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TATA ALTROZ RACER:
A COMPETITIVE
HATCHBACK

TATA ALTROZ RACER: A COMPETITIVE HATCHBACK



Tata knows the importance of both conquering new markets and maintaining its current stronghold. While SUV sales are booming, Tata has launched the new Altroz Racer to strengthen its position in the hatchback segment. We took the Altroz Racer for a spin at the CoASTT Performance Track in Coimbatore to see how it stacks up against the Hyundai i20 N Line.

Appearance

True to its name, the Altroz Racer sports a bold look with a black bonnet, roof, ORVMs, 16-inch alloy wheels, grille, and pillars. Double white stripes run from the roof to the bonnet, adding to its racecar vibe. The checkered flag design on the roof is a nice touch. The projector





headlamps, LED DRLs, and new spoiler add a stylish flair.

The car comes in three dual-tone colours: orange, grey, and white. Its dimensions remain unchanged, with a ground clearance of 165 mm.

Interior Decor

Inside, the sporty theme continues with black seats and a dashboard, accented with orange stitching. The AC vents and gear knob have an orange border. The instrument cluster is now fully digital. The rear seats feature a centre armrest, separate AC vent, and adjustable headrest, and the flat floor allows three passengers to sit comfortably.

The driver's seat has manual height adjustment. The seats are ventilated and

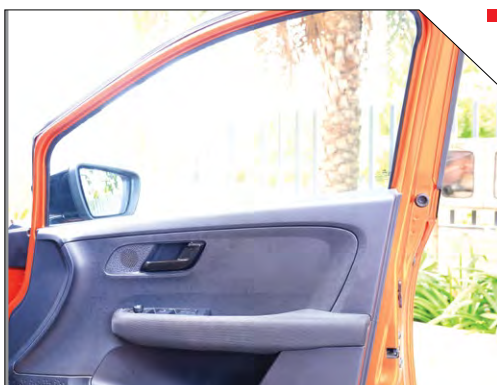
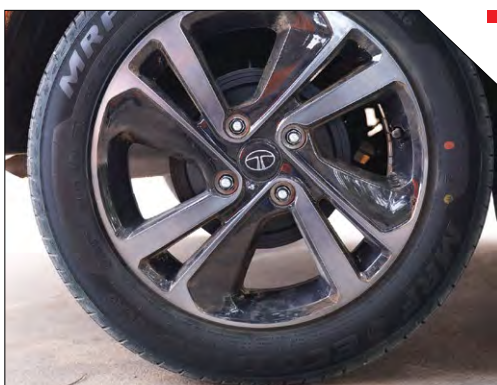
SPECIFICATIONS	
Dimensions	3990 mm (L) x 1755 mm (W) x 1523 mm (H)
Wheelbase	2501 mm
Ground Clearance	165 mm
Gearbox	6-speed manual
Seating	5
Fuel Tank	37 litres
Boot Space	345 litres
Engine	1199 cc, 3-cylinder inline
Power	120 bhp @ 5500 rpm
Torque	170 Nm @ 1700-4000 rpm
Drive	Front-wheel drive
Brakes	Disc (front) / Drum (rear)
Tyres	185/60 R16

covered in leatherette. Cabin space remains generous.

Special Features

The top variants include a 10-inch touchscreen similar to the one in the Nexon, along with a 360-degree camera for enhanced security. The system supports wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. Other features include the iRA-connected car system, voice-assisted sunroof, wireless charger, and air purifier. The rear seats are spacious and comfortable.





Safety Features

The Altroz Racer boasts a GNCAP five-star safety rating. It comes with 6 airbags, electronic stability control, E-Call/B-Call, rear defogger, and rain-sensing wipers. The front wheels have disc brakes, while the rear wheels have drum brakes.

Engine

The Altroz Racer is powered by the same 1.2-litre engine found in the standard Altroz turbocharged variant but with an additional 10 bhp and 30 Nm of torque. The 3-cylinder engine now produces 120 bhp and 170 Nm of torque, delivering instant power when you press the accelerator. The exhaust note is sporty, but engine noise can be a bit loud at higher speeds.

The 6-speed gearbox isn't the smoothest, but the car is priced Rs 50,000 lower than its competition. Its excellent ride and handling, coupled with features like a sunroof, ventilated seats, and air purifier, make it a compelling choice.

Driving Experience

The Altroz Racer excels in ride and handling, especially on the 15-turn CoASTT High Performance track. Built on the ALFA (Agile, Light, Flexible & Advanced) platform, the car lives up to its name with agile handling. Its top speed is 165 km/h. In city traffic, the Altroz Racer proves to be just as capable as it is on the racetrack.

The steering is light at low speeds and firm at high speeds, providing confidence during driving. The suspension effectively absorbs bumps, ensuring a smooth ride.

For those seeking a race car feel, the manual gearbox adds to the thrill, despite not being the smoothest. The Altroz petrol model also offers a dual-clutch automatic gearbox option.

Conclusion

The Tata Altroz Racer offers an exciting blend of style, performance, and features at a competitive price. Whether you're navigating city streets or taking on a race track, the Altroz Racer proves to be a versatile and enjoyable hatchback.



BHARGAV SRIDHARAN


 N.KARTHIK

MAHINDRA XUV 3XO



Mahindra is the name acronym for SUVs and they are the specialist in the segment. But somehow, they could not make inroads in the compact SUV segment like their other SUVs like Scorpio, Thar or XUV 500. Though the company's subcompact car XUV 300 was a well-rounded SUV, it didn't take off due to some reasons. But the company did not give up and has completely refreshed its XUV 300 including the name and from now it will be called XUV 3XO'. The designers have gone all out to give the 3XO a completely new look, redone the interiors, some first-in-class features and some class-best specifications to give a tough fight to its competitors.

Known for its bold design, and powerful engine options, this time Mahindra added a host of features and made XUV 3XO a complete package and stand out in a competitive segment. Let's delve into various aspects of the vehicle, including design, performance, interior, safety features,



A NEW ENTRANT IN THE CROWDED COMPACT SUV SEGMENT

The backrest is nicely reclined for comfort and gets a 60-40 split, which will be useful for expanding the new 364-litre space that's made deeper this time around. The 3XO scores well on space for small items.



and overall value for money.

Design and Aesthetics

The Mahindra XUV 3XO boasts a striking design that combines robust SUV elements with modern styling cues. The face of the car is distinctively large and new vertically oriented headlights are outlined by C-shaped DRLs like in XUV700 making the front fascia unique.

The grille looks fresh with chrome accents blacked-out gloss panel and the new Mahindra logo. The headlamp unit comes in two sections, the top being a concealed projector and the lower down unit with an open projector fog

lamp. The aggressively designed bumper with integrated fog lamps adds to its bold look.

The side profile is enhanced by pronounced wheel arches, and stylish alloy wheels with a new 17-inch diamond cut alloy, which is the largest in the segment. There's also chunkier side cladding with cuts at the wheel arches. The rear is equally appealing with new sets of LED tail lamps, a sharply cut tailgate and a more purposeful-looking rear bumper giving it a strong look. The XUV 3XO's design is not just about aesthetics; it also focuses on functionality. The compact dimensions make it ideal for city driving, while the generous 201mm ground clearance ensures it can handle rough terrains. Overall, the Mahindra XUV 3XO's design is a perfect blend of style and practicality, making it a head-turner on the road.

Interior and Features

The interior gets a significant change especially loaded with more features than before and also feels quite premium when compared to other SUVs in the segment. The leatherette upholstery's quality feels upmarket, the soft-touch upper dashboard looks and feels premium,





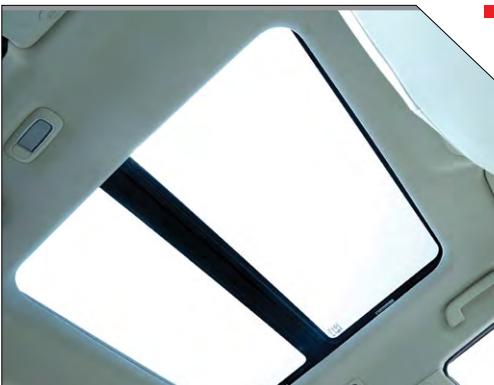
and there's good space inside with supportive seats as well. A new and bigger 10-inch touchscreen system is easier to use and comes with a lot of connectivity options. The dual 10.25-inch screens for the infotainment display and the digital instrument cluster are from the XUV400 and use MapMyIndia's maps rather than Google Maps. The touchscreen is smooth and comes with wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, eSim-based connected car tech that brings in functions like remote ignition and cooling, remote vehicle updates and a whole lot more. On fully loaded AX7 L versions, the screen is also the display for a 360-degree camera.



When it comes to audio systems, the Harman Kardon sound system packages two tweeters, four-speaker and a subwoofer. Dual-zone auto climate control continues to be a highlight in the new Mahindra XUV 3XO. The front row gets a wireless charger along with a 65-watt fast C-type charging point, which can also be used to charge laptops. The biggest highlight is the new panoramic sunroof, which according to Mahindra is the biggest in the segment. If I need to complain then I would say the ivory interior which will be prone to dirt and the absence of a dead pedal for the driver to rest their left foot.

