Kathrin Frauscher, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of BMW India Financial Services, added, "True change can be brought by people themselves. This is why, BMW India Foundation's programs are based on the principle of 'helping people help themselves'."



MG launches second edition of 'Drive Her Back' initiative



Candidates from MG Motor India's DHB Season One conducted in 2019

REINFORCING its commitment to gender diversity and women empowerment, MG Motor India has now launched the second edition of its 'Drive Her Back' initiative. The returnee-ship programme will engage 32 women for one-year internship across marketing, communications, sales, after-sales, and product functions, said a press release by the carmaker.

Launched in 2019, Drive Her Back enables experienced and qualified women to resume their careers with dignity and pride. The selected women are extended personalised coaching and assigned internal mentors for adapting to the corporate environment. MG also provides all candidates with networking opportunities and professional development.

MAHINDRA & Mahindra on October 15 announced the one-year completion of India's first all-women-run automobile service workshop in Jaipur.

The Mahindra authorised workshop was inaugurated by current MLA Ms. Krishna Poonia on International Girl Child Day last year as part of the company's larger initiative named 'Pink Collars' to promote recruitment of women in core productive roles across the company's automobile workshops.



ALL-WOMEN WORKSHOP by Mahindra completes a year

Powered by a team of nine women, the Compact Qwik (CQ) outlet is a category of Mahindra authorised two-bay urban workshop that caters to scheduled services.

Owned and operated by Mahindra's channel partner – Kalyan Motors in Jaipur, the Compact Qwik workshop is now run by a team of women in roles such as technicians, service advisors, drivers, part managers and security guards.

The Pink Collar initiative encourages channel partners to tie up with Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and impart up-to-date industrial knowledge through the company's expert trainers, provide automotive aggregates to support practical training.

MG Developer Program & Grant 2.0 in second phase



Mr Gaurav Gupta,
Chief Commercial Officer, MG Motor India

In a bid to promote innovation while strengthening India's urban mobility space, MG Motor India has now commenced the second phase of its initiative - MG Developer Program & Grant 2.0.

The initiative is aimed at identifying and endorsing new-age solutions that improve customer experiences as well as the efficiency of the automotive sector, said a press release.

MG Developer & Grant is conducted in partnership with global technology leaders including Adobe, Cognizant, SAP, TiE-Delhi NCR, Unlimit, and MapMyIndia. It is further open to external developers – such as students, startups, innovators, inventors, and tech enterprises – as well as internal teams of MG Motor and its channel partners.

The programme, which focuses on ground-breaking innovations in connected mobility, charging infrastructure, electric vehicles and components, car buying experiences, AI & ML, batteries and management, voice recognition, navigation technologies, customer experiences, and autonomous

vehicles, is expanding its scope in the second phase with a wider ambit including new categories such as sustainability, ease-of-business and innovation in times of COVID-9.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Gaurav Gupta, Chief Commercial Officer, MG Motor India, said, "Innovation has been the core focus of the MG brand since its birth in 1924. As a strong pillar for the brand MG, innovation has always been encouraged by us in the auto-tech startup space with our entry in to the Indian market. We need innovative solutions that can change paradigms and address the real-world needs of today. MG, as a brand, calls upon all ignited minds of India to brainstorm solutions that drive meaningful impact within the automotive space."

The MG Developer Program & Grant was launched in 2019 and received more than 320 entries in its first leg.

'My MG Shield' for Gloster

MG Motor India on October 5 introduced 'My MG Shield', the country's first personalised car ownership programme for *Gloster*. It provides flexible after-sales needs based on the ownership period, kilometers covered and other preferences. According to a press release, the programme is aimed at providing transparency in transactions and ensuring complete peace of mind for customers with more than 200 combinations in warranty, road-side assistance, maintenance, residual value assurance, accessories and merchandize etc.

