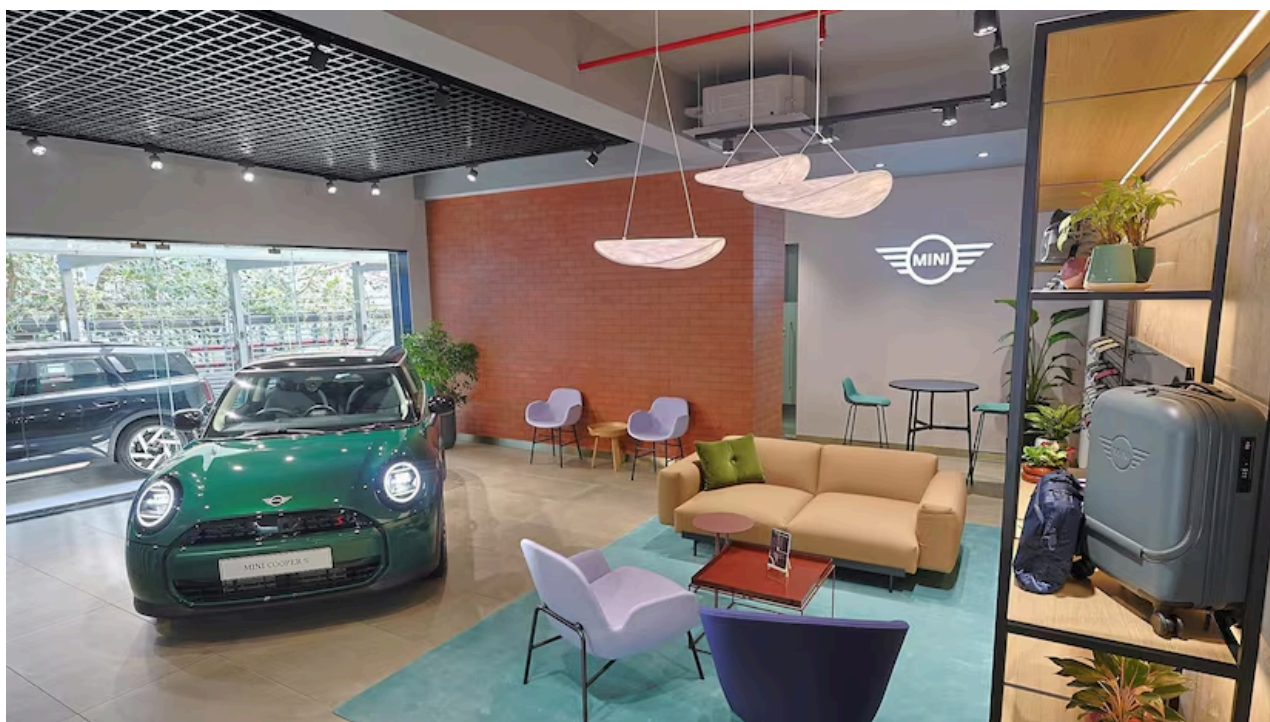


Luxe automakers on top gear to woo buyers in upscale lounge ambience

BS business-standard.com/industry/news/luxe-automakers-on-top-gear-to-woo-buyers-in-upscale-lounge-ambience-124102000522_1.html

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They are updating dealership networks to offer customers a more luxurious lounge



Retail.Next showroom of BMW - Infinity Cars Worli

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Luxury automakers are turning the car-buying experience more refined.

Amid mass-market brands entering the premium space, the luxury market leaders such as BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Audi are upgrading their dealerships by offering one-stop solutions, and digital tools such as augmented /virtual reality and digital display walls. Armed with swanky showrooms with more open spaces, decked with plush fixtures, and offering indulgences such as high-end perfumes and customisable accessories, they are rolling out the red carpet for the well-heeled. Industry analysts say this is a strategic move to create further distinction between themselves and mass-market players.

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BMW Group India, for instance, is investing Rs 365 crore to revamp its 56 dealerships over the next three years. Its 'Retail.NEXT' initiative aims to move from the traditional car dealership model towards a lounge-like experience and personalised interactions. Here, customers will find sales and service offerings of BMW, MINI, and Motorrad, along with pre-owned cars, under one roof.

Vikram Pawah, president and chief executive officer (CEO), BMW Group India, said the company was expanding its vision of an “immersive luxury experience in India” with this initiative.

Its dealerships will now come equipped with digital product configurators that allow customers to design their BMWs, and reserve a customer service booking via the MyBMW App.

German luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz, too, is pumping Rs 150 crore into upgrading its 25 India outlets into lounges with interactive spaces and omnichannel retail experiences. This aligns with the company’s global strategy to appeal to high-end clientele. The company has adopted the ‘Retail of the Future’ model, which allows for direct sales to customers, offering nationwide stock access and promoting transparent pricing. With this Mercedes-Benz is also broadening its merchandise selection with luxury items such as perfumes and accessories to enhance the dealership.

"A significant aspect of this initiative is the establishment of our retail infrastructure, which will provide a seamless ‘omni-channel’ retail experience that integrates online and offline interactions,” said Santosh Iyer, managing director & CEO, Mercedes-Benz India. Mercedes-Benz's franchise partners will invest in upgrades across the network of 100-plus retail outlets by the end of next year.

Audi India, on the other hand, is offering 360-degree product visualisers, augmented reality tools, and the myAudi Connect app that helps consumers explore and configure their vehicles.

"From virtual tours and digital display walls to over 1,000 electric vehicle charging stations, our goal is to make premium mobility more convenient, immersive, and environmentally conscious," said Balbir Singh Dhillon, head, Audi India.

These moves by the luxury market leaders coincide with mass-market players like Hero MotoCorp and MG Motor expanding into the premium space, launching exclusive showrooms for high-end vehicles. Hero recently opened its first 'Premia' dealership, showcasing its premium motorcycles like the Harley Davidson X440 and the Karizma

XMR, while MG Motor has announced plans to launch 'MG Select' outlets for its luxury lineup.

Anurag Singh, managing director, Primus Partners said these innovations were driving significant changes in how the auto industry approached both sales and the dealership experience. "We are witnessing several trends reshaping the way cars are sold today: A growing reliance on digital tools by consumers, the integration of digital displays and augmented/virtual reality in dealerships, and increasing demand for customisation at the vehicle level, from colour and trim to engines and seating," said Singh.