Safety

The rear seats are comfortable and are commendable with a generous amount of legroom, adequate headroom, and manageable shoulder room for even three occupants. All three rear passengers get three-point seat belts and dedicated headrests, fold-down centre armrest, a 12V charger and a USB Type C charger. The flat floor, bigger sunroof, and rear AC vents make the area feel more spacious and airier. The backrest is nicely reclined for comfort and gets a 60-40 split, which will be useful for expanding the new 364-litre space that's made deeper this time around. The 3XO scores well on space for small items. There's a bottle holder on each of the doors, a pair of cupholders front and rear, a deep cooled glovebox as well as storage under the front centre armrest.



On the safety front, it gets six airbags, ESC, all three-point seat belts with reminders, rear parking sensors, all-disc brakes, traction control with brake assist, and ISOFIX mounts even in the base variant. Higher up the line-up, there's hill hold and descent control, TPMS, and front sensors. The 'L' variants, namely the AX7 Luxury and AX5 Luxury get Level 2 ADAS, a 360-degree camera, and an electronic parking brake with auto hold in addition to all the other features.

Engine and Performance

Like the XUV 300, the XUV 3XO comes with three engine options: a 117hp and 300Nm, 1.5-litre four-cylinder diesel; a 111hp and 200Nm 1.2-litre, three-cylinder turbocharged unit; and the range-topping 131hp and 230Nm, 1.2-litre, three-cylinder, direct injection turbo-petrol unit. A six-speed manual is available across the variants (both petrol and diesel). In terms of automatic, diesel continues to come with a 6-speed AMT, and both petrol engines get the new 6-speed torque converter automatic.



The performance of the XUV 3XO is commendable in both urban and highway conditions. The cabin is quiet even with the diesel engine

The combination of stylish design, strong performance, feature-rich interior, and top-notch safety makes the XUV 3XO a compelling choice in the subcompact SUV segment. The Mahindra XUV 3XO is a well-rounded vehicle that excels in various aspects.



where it comes to life without much noise, the vibes are negligible, and the motor feels refined at all times. However, when you rev up in a lower gear, it becomes audible. Nevertheless, hardly any vibrations were felt inside the cabin.

The 1.5-litre diesel engine promises a maximum fuel efficiency of more than 21 kmpl. The diesel engine, offers robust performance with excellent torque delivery, making it ideal for long-distance driving and overtaking on highways. Turbo lag is well contained at low speeds, and there's a very nice spread of power that helps get the XUV 3XO to cruising speeds without much effort. The 6-speed gearbox also helps make the 3XO a relaxed cruiser, and although the gearshifts on the manual are decent. The petrol engine, on the other hand, is peppy and responsive, making it suitable for city commutes.

The mStallion T-GDi turbo-petrol engine is well refined and unlike other three-cylinder engines the noise levels are kept so well in check that at higher speeds you'll almost always underestimate engine rpm. The new 6-speed torque converter automatic also gels very well with this engine delivering smooth and timely shifts. You can take manual control via the gear lever where paddle-shifters are missed. With McPherson struts at the front and twist beam suspension at the rear, the suspension setup ensures a comfortable ride by absorbing road

imperfections effectively.

Conclusion

The Mahindra XUV 3XO is competitively priced, offering a range of variants to suit different budgets. The XUV 3XO starts at Rs 7.49 lakh (ex-showroom), which is quite attractive, considering the host of features and the level of safety it provides. The fuel efficiency is decent, with the petrol variant delivering around 17 kmpl and the diesel variant offering approximately 21 kmpl, which is economical for daily commutes and long drives.

The combination of stylish design, strong performance, feature-rich interior, and top-notch safety makes the XUV 3XO a compelling choice in the subcompact SUV segment. The Mahindra XUV 3XO is a well-rounded vehicle that excels in various aspects. Its bold design, powerful engines, comfortable and feature-rich interior, and extensive safety features make it a strong contender in its class. Whether for city driving, highway cruising, or tackling rough terrains, the XUV 3XO delivers a satisfying performance. For buyers looking for a subcompact SUV that offers great value for money, the Mahindra XUV 3XO is certainly worth considering.



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AVINASH NORONHA

MUTHU KUMAR

MARUTI



UPGRADING THE

SWIFT

If you have a winning formula, there is no real reason to change it. Especially if your formula has been successful for a whopping 19 years. An incredible achievement for the Maruti Suzuki Swift, which has been winning hearts of Indian drivers for nigh on two decades.

Even as the new Swift is being brought into the Indian market, still more than four thousand units were sold in April itself. A testament to the resilience of the brand.

After a bit of a gap, the 3rd generation of this beloved family hatchback has made its way onto our roads.

While there are many things to like about the new Swift, but the one element which will grab everybody's attention is the more frugal engine, which delivers better fuel efficiency. Maruti has always played this game well and is only upping this ante.

The new Swift has been launched with a new engine, new features, an upgraded cabin, and added safety features. The Swift's design and style

have become close to the hearts of customers, so Maruti has not made any drastic changes in these basic features, though there is a noticeable improvement. The Swift is still built on the same Heartect platform, with a wheelbase of 2,450mm. However, the weight has only increased by about 25 kg, mainly due to the extra airbags.

Exterior Design

The front of the Swift, often seen as the car's face, has received some updates. The housing of its LED headlamps is now black, and the entire grille is now an attractive black colour instead of the chrome strip across the grille. The logo, which was on the grill, has now shifted to the bonnet, designed in the shape of an oyster shell. The side view remains unchanged, but the shoulder line is now more visible. The rear armrest on the C-pillar is back in its original position, and the black colour on the pillars and roof gives the car a sporty look. The 15-inch alloy wheels (14-inch on cheaper models) add a fresh touch to the design.

RELIABLE WORKHORSE

SPECIFICATIONS	
Dimensions	H/W/D: 3860/1735/1520 mm
Wheelbase	2450 mm
Ground Clearance	163 mm
Boot Capacity	265 litres
Turning Radius	9.6 meters
Weight	920 - 925 kg
Fuel Tank	37 litres
Engine	1197 cc, 3-cylinder NA
Power	82 hp @ 5700 rpm
Torque	112 Nm @ 4300 rpm
Gearbox	5-speed Manual / 5-speed AMT
Tyres	185/65 R15
Suspension	MacPherson Strut/ Torsion Beam
Mileage	24.8 / 25.7 kmpl (claimed)
Drive Layout	Front-wheel drive



At the rear, the LED tail lights have changed to a C shape. The tailgate opens and closes between the two taillights.

Interior Features

The car's dashboard is reminiscent of the Baleno. To give it a sporty look, the dashboard and seats are all black. The touch screen has grown to 9.0 inches and has become a floating screen, which means the AC controls have been repositioned. The instrument cluster is now colourful and includes a navigation mirror visible on the touch screen. Many elements like screws and buttons come from more expensive cars like the Baleno and Fronx. The addition

of a piano finish to the steering wheel is a nice touch.

The handle on the C-pillar has been shifted, allowing for new quarter glasses. This makes the second row of seats feel a bit more spacious. For short trips, three people can travel in the back seat, while two people will be more comfortable on longer journeys. There is a separate AC vent for rear passengers, and the trunk can hold 265 litres of cargo. If more space is needed, the rear seats can be folded in a 40:60 ratio.

New Features

Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are available, along with cruise control, a wireless charger, and a reverse camera.

Safety

Safety features like 6 airbags, ABS, EBD, hill hold assist, and 3-point seat belts are provided even in the cheaper variants. The Swift earned just one star in the 2022 GNCAP test, so it will be interesting to see what rating it gets in the Bharat NCAP.

Engine and Gearbox

The new Swift replaces the 4-cylinder 1.2-litre K series engine





with a 3-cylinder 1.2-litre Z series engine. This engine provides an additional 3 kmpl mileage compared to the old engine, with the AMT gearbox giving a mileage of 25.75 kmpl and the manual gearbox giving 24.8 kmpl. Although the noise is low for a three-cylinder engine, a slight vibration can be felt when the car is idling. In the AMT car, power delivery is linear, but the engine struggles if you press the accelerator hard for immediate power. If you keep your foot on the accelerator continuously, you can feel the gear change with a slight jerk. The AMT also has a Tiptronic facility for manual driving, but the Swift could benefit from a better automatic gearbox.

Compared to other cars in this segment, the Swift's 5-speed manual gearbox stands out for its smooth shifting.

Handling and Suspension

The steering has certainly improved. It is light, making it suitable for city driving, and it snaps back easily when you turn it. There's no noticeable body roll. The front suspension absorbs vibrations well, but they are more evident in the rear.

Pricing and Comparison

The price of the Swift is comparable to the Maruti Baleno and higher than the rival Hyundai Grand i10. However, the Swift's sporty exterior, improved manual gearbox, and overall driving experience continue to attract loyal customers.

The new Swift's updates, especially in mileage and interior features, make it a strong contender in its segment. While the 3-cylinder engine may not be as lively as the previous 4-cylinder, the improved manual gearbox enhances the driving experience. Ultimately, its success will depend on how customers receive these changes.

It does feel like the brand has their finger on the pulse of the buyer, knowing their needs and desires. It is difficult to bet against the Swift continuing the success which it has enjoyed all these years.