Mr Rajeev Chaba, President & Managing Director, MG Motor India, said, "At MG, we understand that everyone has different requirements for their car. The programme helps our customers step into a new era of hyper personalisation, with 200+ options to choose from."



3 yrs / 1 Lac Km Warranty	Warranty	RSA	Maintenance Plan	Buyback Plan
3 yrs RSA	5 yrs / Unlimited km	5 yrs	None	None
3 Labour Free Services	INR 35000	INR 4791	INR 0	INR 0
Total Package Value	Points Avl for Redemption	Net Payable		
INR 39791	INR 50000	INR 0		
Balance INR 10209 Applicable for Redemption against Gloster Accessories/Merchandise				



Tata launches *Signa 5525.S*

First 4x2 tractor with highest GCW



Mr. RT Wasan, V-P, Product Line,
M&HCV, Tata Motors

TATA Motors launched *Signa 5525.S*, the country's highest GCW prime mover (tractor) in 4x2-segment. Its 55-tonne GCW offers unique value proposition for customers to maximise profitability, said a press release.

The model is designed with Tata Motors' Power of 6 philosophy empowering customers with the power of enhanced performance, lower total cost of ownership, higher comfort and convenience; thereby improving the revenue and reduction operating cost at the same time, added the release.

The *Signa 5525.S* 4x2 prime mover is powered by Cummins 6.7-litre engine with a power rating of 250hp and torque rating of 950Nm from 1,000-1,800rpm, ensuring fatigue-less driving and reduced turnaround time for more trips and higher revenue.

The drivetrain is designed with industry-proven G1150 9-speed gearbox, 430mm dia. organic clutch and heavy-duty RA110 rear axle with enhanced pulling

power; designed for demanding terrain and multiple application requirements.

The *Signa 5525.S* is equipped with three distinct drive modes – Light, Medium and Heavy, coupled with Gear shift Advisor to ensure optimum power and torque selection, based on the load and terrain, and on-drive coaching for right gear selection ensuring high fuel efficiency and the lowest total cost of operations in its segment.

Speaking at the launch, Mr. RT Wasan, Vice-President, Product Line, M&HCV, Tata Motors, said, "With the introduction of the *Signa 5525.S* 4x2, Tata Motors continues its mission to be the pioneer in the Indian commercial vehicle industry with the widest range of products, offering its customers the best-in-class solutions to improve their overall profitability through both levers of higher revenue generation and operating cost reduction."

Toyota joins hands with Myles to ramp up its subscription services



Mr. Naveen Soni,
Senior V-P, Sales and Service, TKM

TOYOTA Kirloskar Motor (TKM) on October 8 announced a tie-up with Myles Automotive Technologies to expand its car subscription service for individual customers in Delhi-NCR, Mumbai and Bengaluru.

TKM offers a white-board subscription programme in the country through a newly launched vertical, Toyota's Mobility Service (TMS) that will spearhead all mobility initiatives in India.

With the collaboration with Myles, TKM also announced steps to provide more convenience to customers with the introduction of shorter subscription periods of 12 and 18 months.

Customers can now choose from flexible subscription tenures of 12, 18, 24, 36 or 48 months and annual running kilometre usage for a fixed monthly rental through Myles. The monthly rental includes vehicle usage cost, road tax, registration, insurance coverage and maintenance for kilometres opted and 24x7 roadside assistance that will be handled by Myles in association with TKM dealers.

The monthly rental varies depending on the model, kilometres opted and the tenure.

Ms. Sakshi Vij, Founder and CEO, Myles Automotive Technologies, said, "The tie-up with TKM is an important one for us considering the increasing customer aspiration to drive a Toyota vehicle, many of which are iconic and enjoy segment leadership over the years in the Indian market. Together, we aim to cater to the rapidly rising demand for personal transportation."

Mr. Naveen Soni, Senior Vice-President, Sales and Service, TKM, said, "We have been experiencing good response for our subscription service since the launch in August this year. We are optimistic that the tie-up with Myles will provide the subscription service further impetus."