MY OFF-ROAD ADVENTURE WITH THE MERCEDES- BENZ GLC 220D

If you ask me if you're ready for an off-road adventure, I'll happily agree! And if it's an off-road drive in a Mercedes, the excitement is doubled!

For off-roading, a few essential features are a must: All-Wheel Drive, Anti-Lock Braking, Traction Control, and an All-View Camera/Mirror. With all these features in this Mercedes, we decided to take the plunge and go for a ride.

I was eager to see how the Mercedes-Benz GLC 220D, priced at Rs 90 lakh ex-showroom, would perform on rough terrain. In a time when many cars

are switching to petrol and electric, keeping a diesel engine in such an expensive car is a bold move by the company.

Known for their luxurious drives, I had seen this model effortlessly tackle mud, hills, and potholes on the road. The place we chose for our test drive was a rugged area with small rocks.

Our first challenge was to load and unload on a big rock with only the left front wheel cruising. When the car tried to climb the rock, even if the right-side lost traction, the all-wheel drive ensured power was delivered to the left side, helping it get over the hill.







The car handled this without any issues.

In the same area, traveling with a two-wheel drive would have been much more difficult. We drove the Benz in circles, much like Vijay Sethupathi did in "Chekka Chivantha Vaanam," but on rough ground.

The GLC 220 climbed and descended every obstacle without getting stuck. The control was stable, with no slips. One useful feature was

the ability to see the angle of each tyre, which was helpful for off-roading.

The 360-degree camera deserves special mention. It allowed us to see the car from all angles rear, front, and sides. Normally, we wouldn't know how big a rock under the car is, but with this camera, we could navigate correctly.

The drive was smooth, powered by a 1993 cc engine. We even managed some small drifts. The luxurious

interiors, similar to those in the Mercedes-Benz S series, made us forget about the outside temperature and environment.

You might wonder if it's sensible to drive a luxury car on forest hills. With all-wheel drive, it was entirely possible. It was a great experience to go off-road in a car worth almost one crore rupees. However, not everyone should try this!



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I recently had the opportunity to test Vredestein tyres. The testing location was a challenging combination of forest and hills, specifically in the mountains of Ooty. We had the Toyota Fortuner and Isuzu vehicles fitted with Vredestein tyres ready for the test. The tyres we tested were the PINZA HT, not the all-terrain PINZA AT.

Vredestein, a well-known tyre brand from the Netherlands, has been making waves in the tyre industry with its high-performance products. What many might not know is that Vredestein is part of the Apollo Tyres family, an Indian tyre manufacturer with a global presence. This partnership brings together the best of both worlds, combining Vredestein's European expertise and Apollo's extensive experience in the tyre industry.

Apollo Tyres acquired Vredestein in 2009. This acquisition has allowed Apollo to expand its footprint in the European market while leveraging Vredestein's reputation for producing high-quality, premium tyres. Vredestein, on the other hand, has benefited from Apollo's extensive distribution network and manufacturing capabilities.

The off-roading experience was interesting. First, I drove a Fortuner 4x4 followed by an Isuzu V-Cross on some pretty scary roads. Vredestein claims that their tyres offer good grip in dirt and mud, and from what I experienced, it seemed true.

One of Vredestein's claims is that their tyres guarantee a quiet ride. To test this, we rolled down the windows and listened carefully. However, we could

REVIEW OF VREDESTEIN TYRES





hear the tyres screeching.

The next day, before the fatigue of navigating Ooty's hilly roads wore off, I had the chance to test these tyres on a smoother road. In India, SUVs usually come with tyres up to 18 inches, and for anything larger, we have to import. One of the key advantages of the partnership Apollo Tyres is the ability to introduce larger tyre sizes, such as the 21 and 22-inch options, into markets like India, where such sizes were previously hard to procure. This has been particularly beneficial for owners of premium SUVs and luxury vehicles, who can now equip their cars with Vredestein's high-performance tyres without needing to import them. Now, Vredestein has introduced 21 and 22-inch tyres in India, making this no longer necessary to import. I tested these larger tyres on a BMW X5 and a Mercedes-Benz G63 G Wagon. The handling and performance of the G Wagon, in particular, stood out. The Vredestein tyres enhanced its

performance, though I noticed a bit of body roll.

On the highway, the HT tyres really shone. They are specifically designed for highway driving. I tested them on an Isuzu, and although Vredestein claims their tyres guarantee a quiet ride, we again heard some screeching with the windows down. However, the overall performance was smooth, likely due to the tyre pattern design. The tyres have a three-line pattern with curved edges, which Vredestein says helps them run quietly.

Vredestein introduced the PINZA HT as an 18-inch tyre and the ULTRAC VORTI I as 21 and 22-inch options for SUVs. They also have a presence in the two-wheeler segment, running on Royal Enfield's Continental GT bikes. With Vredestein's strong brand recognition in Europe and Apollo's growing influence in emerging markets, they have positioned themselves as formidable competitors to other major tyre brands like Bridgestone and MRF.

Key Points:

Testing Location: Forest and hills in Ooty.

Vehicles Used: Toyota Fortuner 4x4, Isuzu V-Cross, BMW X5, Mercedes-Benz G63 G Wagon.

Tyre Models Tested: PINZA HT, ULTRAC VORTI I.

Performance Highlights: Good grip in dirt and mud, enhanced performance in G Wagon, smooth highway performance.

Noise Observation: Some screeching is heard despite claims of quietness.

Market Impact: Vredestein's strong, quiet, and smooth tyres are set to compete with Bridgestone and MRF.

Overall, the Vredestein and Apollo Tyres partnership has created a powerful presence in the tyre market, combining strengths to deliver top-notch products that meet the needs of drivers worldwide.



BAJAJ PULSAR NS400Z

AFFORDABLE

THRILLS

ON TWO

WHEELS



Imagine getting a 400 cc bike for just a quarter of a lakh! It's like buying a Dominar for a fraction of the cost. Bajaj's Dominar 400 has always been a popular choice, but its price makes it inaccessible for many. To address this, Bajaj has introduced the NS400Z in its Pulsar NS series, packing the Dominar's engine and frame.

First Impressions

The NS400Z is the largest bike in the NS series. I travelled to Pune with my team to test it, experiencing its performance on the Chakan factory track and the hilly terrain of Lonavala.



SPECIFICATIONS	
Engine	373 cc, liquid-cooled
Power	40 bhp @ 8,500 rpm
Torque	35 Nm @ 7,000 rpm
Wheelbase	1,343 mm
Ground Clearance	165 mm
Seat Height	805 mm
Kerb Weight	174 kg
Tires (M/P)	110/70x17 / 140/70x17
Fuel Tank	12 litres
Brakes (M/P)	320 / 230 mm disc



Design and Features

At first glance, the NS400Z resembles the NS200. The "Z" in its name is pronounced as "see," indicating future models with more features. The bike maintains the NS series' nude style with some notable differences:

Headlight: The projector headlight is impressively bright, and the LED DRL shines in a "Z" shape.





■ Exhaust: The underbelly exhaust prevents leg heat and adds safety when carrying kids, though its performance in the rainy season remains to be seen.

Stickers and Aerodynamics: The bike has stylish stickers and aerodynamic features inspired by MotoGP bikes.

Handlebars and Mirrors: It features a wider single bar handlebar and mirrors similar to the Dominar.

Forks and Wheels: The USD forks shine in a light golden colour, and the bike has slightly reduced wheel sections for better handling.

Ride Quality

The instrument cluster uses bonded glass to prevent water seepage and glare, offering a clear colour display. The 12-litre fuel tank is comfortable to grip, and the bike's overall build quality is solid, weighing 18 kg less than the Dominar.

The NS400Z's 17-inch MRF Zapper tyres, dual-channel ABS, and four riding modes (Road, Sport, Rain, Off-Road) enhance its performance. Traction control and ride-by-wire technology make riding safer and more efficient. During testing, I reached a top speed of 160 km/h, slightly exceeding Bajaj's claim of 154 km/h.

Engine and Performance

The bike's 373 cc liquid-cooled engine produces 40 bhp and 35 Nm of torque. Despite sharing its engine with the Dominar, the NS400Z feels cooler on the feet. Minor adjustments to the engine sprocket improve its performance. The bike handles city driving and highway cruising well, though an aluminium swingarm would be a nice addition.

Connectivity and Controls

The bike offers excellent connectivity features, including call notifications, music control, and turn-by-turn navigation. However, the plastic quality of the switch gears could be improved.

Fuel Efficiency


Bajaj claims the NS400Z delivers 28.5 kmpl. In our tests, alternating between city, highways, and hill stations, we achieved around 29 kmpl, and it can exceed 31 kmpl on highways.

Conclusion

The NS400Z's biggest advantage is its price. At an ex-showroom price of Rs. 1.85 lakh (around 2.25 lakh on-road), it offers exceptional value, especially compared to other bikes in its class. Bajaj aims to transition commuters from smaller CC bikes to larger ones, and the NS400Z is a great start.



THULASIDHARAN TJ

 BHARATHWAJ

ATHER
RIZTA

A PRACTICAL
SCOOTER
FOR FAMILIES

S (2.9 kWh) : Rs 1.10 lakh

Z (2.9 kWh) : Rs 1.24 lakh

Z (3.7 kWh) : Rs 1.45 lakh



Last month, the Ather Rizta made it to the cover story, receiving positive feedback from electric scooter enthusiasts. People were curious about its performance and eagerly asked, "Where is the ride report, sir?" Ather had already invited us to test the Rizta, and finally, the day arrived. I, along with my photographer friend Bharadwaj, headed to Bengaluru for the test ride. Coincidentally, it rained in Chennai the very next day—Ather seems to have a connection with rain!

Impressive Engineering

Ather's reputation for resilience is well-deserved. Their scooters were among the few that braved the heavy rains and floods in Chennai and Tirunelveli, while many ICE vehicles were stuck in service centres. I spoke with Ather's R&D engineers, curious about their secret. They tested the Rizta in 400 mm of water, dropped its lithium-ion battery from a height of 20 feet, and put it through rough tracks for traction control. This hard work is evident in every aspect of the Rizta.



Design and Practical Features

We discussed the design last month, so let's focus on why the Rizta is called a practical and family scooter. One standout feature is the backrest, complete with cushioning, making it comfortable for long rides. My friend Bharadwaj felt secure enough to take videos without fear of falling. The Rizta's boot space is 34 litres, comparable to the Ola S1 Pro but less than the River Indie scooter's 43 litres. However, Ather offers an additional 22 litres of front storage, making a total of 56 litres with optional accessories.

The Rizta's seat height is 780 mm, suitable even for shorter riders, and its seat length is 900 mm, providing ample space for a family. With a length of 1850 mm, half of which is reserved for seating, it's highly practical.

Safety Features

The Ather Rizta is the first electric scooter to feature traction control. I tested it on sandy roads and experienced no loss of traction. The Rizta also has skid control, ensuring both wheels rotate at the same speed to prevent skidding. Another notable feature is Slow Speed Stability, maintaining balance even at low speeds. For instance, at just 3 kmph, the Rizta felt stable without needing to put my feet down. The Fall Safe feature cuts off the motor if the scooter falls, preventing accidents.

Driving Experience

The Rizta has a 4.3 kW motor and 22 Nm of torque, similar to the 450X lineup. It accelerates to 60 kmph in 4.7 seconds, with a top speed of 80 kmph. However, it's designed as a family scooter, so performance enthusiasts might find it less thrilling. The Rizta has two modes: Smart Eco and Zip, with a belt drive and mid-mounted motor, ensuring a smooth ride.

The top-end variant includes features like a TFT screen, backrest, extra storage, live location sharing, connected features, Google Maps, WhatsApp notifications, and Alexa connectivity.



Specifications	
Wheelbase	1,285 mm
Seat Length	900 mm
Seat Height	780 mm
Ground Clearance	165 mm
Weight	118 kg
Battery	2.9 kWh / 3.7 kWh
Range	105 km / 125 km (Real Time)
Suspension	Telescopic Fork / Monoshock
Brakes	200 mm disc / 130 mm drum
Tyres	12 inch
Under Seat Storage	34 litres
Front Storage	22 litres
Peak Motor Output	4.3 kW
Peak Torque	22 Nm
Top Speed	80 kmph
Charging Time	4.30 hrs to 5.45 hrs

Battery, Charging, and Convenience

The Rizta offers two battery options: 2.9 kWh and 3.7 kWh. The S variant comes with the smaller battery, while the Z variant offers both. The top-end variant includes features like a TFT screen, backrest, extra storage, live location sharing, connected features, Google Maps, WhatsApp notifications, and Alexa connectivity. Charging takes between 4.30 and 5.45 hours.

Range and Performance

Ather claims a range of 123 km for the 2.9 kWh battery and 159 km for the 3.7 kWh battery. In real-time, the range is about 105 km and 125 km, respectively. During my test, I managed to get around 110 km with mixed driving modes.

Verdict: Should You Buy It?

The Rizta impresses with its build quality, practical features, and safety. However, it could benefit from disc brakes and ABS. The top-end variant, priced at Rs. 1.45 lakh, might be a deal-breaker for some. The Z variant with the 2.9 kWh battery is sufficient for a family. While it might not appeal to young performance enthusiasts, family-oriented riders will definitely appreciate it.

The Ather Rizta offers a blend of practicality, safety, and decent performance, making it an excellent choice for families.



**FROM BEHIND THE
LENS TO BEHIND THE
HANDLEBARS:**

MY JOURNEY ON THE KTM TRACK



I am Ramesh Baalaji, and I work as a videographer and photographer for Ananda Vikatan. Often, I go on assignments for Motor Vikatan due to my keen interest in cars and motorcycles. Being from Coimbatore, I have spent years at the Kari Motor Speedway racetrack as a cameraman, photographer, and videographer. My passion for motorsports photography demands full attention to race timings, laps, and especially the riders' numbers and their preferences in photographs.

Many times, I felt the urge to ride on the track myself, but financial constraints and time commitments always held me back. My primary responsibility was to capture photographs for the riders, starting from track days.

When KTM Cup Season 2 started, Thulasidharan from the Motor Vikatan team participated in Round 1 as a media person to experience the RC 390 on the racetrack. I accompanied him

I also learned the importance of responsible riding on the track to test speed rather than on the streets, which can cause accidents.

as a videographer. Weeks later, during the KTM Cup finale, a media race was included for all media people around India. When the Motor Vikatan team asked if I was interested in participating, I saw it as a unique opportunity. Riding while representing the media seemed like my only chance, and fortunately, everything fell into place. I am grateful to Motor Vikatan for the opportunity to race in the KTM media race. It all happened quickly, and I had to prepare from scratch. I felt both excited and nervous because, as a photographer, I had spent countless hours observing riders from practice sessions to the podium. With this knowledge, I was curious about how I would perform on the track.

My Race Experience

The KTM Cup Season 2 media race spanned three days, from May 26 to 28. On the first day, we attended a detailed theoretical session, learning about flags, techniques, and the nuances of track riding. The second half of the day was dedicated to training on the track, and I also applied for the FMSCI license

required to officially participate in races in India.

On the second day, we had a practice session, which was invaluable. It allowed me to gain experience and consistently improve my timing, albeit at a slower pace. As a first-timer on the racetrack, it helped me understand the speed and how to control the machine in corners. My primary goal was to avoid falling and hurting myself, so I focused on learning the technique rather than going crazy fast. Eventually, with the right technique, I was able to improve my speed.

By the third day, I had passed the qualifying round with reasonable timing, starting in the last position. On the final day, I finished the race in 10th place, moving up from my starting grid position of 13th, which I consider a significant improvement in terms of timing. I also learned the importance of responsible riding on the track to test speed rather than on the streets, which can cause accidents. Racing events like the KTM Cup allow enthusiasts to experience the thrill and speed of racing in a safe environment. Thanks to KTM for this opportunity.

This journey from behind the lens to behind the handlebars was an incredible experience, blending my passion for photography with the thrill of racing. It gave me a new perspective to the sport I love and have documented for years. If you own a KTM motorcycle or know someone who does, you can also participate in this racing event. In 2025, KTM Cup Season 3 will be coming, and I might be there as a videographer—or who knows, maybe even as a racer again. See you there soon!



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EXPLORING RENAULT'S LATEST UPGRADES

A JOURNEY FROM BANGALORE TO GOA



It's been a long time since I went on a long drive, and I was yearning for one. When an invite from Renault came, I couldn't say no. This drive took us from Bangalore to Goa. At present, Renault has three cars in their portfolio, but Renault is not a small company. First, let us know get to know the brand and legacy of Renault.

Renault cars are sold in 120 countries worldwide. The French company merged with Nissan in 1999 and entered the Indian market in 2005, starting production in 2010. They launched their first car in India in 2011. From then until 2020, Renault continuously released new models. After a brief period without major



The Triber is priced between Rs. 5.99 to 8.97 lakhs. The boot space is 84 litres, which expands to 625 litres with the third-row seats removed.



announcements, Renault is back with new upgrades.

When Renault invited us for a test drive, the first question from friends was whether the Duster was making a comeback. While the Duster will return soon, we got the chance to drive the Renault Kwid hatchback, the Kiger SUV, and the Triber compact SUV. Our journey took us from Bangalore to Madikeri, Madikeri to Gokarna, and Gokarna to Goa in these three cars.

Triber: Bangalore to Madikeri

Our first leg from Bangalore to Madikeri was in the Triber. Despite being stuck in traffic for four hours, we had time to explore the car's updates. The Triber is available in both Manual and AMT variants, delivering 72 Bhp and 96 Nm of torque. It features a new 7-inch digital instrument cluster, average mileage display, wireless charger, armrest, and mirror control with power bolt ORVM. This 7-seater

car has a ground clearance of 182 mm and is available in five colours. Safety features include four airbags and hill start assist. The Triber is priced between Rs. 5.99 to 8.97 lakhs. The boot space is 84 litres, which expands to 625 litres with the third-row seats removed.

After navigating Bangalore's traffic, the highway ride was pleasant. We encountered heavy rain and power lines on the highway 40 km before Mysore, redirecting us to the service road. We arrived in Madikeri at 9:30 pm after a 254 km drive.