Mahindra rolls out BS-VI variant of *Alfa*

MAHINDRA & Mahindra on October 12 announced the launch of the BS-VI variant of *Alfa*, its flagship three-wheeler brand.

The *Alfa* brand, said a company press release, is known to be the most fuel-efficient in its category and offers a range of passenger and cargo variants with four offerings catering to varied customer segments.

It has gone over significant makeover in its BS-VI avatar and offers 37 per cent higher displacement, 16 pc higher power and 12 per cent higher torque over its BS-IV version. With 9.4 hp power and 23.5 Nm torque, *Alfa* offers improved pickup and better pulling power on slopes, added the release.

Its mileage of 28.9 km/l in passenger and 29.4 km/l in load variant ensures higher savings compared to other brands in the category. Further the long wheelbase and high ground clearance, strong sheet metal body reflect the core Mahindra DNA of being rugged and strong and offer smooth drive on rough roads with ease, said the release.

According to Mr Veejay Nakra, CEO – Automotive Division, M&M Ltd, “We are happy to launch our flagship three-wheeler *Alfa* in BS-VI variant with best-in-class fuel efficiency, higher power, torque and driveability, which provide better operating economics and comfort to the end-users.”



Mr Veejay Nakra,
CEO, Automotive Division, M&M

New range of accessories for *Thar*



MAHINDRA & Mahindra on October 13 introduced a new range of accessories and merchandise for *Thar*. It has been put together keeping in mind the sporty and adventurous lifestyle of *Thar* owners and fans, said a press release.

The line-up includes: exterior embellishments that dial-up the all-new *Thar*'s timeless design; interior add-ons that give the cabin a signature look while also enhancing everyday comfort and convenience and technology that helps owners realise the true off-road experience while providing greater safety, added the release.

The range of accessories, it said, will help the owners to personalise *Thar* in their own unique way to make a veritable statement. The variety of accessories means that no two *Thars* need be the same, added the release.



Five new startups chosen for Maruti Suzuki's MAIL



MARUTI Suzuki India Limited has shortlisted five new startups as part of the third cohort of its MAIL (Mobility & Automobile Innovation Lab) programme.

With addition of these five startups i.e Clean Slate, Peer Robotics, Vicara, Hyper Reality, and URJA, Maruti Suzuki is now engaged with 14 startups under the MAIL programme in the last 18 months.

Clean Slate technologies a startup from Bengaluru, stood as the winner of the programme, followed by Peer Robotics from Gurgaon as first runner up and Vicara from Bengaluru as second runner up. They will now engage with Maruti Suzuki for paid projects and also will be entitled for other benefits associated with the programme.

Commenced with an aim to nurture innovation in the automobile and mobility sector, Maruti Suzuki had launched the MAIL initiative in partnership with GHV Accelerator in January 2019. The MAIL initiative is more than just a startup accelerator, it aims to create an environment to nurture, foster and guide the early-stage startups.

Explaining the company's efforts towards mentoring startups, Mr. Kenichi Ayukawa, Managing Director & CEO, Maruti Suzuki India, said, "The auto industry is extremely dynamic and faces new challenges frequently. The lookout for new technological aids to assist the industry and continue working efficiently is an ever-evolving task. Our flagship MAIL programme is now in its third cohort and in each round we come across several innovative ideas that solve real-life industrial challenges. MAIL programme focusses on offering a platform to these early stage startups where they can translate their big ideas into business solutions. Besides, this they get a unique opportunity to get the idea validated and approved by Maruti Suzuki's domain experts. We are excited to partner with the shortlisted startups and be a part of their growth story. We wish them the very best and hope this exposure gives them scalability."





Maruti Suzuki Alto Two decades of setting industry benchmarks

EMPOWERING more than 40 lakh households with a sense of pride, Maruti Suzuki's *Alto* is celebrating 20 years of setting unmatched industry benchmarks.

Alto has undergone multiple changes and upgrades in the last two decades which has made it more contemporary, feature loaded and aligned to the evolving needs of the customer, said a press release issued by the carmaker.

The winning proposition, it said, is *Alto*'s unique blend of compact captivating design, easy manoeuvrability, high fuel-efficiency, upgraded safety, comfort features and low cost of acquisition. *Alto* today offers premium features such as touchscreen SmartPlay infotainment system, ABS with EBD, Dual tone interiors, Dual airbags etc, to the aspiring entry car buyers.

Speaking on the milestone Mr. Shashank Srivastava, Executive Director (Marketing & Sales), Maruti Suzuki India Limited, said, "*Alto*, over the past two decades has changed the way India commutes. It has ranked as the No.1 selling car in last 16 years and continues to win hearts and surprise Indian car buyers with its exciting value proposition."



Maruti's Vitara Brezza hits 5.5-lakh sales mark

MARUTI Suzuki's compact SUV *Vitara Brezza* has hit 5.5-lakh sales mark within a short span of four and a half years. This is by far the fastest by any compact SUV, said a press release by the company. .

Launched in early 2016, *Vitara Brezza* revolutionised the compact SUV segment with its glamorous looks. It instantly won the appreciation of critics and customers alike for being a complete package in terms of looks, performance and ease-of-driving.

Responding to rapidly-changing customer needs, the all-new *Vitara Brezza* was refreshed earlier this year at the 2020 Auto Expo. Now equipped with the robust and powerful four-cylinder 1.5 Litre K-series BS-VI petrol engine, the compact SUV offers a wholesome blend of power, sportiness and convenience for an unmatched driving experience.

Mr. Shashank Srivastava, Executive Director (Marketing & Sales), Maruti Suzuki India Limited, said, "This 5.5 lakh sales milestone of *Vitara Brezza* has been a marquee statement of our endeavour to consistently innovate and strengthen Maruti Suzuki's portfolio in line with the current consumer preferences and market trends."

Mercedes starts 'new era' of future mobility EQC

MERCEDES-Benz started a new era of future mobility in the luxury segment with the launch of Mercedes-Benz EQC.

The launch on October 8 represents Mercedes-Benz's commitment to the automotive industry's journey towards a sustainable future and signifies a major milestone towards its 'Ambition 2039' which aims to achieve climate-neutral mobility, said a press release issued by the luxury carmaker.

The Mercedes-Benz EQC is the first product under Mercedes-Benz EQ brand, a comprehensive product and technology ecosystem that aims to shape the future of mobility, which derives from the Mercedes' brand values of 'Emotion' and 'Intelligence'.

The new Mercedes-Benz EQC is priced at ₹99.30 lakh (ex-showroom, India). The price for the first 50 units includes: AC wall box charger, home electrical charger, five years unlimited on-road assistance, five years comprehensive service package, five-year unlimited kilometers extended warranty and eight years/1,60,000 km battery cover.



Mr. Martin Schwenk, MD & CEO, Mercedes-Benz India, and Mr. Santosh Iyer, V-P, Sales and Marketing, Mercedes-Benz India, launch India's first luxury EV

Isuzu launches BSVI-compliant *D-Max* cabs

ISUZU Motors India on October 14 launched BSVI-compliant *D-Max Regular Cab* and *D-Max S-Cab*.

Expanding the commercial vehicle range, the company added a new variant *D-Max Super Strong* with a 1,710 kg payload, to lead its commercial vehicle range.

Powered by a 2.5-litre Isuzu 4JA1 engine, the enhanced range of commercial vehicles project an aggressive stance with their new styling and refreshed design, said a press release by the company. The vehicles are launched with many first-in-segment features in the commercial vehicle category in the industry. The refreshed models come packed with added features both on the exterior and interior.