Kiger: Madikeri to Gokarna

The next leg was from Madikeri to Gokarna, a 354 km journey through the Western Ghats and along the Arabian Sea. We drove the Renault Kiger, equipped with a 1.0-liter engine available in Manual, Automatic (AMT), Turbo, Turbo CVT, and Extreme Turbo variants.





We used the CVT version, which provides a smoother ride without the gear change lag seen in traditional automatics. The Kiger has a 40-liter petrol tank and three driving modes: Eco, Normal, and Sport.

Safety features in the Kiger include ABS, electronic stability program, rear seat belt monitoring, tyre pressure monitoring, traction control, hill start assist, and four airbags. These features are standard across Renault's lineup as part of their 'Human First' program. The Kiger is priced between Rs. 5.99 to 11.2 lakhs.

Kwid: Gokarna to Goa

The final stretch from Gokarna to Goa was in the Kwid, Renault's hatchback. Covering 130 km, the Kwid impressed with its steering control and compact design. The car produces 68 Bhp and 91 Nm of torque and is available in both manual and automatic variants. Safety features include ABS, electronic stability, two airbags, and hill start assist. While the automatic lag is noticeable, it doesn't significantly impact the ride. The Kwid's ex-showroom prices range from Rs. 4.69 to 6.4 lakhs.

Renault's Future Plans

Renault is planning to launch new-generation cars and SUVs this year, investing Rs. 5,300 crores in research and development. With over 10,000 engineers working on these projects in Chennai, many exciting upgrades are expected. Renault will introduce a new logo for all their cars, and the Kwid RXL (O) model will soon be available at Rs. 4.99 lakhs. India is a key market for Renault, and many new developments are on the horizon.

We completed our journey and thoroughly enjoyed driving the Renault range of cars. The experience provided valuable insights into the upgrades and the future direction of Renault in India.



CYCLING THROUGH THE KHASI HILLS:

A JOURNEY
THROUGH
MEGHALAYA



Day 1: Guwahati to Shillong

Our adventure began on a crisp morning in Guwahati. Chaitra and I, loaded with excitement and packed bicycles, set out from the bustling city towards Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya. The anticipation of the journey ahead was palpable as we pedalled, leaving the noise of the city behind.

The road to Shillong was a gradual ascent, winding through picturesque landscapes. The lush greenery and rolling hills of Assam slowly gave way to the dramatic and rugged terrain of Meghalaya. The journey was not

without its challenges; the traffic and the constant honking were a reminder of the urban chaos we were escaping. As we climbed higher, the air grew cooler and fresher, a welcome change from the sweltering heat of Guwahati.

By late afternoon, we reached Umiam Lake, a vast and serene body of water that signalled our proximity to Shillong. The sight of the lake, shimmering under the setting sun, was a perfect prelude to the beauty that awaited us in the days to come. After a brief rest, we continued our journey, finally arriving in Shillong as the city lights began to twinkle. The vibrant and

bustling city greeted us with a mix of colonial charm and modernity, setting the stage for the adventures ahead.

Day 2: Shillong to Cherrapunji

Our second day began with a hearty breakfast at a local café, fuelling us for a day of exploration. Shillong, often referred to as the "Scotland of the East," lived up to its reputation with its cool climate and hilly terrain.

We rode to the rainiest place on earth... or the second rainiest as we were often corrected!

The road was a bit of climbing out of Shillong before we descended





to the famous village of Cherrapunji. We found a quaint homestay to spend the night before having even bigger adventures the next day.

Day 3: Cherrapunji and around

We spent the day with less cycling and more hiking.

After a short 12 km ride to the start of the trekking route. We spent half the day cycling to a natural wonder. The Living Roots Bridge in Sohra is a marvel and the trek down to see it is a rigorous exercise. Words don't do justice to the thick forest, and the beautiful sights of the land.



Day 4: Sohra to Dawki

Day 4 of our adventure took us from the mystical hills of Sohra to the bustling border town of Dawki, filled with unexpected encounters and experiences.

As we set out amid lingering clouds and drizzle, the scenery unfolded in shades of green and grey. Flat-roofed houses dotted the landscape, making us question the architecture in one of the wettest places on earth. The weather teased us with sporadic rain showers, prompting us to repeatedly don and doff our rain jackets. We passed through Mokdok, a village notable for its cleanliness and numerous dustbins.



With accommodation scarce, we pressed on towards Dawki, descending narrow roads bordered by areca nut tree plantations. Our speed was fuelled by the fear of the setting sun.

Upon reaching Dawki, our anticipation turned to disappointment as we encountered a muddy river teeming with boats, reminiscent of a crowded ghat in Varanasi rather than the tranquil Dawki of my memories. Scant lodging options and lacklustre eateries further disheartened us. Dinner was at a dubious dhaba, where the average food contrasted with spotless utensils and grimy walls.

Day 5: Dawki to Krang Shuri

Our journey from Dawki to Krang Shuri revealed Meghalaya's diversity and charm through unexpected encounters and breathtaking landscapes.

Leaving Dawki towards Jowai, we faced steep inclines and broken-down trucks, climbing 600 meters in 10 km amidst diesel smoke and enterprising vendors. The Jaintia hills' smaller, rounded contours contrasted with the Khasi hills, reminding me of the Shire from "The Lord of the Rings." Alcohol shops outnumbered tea stalls, a curious observation.

Krang Shuri was incredible, even in dry weather. We enjoyed pseudo-

kayaking in tranquil waters, basking in the setting sun. Chance encounters with fellow travellers, like an avid cyclist from Bhubaneswar and a retired Bengali gentleman, enriched our experience.

Returning to our dhaba, we found solace in the company of its amiable owner, Xolar. His story of returning home to start a small food processing unit after working in Chennai mirrored the resilience of the land. We savoured a delicious dinner of dal and pork curry, reflecting on the day's adventures and the myriad experiences that had woven themselves into our travels.

Day 6: Krang Shuri to Jowai

Day 6 took us from the tranquil haven of Krang Shuri to the bustling town of Jowai, a journey marked by poignant observations about the region's character. Morning hygiene was a challenge amidst rustic accommodations, and breakfast mirrored the simplicity of our surroundings.

As we climbed, we marvelled at the contrast between shaded village roads and the sweltering main highway. Plastic litter and the scent of intoxicants served as sobering reminders of regional challenges. A challenging climb out of Jowai led us to a fancier dhaba for a leisurely lunch amidst increasing traffic.

Reaching higher altitudes, we enjoyed the sight of pine trees and melodious birds, stumbling upon a quirky bakery where language barriers were overcome in pursuit of sweet buns. After crossing Jowai, we found solace at a lakeside hotel and had dinner at a shady dhaba, ending the day with reflections on the richness of travel experiences and the promise of new adventures.

Day 7: Jowai to Shillong

As the sun rose over the tranquil lake, we enjoyed a leisurely breakfast of puris, sabji, toast, and boiled eggs, along with leftovers from the previous day's bakery visit. With spirits high, we departed Jowai at 10 AM, heading towards the city of Shillong. The road wound through pine-covered hills and charming villages, evoking memories of a cycle ride in Ranikhet. Cloudy skies shielded us from the sun as we comfortably rode 50 kilometres, ascending 1000 meters.

Passing through highways filled with trucks, we eventually



found quieter roads where the prosperity of the Khasi hills was evident in the modern infrastructure. Despite the region's heavy rainfall, flat roofs were common, and waterproof cement was heavily advertised. Friendly locals greeted us as we neared Shillong, highlighting the positive impact of education and tourism.

In Shillong, meticulously maintained houses and commercial establishments lined the streets, showcasing the residents' pride. We noted an abundance of car washes and shiny vehicles, including a royal blue tow van made from an old Matador. Navigating narrow shortcuts, we reached our homestay amidst the bustling city streets, welcomed by warm hospitality.

Day 8 & 9: Sohra on a Scooter

Day 8 brought a change as we traded our bicycles for a Yamaha RayZ scooter from Larry in Shillong. Our legs needed a break, and the scooter offered easier exploration of Sohra's picturesque landscapes. Despite our excitement, we humorously found our



pace on descents slower on the scooter than on our bicycles.

Our first stop was the Garden of Caves in Sohra, but Eid holiday crowds deterred us. At Laloo's, I indulged in beef, though pork was superior in Meghalaya. Next, we visited Mawsmi Cave, where the beauty left us spellbound despite the crowds. A sign warning "no refunds" hinted at challenges inside. The viewpoint of

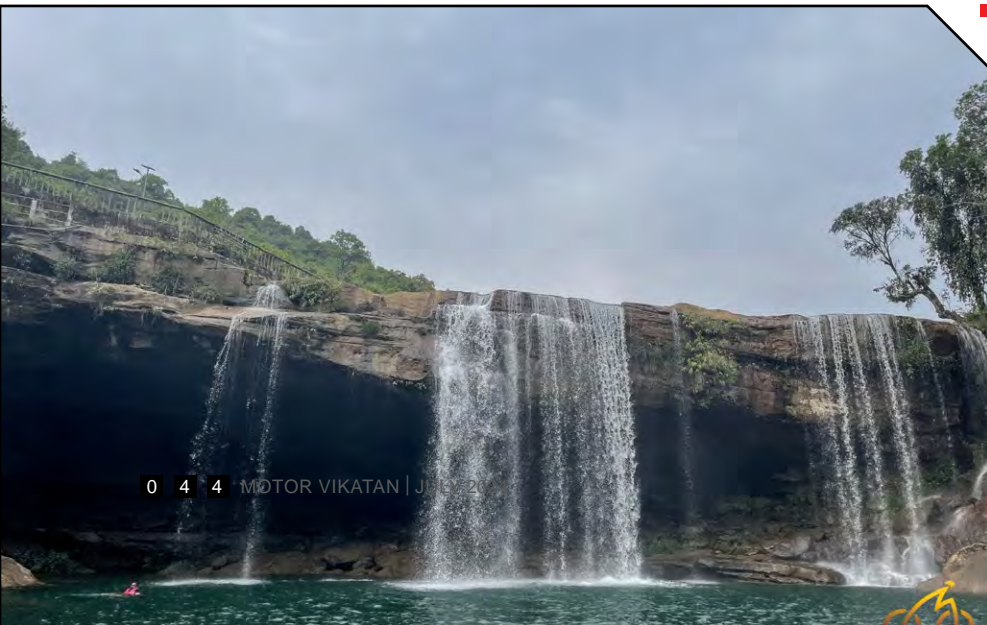
the Seven Sisters Waterfall lacked its seasonal splendor, but Kynrem Falls, with its solitary grandeur, made the long ride worthwhile.

Buoyed by success, we headed to Tyrna, the starting point of the Double Decker Bridge trek. Despite rough roads, we reached Monica Homestay in Sohra. Dinner was a mix of veg thali and non-veg delights, with a humorous disclaimer: "No 'Pure-Veg' Food available here."

Day 9 began with a relaxed morning and a conversation with Rinku from our homestay, who shared insights on the region's social, cultural, and political landscape. Our first visit was Nohkalikai Falls, where a rainbow formed in the waterfall. Despite being bitten by insects, we enjoyed the view. Further along, we saw Lai Pateng Khowsiew waterfall.

From Nohkalikai, we headed to Mawkma Village, navigating under-construction roads. Wei Sawdong Falls, though difficult to find, was a breathtaking sight. Prut Fall allowed





us to walk behind the waterfall, where a group of women's Instagram-worthy conversations entertained us.

Skipping lunch, we rode to Laitlum Canyon, arriving dry but freezing due to a sudden downpour. Despite the cold, the valley view was worth the ride. We returned to Shillong, quickly shedding warm clothes for more comfortable attire. Dinner included Shillong-Chinese food at 'The Wok' and a Naga Thali with Pork cooked in bamboo shoots, ending with hot coffee at a bistro.

Day 10: Shillong to Guwahati

Day 10 was our last day of cycling, starting with a hunt for breakfast in Shillong Market. After enjoying rice cakes and Jadoh with pork, we faced traffic due to Bihu celebrations. As we descended beyond Umiam Lake, the heat increased. Stopping for lunch at a 'pure veg' restaurant in Nongpoh, we crossed into Assam, where the incessant honking reminded us of city life. After checking into our hotel in Guwahati, we enjoyed tea and Assamese thalis with friends, ending the night in Guwahati on the eve of Bihu.



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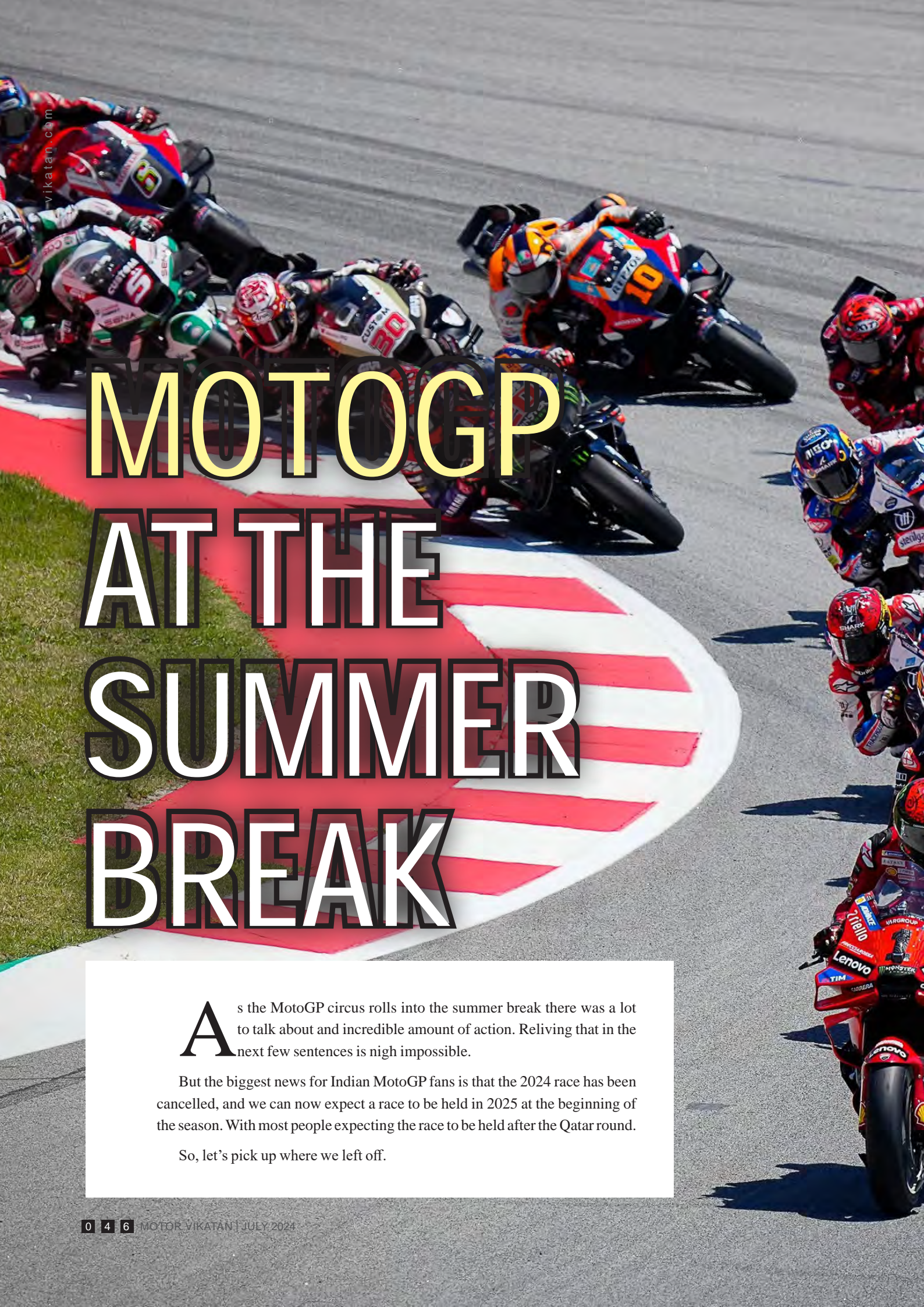
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MOTOGP AT THE SUMMER BREAK

As the MotoGP circus rolls into the summer break there was a lot to talk about and incredible amount of action. Reliving that in the next few sentences is nigh impossible.

But the biggest news for Indian MotoGP fans is that the 2024 race has been cancelled, and we can now expect a race to be held in 2025 at the beginning of the season. With most people expecting the race to be held after the Qatar round.

So, let's pick up where we left off.





Di Giannantonio, Oliveira, Viñales, and Acosta rounded out the top 10. The race tightened the championship standings, with Martin leading Bagnaia by 17 points, followed by Bastianini, Acosta, Viñales, and Marquez.

Circuit of Americas

In a thrilling MotoGP race in Texas, Maverick Viñales made history by becoming the first rider to win with three different manufacturers. Starting from pole position, Viñales had to fight through the pack after being pushed out of the top 10 at the first corner. Rookie Pedro Acosta initially led, battling with Jorge Martin and Enea Bastianini, who both secured consecutive podiums. Marc Marquez and Jack Miller were also prominent in the early stages, with Marquez ultimately crashing out after briefly leading.

Acosta and Martin exchanged the lead multiple times, with Acosta holding strong despite challenges. Viñales began his comeback, eventually overtaking Miller and closing in on the leaders. As Martin's pace faded, Viñales seized the opportunity, passing both Acosta and Martin to take the lead with eight laps remaining. He quickly built a significant gap, maintaining his advantage to secure victory. Acosta finished second, while Bastianini overtook Martin for third. Bagnaia,

Fabio Di Giannantonio, Aleix Espargaro, Marco Bezzecchi, Brad Binder, and Raul Fernandez rounded out the top 10.

Despite finishing off the podium, Martin retained his lead in the world championship standings, 21 points ahead of Bastianini, with Viñales moving into third place.

Jerez

At Jerez, a record-breaking crowd witnessed a thrilling race where Pecco Bagnaia triumphed over Marc Marquez. Despite missing a home victory by three-tenths of a second, fans enjoyed an intense battle as Bagnaia, under immense pressure, delivered a flawless performance to return to the top podium step and boost his title defence. Marquez, learning from past mistakes, started cautiously but launched a fierce attack to secure his first podium with Gresini, celebrating it like a win. Marco Bezzecchi, who challenged Marquez, settled for third, marking his first podium of the season.