Mr. Tsuguo Fukumura, Managing
Director, Isuzu Motors India

As a first-in-segment, Isuzu has equipped both the vehicles with Variable Geometric Turbocharger that allows effective fuel burn.

Both the models now come with the MID (Multi-Information Display) cluster with GSI (Gear Shift Indicator) that enables the driver to use the ideal gear in any driving condition ensuring best of the vehicle in terms of torque, fuel management and drivetrain durability.

Commenting on the launch of the new vehicles, Mr. Tsuguo Fukumura, Managing Director, Isuzu Motors India, said, "The Isuzu *D-Max* and *D-Max S-Cab* have always struck a chord with our customers for being vehicles offering the perfect combination of space, strength and performance to steer ahead of the curve in business and in life. We at Isuzu are committed to bring in reliable technology and engineering to the Indian market. Isuzu is globally renowned for making tough, reliable and durable vehicles and the new *D-Max* and *D-Max S-Cab* personify these characteristics".

HERO Electric on October 5 announced the launch of an all-new segment, called 'City Speed', catering to the city commuters.

City Speed e-bikes offer higher cruising speed and gradeability to ride easily on flyovers and slopes, said a press release.

As part of the City Speed portfolio, Hero Electric will introduce three new e-bikes of its electric scooters *Optima-hx*, *Nyx-hx*, and *Photon-hx*. These e-bikes will be available in 500+ Hero Electric dealerships across 25 states in the country.

The e-scooters will be priced from ₹57,560 making them the most affordable electric two-wheelers in the category. In some places like Delhi, there will be a subsidy further bringing down the prices.

Commenting on the announcement, Mr Sohinder Gill, CEO, Hero Electric India, said, "The current e-bike market is polarised with bikes available in low speed, very low price or high speed, very high prices. After years of research we have developed electrical powertrains that have 'best-in-class' efficiencies, using the least amount of battery power, giving adequate pickup and speed.

City Speed

A new segment from Hero Electric



Hero MotoCorp launches *Pleasure+ Platinum*



ADDING to the ever-growing appeal of its *Pleasure* brand, Hero MotoCorp on October 15 launched *Pleasure+ Platinum*.

The new *Pleasure+ Platinum* comes in quick succession after the recent launch of *Maestro Edge 125 Stealth*.

The scooter offers a differentiated experience with its enhanced aesthetics, accentuated retro design and premium chrome elements, said a press release by the company.

The *Pleasure+ Platinum*, is available in a new Matt Black color scheme which is combined with brown inner panels which imparts a luxurious look. The chrome additions including mirrors, muffler protector, handle bar-ends and fender stripe further enhance its retro style and relays the brand trust of quality.

The *Pleasure+ Platinum* also comes with low-fuel indicator feature, a seat back rest for added comfort, a dual-tone seat with *Platinum* hot stamping, white rim tape and premium 3D logo badging, which enhances the aesthetic appeal of the scooter.

The *Pleasure+ Platinum* comes with a 110cc BSVI-compliant programmed fuel injection engine with 'XSens Technology' delivering a power output of 8 BHP @ 7000 RPM and torque-on-demand of 8.7 NM @ 5500 RPM.

Hero MotoCorp kicks off *Maestro Edge 125 Stealth*



Mr Naveen Chauhan, Head – Sales & Aftersales, Hero MotoCorp, said, "We are glad to kick-off our festive campaign with the new *Maestro Edge 125 Stealth*, which is a stand-out product in the category. Our scooter brand *Maestro Edge* remains highly popular with the customers and this new addition will add to the brand's appeal."

The premium 'Stealth' crest badging, Carbon Fiber Textured Strips, White Accents, and tone-on-tone stripes provide the new scooter a contemporary and youthful look, according to the company.

It comes with a 125cc BSVI-compliant Programmed Fuel Injection engine with 'XSens Technology' - delivering a power output of 9 BHP @ 7000 RPM and torque-on-demand of 10.4 NM @ 5500 RPM.

IN keeping with its focus on bringing exciting products for the youth, Hero MotoCorp on October 7 introduced new *Maestro Edge 125 Stealth* scooter.

The latest addition to the company's premium scooter portfolio, the *Maestro Edge 125 Stealth* will be available at ₹72,950 (ex-showroom, Delhi).

The new *Maestro Edge 125 Stealth* has a fast and ferocious stance, further enhanced by the fresh contemporary design aesthetics, said a press release by the manufacturer. The parametric patterns, superior material finish, sharp accents and an exclusive Matt Grey theme with crest badging accentuates the appeal of the scooter, providing a premium and personified riding experience, it added.

'First meeting point' for auto aftermarket players to come face-to-face post-COVID

ACMA Automechanika New Delhi scheduled for April 22-25, 2021

AS the automotive sector gears up to get back on track with shifting consumer trends, the 2021 edition of ACMA Automechanika New Delhi will be the first meeting point for 'face-to-face networking' to revive trade discussions.

With a view to create a stronger business impact, Messe Frankfurt India together with the Auto Component Manufacturers of India (ACMA) have announced that the fifth edition of ACMA Automechanika New Delhi will take place from April 22 to 25, 2021.

The automotive industry, said an ACMA press release, is shifting gears as it witnesses an uptick in vehicle consumption in Q2 FY 2020-21. With health and safety taking precedence, mobility needs and consumer sentiments have led to a rise in vehicle buying – and demand for private vehicle has picked up with green shoots emerging in the two-wheeler and small car segments.

Major carmakers reported a near 20 per cent jump in August domestic passenger vehicle sales compared to last year which is expected to further rise during the festive season. This growth, combined with car parc of second-hand vehicles due to increased private-car use, is expected to lead to a rise in aftermarket demand. The shifting trends have brought with it a surge in omni-channel aftermarket models as well as 'new normal' aftermarket solutions.

Re-starting the business year under the new normal, the 2021 edition of ACMA Automechanika New Delhi will therefore be marked in the automotive industry calendar as the 'first meeting point' for auto component and aftermarket players to come face-to-face for business. The fifth edition, said the release, will be crucial to rebuild customer connections and re-unite businesses in the auto segment through its array of displays for the 'new normal'.

Autoserve 2020 from Nov 23

VIRTUAL



THE ninth edition of aftermarket event Autoserve 2020 will be held from November 23 to December 22, virtually through Hive platform of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

The one-month exhibition will have over 75 exhibitors and will also include an international conference on automotive aftermarket. There will be a special focus on e-vehicles.

2nd India Auto Show 2021

January 7-10

FACE TO FACE



THE 2nd India Auto Show will be held from January 7 to 10, 2021 at the Bombay Exhibition Centre. It will be the first Face to Face Automotive Industry Congregation post lockdown

Road transport sector hit adversely: ICRA report



THE COVID-induced lockdown coupled with other restrictive measures to contain the disease have adversely impacted the prospects of the logistics sector, especially the road freight transportation movement. The extended nation-wide lockdown for the major part of Q1 FY2021 paralyzed economic activity and thereby the freight availability also moderated significantly.

This coupled with restrictions on cross-border movement, shortage in availability of drivers and manpower due to large-scale migration and lack of availability of return load, significantly impacted the road logistics sector during the first quarter, according to a latest report by rating agency ICRA.

Mr Shamsher Dewan, Vice-President, ICRA Ratings, said, "The aggregate revenues of ICRA's sample of logistics companies contracted sharply by 35 per cent during the quarter. The impact was more visible on players operating on an asset-heavy model, due to high fixed costs for owned assets, while asset-light players fared relatively better."

This decline, he said, was also corroborated by the generation of E-way bills, which contracted by 49 per cent during the quarter. "In addition to the impact on the road logistics sector, the macroeconomic slowdown and lockdown also had a bearing on the rail and seaways freight traffic that primarily comprises of bulk commodities like coal, cement, iron ore

and crude oil with volumes contracting by 21.3 per cent and 19.7 per cent Y-o-Y, respectively," he added.