Marquez initially led, but Bagnaia quickly moved up from seventh to challenge for the lead. Jorge Martin briefly took control when Bagnaia ran wide, but Martin's crash on lap 11 handed Bagnaia the lead. Marquez eventually overtook Bezzecchi for second and closed in on Bagnaia. Despite Marquez's relentless efforts and a few lead changes, Bagnaia's fastest laps secured his victory.

Bezzecchi finished third, far behind the leading duo. Alex Marquez took fourth, ahead of Bastianini, who bested Binder for fifth. Di Giannantonio, Oliveira, Viñales, and Acosta rounded out the top 10. The race tightened the championship standings, with Martin leading Bagnaia by 17 points, followed by Bastianini, Acosta, Viñales, and Marquez.

Le Mans

The record crowd at Le Mans witnessed a thrilling MotoGP race. Jorge Martin dominated most of the race, holding off Pecco Bagnaia until the final lap. Marc Marquez, starting far back, secured another impressive second place. Bagnaia, despite leading for a while, finished third after a last-lap attack from Marquez. The race saw intense battles throughout the field, with crashes, penalties, and comebacks aplenty. Martin's win consolidates his

championship lead, while Marquez emerges as a growing threat.

Catalunya

A thrilling race unfolded in Barcelona under scorching hot conditions. Despite early pace, Jorge Martin faded and had to settle for second behind a patient Pecco Bagnaia, who avenged his qualifying mistake. This victory extends Bagnaia's championship lead.

Marc Marquez continued his comeback streak, this time starting from 14th and securing a podium finish in third. Acosta impressed early but crashed out, while Bastianini's strong performance was overshadowed by a penalty that relegated him far down the standings. The battle for the remaining top 10 spots was fierce, with several riders making late surges and position changes. Despite missing the win, Martin retains the championship lead, while Bastianini's penalty puts him significantly behind in the standings.

Mugello

Pecco Bagnaia dominated his home race at Mugello, leading from the start and securing a commanding victory. His teammate, Enea Bastianini, stole second place on the final lap with a daring maneuver on Jorge Martin, who

settled for third.

Martin briefly led at the beginning, but Bagnaia swiftly snatched the lead. Bastianini also capitalized on a cautious start from Marc Marquez to grab fourth. Maverick Viñales, on a different tire strategy, struggled early, dropping from the front row.

Bagnaia maintained a comfortable lead for most of the race, with Martin unable to consistently match his pace. Bastianini lurked behind Martin, eventually finding an opening on the penultimate lap to steal second place at the last corner. Marquez took fourth, while Acosta finished a lonely fifth.

This victory strengthens Bagnaia's championship challenge, bringing him within 18 points of Martin. Bastianini's late podium salvages some points, but he remains significantly behind. Marquez, despite another comeback drive, loses ground in the championship fight.

The Future

We have the Assen weekend coming up on the 30th of June. But more importantly, during this summer break, we have had a bunch of important signings. With the rider market seeing big changes. The biggest of which is Marc Marquez moving to the factory Ducati squad, while fellow Spaniard, Jorge Martin will be moving to the factory Aprilia squad. He will be joined there by the Italian Marco Bezzecchi. Aleix Espargaro will be retiring at the end of the year, while Maverick Vinales will be leaving for a satellite KTM team, where he will ride alongside Enea Bastianini. There are still 9 seats up for grabs as the musical chairs comes to a close.

Funnily, as we enter the second half of the 2024 season, we already have one eye on 2025 with a host of signings already in the bag.



**AFTER 10
RACES, IT'S
MAX AT THE
LEAD AGAIN!
BUT THIS
SEASON HAS
MORE!**

The 2024 Formula 1 Championship has reached an interesting point with the World Champion leading the pack once again and the other drivers seriously challenging him this time for the top spot in the podium. With the entirety of 2023 witnessing only 3 winner, already 4 drivers have been victorious this season. From Monaco to Barcelona, none of the 3 poles were won by Max, he has not dominated like the previous seasons and all of Ferrari, McLaren & Mercedes are fighting for victories. This is turning out to be a better season indeed. Here is a brief look at how each team has performed so far at the end of 10 races.

Alpine

This season cannot be worse for the French constructors. This season was long coming for them on the back of a few poor seasons of planning and it took them 6 races to even open the account. They didn't have the pace at the start of the season to even fight RB and Haas. To top the issues they are going through, their drivers came together a few times and it had its share of



consequences. Now, Esteban Ocon is to leave the team after the season and they are making quite a few changes in the management side as well. Alpine is going through a very bad phase but can take solace in the fact that they have scored points in 4 of the last 5 races.

Aston Martin

After last season's exploits, Aston Martin started the season with so much hope. But they couldn't replicate last season's performance this time as they are the fifth-best team. They are now in the Alpine zone where they cannot challenge the likes of Ferrari & McLaren and separates them from the bottom five as well. They lacked the single-lap pace in most of the races but were able to perform better on Sundays. The young man Fernando Alonso is still performing his magic on track but Lance Stroll is still failing to live up to his potential. Maybe, a mid-season update could change the fortunes like it did for McLaren last time.

Ferrari

Fred Vasseur's side has so many positives from this season. Carlos Sainz's race win after appendicitis surgery, Charles Leclerc's much-



awaited Monaco victory, Oliver Bearman's show in the absence of Sainz in Saudi Arabia, the two double podiums in Australia and Monaco, and above all the announcement of Lewis Hamilton joining them the next time, the Prancing Horse was prancing for sure. But the last 2 races in Montreal and Barcelona bring back the memories of the past. Both the cars were retired in the Canadian GP and now even the drivers started voicing their opinions

directly in the media.

Haas

New season, new management, but the same old story for Haas. They started the season well, had some promise but started to fumble midway. After scoring 7 points in the first 5 races, the American-based team couldn't add up to the tally in the next 5. That's despite Nicolas Hulkenberg's valiant efforts. The German who's joining the Audi set up next season has finished in 11th on 5 occasions. They made some bold decisions such as starting with wet tyres in Montreal, but those calls were not backed by smart follow-ups. With Alpine's late resurgence, they now fell to 8th spot in the Constructors' standings.

Sauber

The only team not to open the account for the season, Sauber is struggling to even fight for points. Zhou Guanyu's 11th-place finish in the season's inaugural race at Bahrain was this team's best finish till Spain. Even the 10-time race winner Valtteri Bottas is failing in the Sauber Car.



"We still have work to do, we need to keep bringing upgrades and make the car faster. It is not rocket science, we just need more bits. We need to keep making the car faster, we need to keep bringing upgrades. There's some plan for the future, but we need bigger upgrades and more of them. I think that's the key honestly", says the former Mercedes driver and he is not wrong by any means.

McLaren

McLaren didn't start the season with a bang. They were testing the waters maybe! They stood on the podium only once in the first 4 races but stood on it every single race since China. Though Oscar Piastri is keeping himself away from the top 5, Lando Norris is making waves in every single race. His long-awaited Formula 1 victory was achieved in the streets of Miami. But he never felt content and raced Verstappen with all his might. The Brit is enjoying the form of his life and taking the challenge to the defending Champion and Red Bull. Just like last season, their upgrade has done magic and if Piastri steps up a little, McLaren will be able to challenge Ferrari for the second spot.

Mercedes

It was a difficult start for Mercedes as they were the fourth-best car on the track. Not a single podium in the first 8 races of the season and a double retirement at the very third race of the season isn't something Toto Wolff would've hoped for. But they are changing the course of the season since Montreal with both the drivers standing on the podium on back-to-back races. The cars show real speed and distance itself from the struggling Ferrari. This should be good news for Mercedes who are dealing with a lot at the back.

Racing Bulls

Franz Tost's dream of taking



his side to the Top 6 position has taken shape this season. With a good pace and 2 capable drivers, RB has registered points in 7 of the 10 races. Yuki Tsunoda's stocks are rising by the day and the Japanese driver has scored the bulk of the points the team has achieved. Daniel Ricciardo isn't delivering much as he scored points in Montreal and in the sprint race in Miami. Both the drivers started with the dream of getting the Red Bull seat which is now filled again by Perez. We don't know whether that has impacted Tsunoda or what, but he hasn't been at his best since the announcement. With Lance Stroll making strides, Tsunoda should get back to his best to stay in the top half of the table.

Red Bull

They're leading but not dominating... Verstappen is winning but not dictating... Red Bull is going to have a challenging season ahead of them with the likes of Ferrari, Mercedes & McLaren rising to the occasion. They now hold a 60-point lead up the top over second-placed Ferrari. The good news for them is the rise of Mercedes

coincided with the struggle of Ferrari so that they didn't have to deal with 3 competitors at a time. However, the struggle of Sergio Perez and the impeccable form of Lando Norris could cause serious damage to their first spot this time. After 4 podiums in the first 5 races, the Mexican failed to achieve one in the next 5. With his contract extended, he can perform with less pressure and aid the team's case for winning the third straight title.