The financial performance of ICRA's sample of ten leading logistics companies was also adversely impacted in Q1 FY2021 as aggregate revenues of players declined by 35 per cent on a Y-o-Y basis, in line with the sharp moderation in GDP growth, which hit historic lows of -23.9 per cent, resulting in subdued freight availability.

With the economy gradually opening up during unlock phases and industrial, manufacturing and construction activities resuming, freight activity too has also been gradually reviving. The latest E-way bill and Fastag data indicates that freight volumes have recovered sequentially and improved to 87 per cent of pre-COVID levels (for E-way bills) and 95 per cent of pre-COVID levels (for Fastag) by August 2020.

As per ICRA note, growth over the near term is expected to be driven by specific segments like e-commerce, as the trend in online purchases and deliveries have picked up substantially post the lockdown. Similarly, the automotive sector has also been picking up, especially sectors like entry-level cars, motorcycles, tractors etc. which augurs well for specific logistics segments like auto carriers.

Apollo appoints Hassen as Chief Digital Officer

APOLLO Tyres has appointed Mr Hizmy Hassen to the newly-created position of Chief Digital Officer.

Mr Hassen will be based out of the company's London office, and will be responsible for leading the strategy and operations of Apollo Tyres' digital journey, including responsibility for information technology.

His last assignment was with Coats PLC, prior to which, he was with Unilever. In over 20 years with Coats he has worked across areas of Supply Chain, Information Technology and Digital Enablement.

Mr Neeraj Kanwar, Vice-Chairman & Managing Director, Apollo Tyres Ltd, said, "With digitalisation being a key focus area for the company, especially considering the challenges that we face today due to the global pandemic, we have created this position of Chief Digital Officer. Hizmy, who comes with 30-years of rich experience, will be the ideal person to develop and execute the future architecture roadmap and evolve the IT delivery model, through partnerships with cross-functional leaders across Apollo Tyres."

Speaking about his joining Apollo Tyres, Mr Hassen said, "I am excited to be a part of this dynamic and growing organisation. I believe that Apollo Tyres is already moving rapidly on the digitalisation journey; my focus would be to challenge and improve upon the existing processes and systems in the company to deliver the best business results."



Mr Hizmy Hassen, Chief Digital Officer, Apollo Tyres



Ampere partners with Bounce



AMPERE Electric, a wholly-owned electric mobility subsidiary of Greaves Cotton Ltd., has strengthened its performance range of e-scooters with a renewed focus on shared and rental electric mobility solutions.

According to a press release, Ampere Electric's partnership with leading bike rental platform Bounce is enabling faster adoption of electric scooters and providing sustainable and affordable last-mile connectivity and superior customer experience.

Ampere Electric has been able to cater to the requirements of retail electric scooter buyers and leading e-commerce delivery and ride-share players with a wide range of electric scooters, said the release.

Ampere is customising the scooters for Bounce making them more accessible and convenient for consumers, it added.

Mr P Sanjeev, COO, Ampere Electric, said, "We are thrilled to partner with Bounce. Ampere along with Bounce is enabling safer and affordable shared mobility solutions for ride-share customers."



AMPERE Electric on October 15 announced its business partnership with eBikeGO, an electric vehicle subscription platform.

With this tie-up Ampere Electric strengthens its presence in fast-growing B2B shared mobility service segment. The rides reinforce emerging need for economical, simple plug & play IoT enabled zero-contact travel.

Mr P Sanjeev, COO, Ampere Electric, said, "Our partnership with eBikeGO is a significant step towards catering the increasing last-mile delivery demands from leading e-commerce platforms in the country, wanting to deliver their goods always on time, through affordable and cleaner e-mobility solutions."

Mr Irfan Khan, Founder & CEO, eBikeGO, said, "The winning combination of Ampere vehicles and eBikeGO's

Ampere ties up with eBikeGO



telematics and tech platform makes a valuable offering to power the EV ecosystem."

Kicks off 'Unlock Life' to boost EV adoption

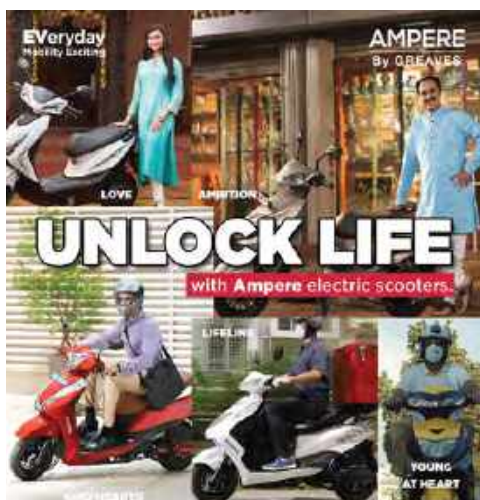
AMPERE Electric is geared up to enhance EV adoption in the country with the launch of its 'Unlock Life' campaign.

This campaign, said a press release, is an ode to new breed of EV buyers seeking wide range of Ampere electric scooter buyers after unlock is announced and more markets are reopened.

The company has launched a phygital campaign supported by new range of e-scooters, customised online buying experience and multi-language call centre which will operate uninterrupted way to help increasing number of buyers know more about various aspects of product, share knowhow on features and financing & privileged benefits.

According to the company, there has been a good uptick in customers visiting showrooms and online, more from smaller towns across the country. To cater this new increasing demand for electric vehicles especially in rural areas, Ampere Electric is creating an easy platform for customers to interact and know more about usage, new schemes and lifecycle savings over conventional petrol scooters, thus enhance accessibility for everyone.

Speaking on the occasion, P Sanjeev, COO, Ampere Electric said, "At Ampere Electric, we are actively listening to voice of customers & have created unmatched product range, robust service backup, and easy financing options to facilitate the seamless transition towards electric scooters."



Grinntech signs MoU with Tamil Nadu Govt



L to R - Mr. Puneet Jain, Co-Founder Grinntech, Mr. E Balasubramoniam, President Grinntech and Mr. Nikhilesh Mishra, Co-Founder, Grinntech

GRINNTECH, an investor-backed startup specialising in Lithium-Ion batteries for EVs and energy storage systems, announced the next step of their growth plans with two significant announcements.

On October 12, it executed a MoU with the Government of Tamil Nadu which outlines the company's intent to establish a battery and battery management system manufacturing facility in Tamil Nadu to cater to the

anticipated growth of EVs in the country.

Grinntech, which has attracted several industry veterans as investors since its incubation at IIT-Madras Research Park, already operates its R&D and pilot manufacturing facility in Chennai. In addition, it has outlined plans for outlay of almost ₹100 crores for R&D, product development and production facilities which will lead to the employment of 250 staff over the next five years.

"We are grateful to the Government of Tamil Nadu for their vision in attracting investment in the fast-growing EV and EV-component sectors. Chennai has had the label of 'Detroit of the East'. Now, as the global auto industry shifts to electrification, this initiative by the Government of Tamil Nadu will help India's EV industry be future-ready", said Mr Puneet Jain, Co-Founder of Grinntech.

Taking yet another step in their growth strategy, Grinntech also announced the appointment of Mr. E. Balasubramoniam as President of Grinntech.

Mr. Balasubramoniam, brings over 35 years of experience in the auto industry including prior leadership roles in Maruti-Suzuki, Tata Motors and most recently as Senior Vice-President at Ashok-Leyland and CEO of the Nissan-Ashok Leyland JV.

Mr. Balasubramoniam is an alumnus of IIT-Madras.

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