Williams

After last season's heroics Williams and Alex Albon would've hoped for a much better season. But they don't have enough pace in the car to fight for points. Albon's 9th place finish in Monaco is the only reason they distanced themselves from Sauber and have seen their cars not finishing races on 5 different occasions. Also, they had to make Albon drive Sargeant's car in Australia after the Thai driver's accident which created a lot of fuss in the paddock. They need to bounce back strong to catch the Alpine & Haas.



Minda Corporation, the flagship company of Spark Minda, has signed a Joint Venture Agreement with HSIN Chong Machinery Works, a Taiwan-based global manufacturer of Automotive Sunroof and Closure systems. A 50:50 joint venture aims to provide manufacturing of Sunroof and Closure Technology Products for passenger cars in India.

Ashok Minda, Chairman and Group CEO – Minda Corporation said, “This collaboration underscores our commitment to Atmanirbhar Bharat, as we strive to deliver comprehensive system solutions encompassing product design, development, and manufacturing for passenger vehicles. Our continuous endeavour is to introduce advanced technology products that will drive the next phase of our growth.”

With evolving consumer preferences and premiumisation, the

MINDA JOINS HANDS WITH HCMF FOR AUTOMOTIVE SUNROOF SYSTEMS





market for sunroofs in India is expected to grow significantly. HCMF is a global technology leader in automotive Sunroof and Closure systems and this collaboration will offer advanced products and technologies in the vehicle access space, particularly for passenger cars increasing the content per vehicle, the press release noted.

Roger Hsi, Chairman, HCMF added, "We are excited to collaborate with Spark Minda to expand our footprint in India's burgeoning Indian vehicle market to develop and manufacture innovative integrated Automotive Sunroof and Closure systems for next-generation vehicles."

"HCMF is confident that this partnership will effectively channelise the complementary strengths of both organizations and establish a strong presence in the rapidly expanding market for Sunroof and Closure systems market in India."

HCMF, headquartered in Taiwan, was founded in 1961 by Hsi Chieh to provide cost-competitive innovative products globally to its customers. The company is engaged in various product groups like Roof System, Comfort Closure System, Door and Closure Mechanical System, Seat System and Mechanical & Mechatronic System.



THE BOOMING USED CAR INDUSTRY IN INDIA:

The used car industry in India is experiencing unprecedented growth, reflecting a significant shift in consumer behaviour and market dynamics. Currently valued at approximately \$32.44 billion, this sector is projected to almost double in size, potentially reaching nearly \$73 billion by FY28. This remarkable journey underscores the increasing acceptance of pre-owned vehicles, driven by affordability, a vast inventory, and improved trust through organised channels. With sales outpacing new cars by 37% in FY23, it's clear that pre-owned vehicles are no longer seen as a compromise but as a smart choice. This shift is driven by several factors like rising fuel costs, increasing ownership expenses and growing disposable incomes.

There is an enormous untapped potential in the country's used car market. Already dynamic and attractive, this market, however, remains unexploited in myriad ways. Currently, it stands at 5.1 million units. By FY 2026-27, it is expected to reach a staggering 8 million units, and by FY 2027-28, it is projected to cross the magic 10-million units mark. No wonder it is considered to be a thriving segment of the automotive industry. India's demographic dividend – the country's youth population – will only propel the demand for pre-owned cars. Latest research surveys demonstrate that there are only 20-22 cars per 1,000 people in India. In the United States and the United Kingdom, this ratio is 980:1000.

But what exactly are Indian buyers looking for in a pre-owned car? Cars, once considered a luxury, are now becoming a part of

everyday life for many. People across the socio-economic spectrum are buying cars, and some households even own multiple vehicles, with one potentially being pre-owned. As a result, safety, performance, and lower ownership costs are now top considerations for used car buyers. All such signs are heartening for India's used car industry. Moreover, the organised segment of the used car market is expanding rapidly, thus gaining traction from the entry of Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and new car dealerships, offering certified pre-owned (CPO) cars with enhanced transparency and quality assurance.

Technological Advancements Fuelling Growth

One of the primary catalysts for the expansion of the used car market in India is the technological revolution. In India, buying a pre-owned vehicle is no longer considered a 'compromise'. Like other businesses, the digital revolution is transforming the automobile industry as well. The advent of digital platforms has revolutionised the way used cars are bought and sold. Online marketplaces and classified websites provide a vast array of options, enabling consumers to compare prices, features, and reviews with ease. This transparency has built trust among buyers, who can now access detailed vehicle histories and certifications through online portals.

Additionally, advancements in artificial intelligence and machine learning are enhancing the accuracy of vehicle valuation and predicting market trends. These technologies empower sellers to price their vehicles competitively, while buyers benefit from fair deals based on comprehensive data analysis. The integration of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) further enriches the buying experience by allowing potential buyers to take virtual tours of vehicles, thereby reducing the need for physical inspections.

Changing Consumer Preferences

Indian consumers are increasingly prioritising



A PATH TO REMARKABLE GROWTH



These organised channels offer benefits such as warranties, free servicing, and detailed inspections, ensuring that buyers receive vehicles in good condition.

value for money, leading to a shift from new to used cars. The rising cost of new vehicles, coupled with a growing awareness of depreciation rates, makes pre-owned cars an attractive option. This trend is particularly pronounced among millennials and Gen Z, who view cars as utilitarian assets rather than status symbols. The desire for financial prudence and the availability of quality used cars are driving this demographic towards the pre-owned car market.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has altered mobility preferences, with many individuals opting for personal vehicles over public transport to minimise health risks. This surge in demand for private vehicles has further boosted the used car market, as buyers seek affordable options without compromising on quality.

Organised Sector and Improved Trust

The transformation of the used car market from an unorganised to an organised sector has played a pivotal role in its growth. Traditionally, the market was dominated by informal transactions with little to no regulation,

leading to issues of trust and reliability. However, the emergence of organised players, such as certified pre-owned programs by automobile manufacturers and established dealerships, has instilled confidence among consumers. Companies such as Maruti True Value, MFCWL, Car Dekho, Spinny etc. have shown progress and growth, thereby eating up the unorganised market share. These organised players have played a decisive role in bridging the gap and reducing trust barriers, primarily by virtue of their brand equity, transparency, and the warranty they offer. To say that these players have 'been on a roll' will be an understatement.

These organised channels offer benefits such as warranties, free servicing, and detailed inspections, ensuring that buyers receive vehicles in good condition. The assurance of quality and after-sales support has significantly reduced the perceived risks associated with purchasing used cars, making them a viable alternative to new vehicles.

Regulatory Support and Financial Accessibility

Government initiatives and regulatory support have also contributed to the thriving used car market. Policies aimed at promoting electric vehicles (EVs) and reducing the carbon footprint have inadvertently boosted the pre-owned market. As more consumers upgrade to EVs, a large number of relatively new internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles enter the used car market, increasing the availability and variety of options for buyers.

Furthermore, financial institutions are increasingly offering attractive loan options for used cars, making them more accessible to a broader audience. Competitive interest rates

and flexible repayment terms have made it easier for consumers to finance their purchases, driving demand in the sector.

The Road Ahead: Challenges and Opportunities

While the future of the used car market in India looks promising, it is not without challenges. Ensuring the authenticity of vehicle histories and preventing fraud remains a concern. The industry must continue to leverage technology to enhance transparency and build consumer trust. Additionally, addressing environmental concerns associated with older vehicles is crucial for sustainable growth.

On the other hand, the shift towards electric and hybrid vehicles presents a significant opportunity. As the adoption of EVs increases, the used car market is likely to see a rise in the availability of high-quality, relatively new ICE vehicles. Moreover, the establishment of a robust infrastructure for the resale of EVs, including battery health checks and certifications, can further stimulate market growth.

In conclusion, the used car industry in India is on the cusp of a remarkable transformation. With a projected valuation nearing \$73 billion by FY28, the sector is poised for exponential growth. Technological advancements, changing consumer preferences, organised market structures, and supportive regulatory frameworks are key drivers of this expansion. As the industry navigates its challenges and capitalises on emerging opportunities, the future of the used car market in India looks exceptionally bright, promising affordability, variety, and quality for consumers across the nation.



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CONNECTED VEHICLES SHAPING THE FUTURE OF MOBILITY

**BHARAT BHUSHAN,**

Head - Digital Business,
Tata Motors Commercial Vehicles

In today's increasingly transformative world of mobility, connected vehicle platforms (CVP) has emerged as a cornerstone of innovation, rapidly transforming how fleet owners interact with vehicles and the ecosystem. Initially focused on simple location services, connected vehicles in India today encompass a broad spectrum of advanced functions including real-time vehicle diagnostics, fuel

efficiency insights, and driver behaviour analytics. This expansion signals a significant leap in operational efficiency and has fundamentally transformed fleet management and stakeholder experience.

The impact of CVP in India has been significant, thus far. By enabling real-time monitoring, it has improved fleet management for businesses, reducing fuel consumption and improve asset uptime through predictive maintenance.

Furthermore, CVP can also assist the insurance industry by enabling usage-based insurance models. Insurance companies can leverage connected vehicles data to assess fleet usage more accurately.



For drivers, CVP has enhanced safety features, based on driving behaviour, and even has aided in emergency responses through automatic crash notifications. These advancements have not only increased the value proposition of connected vehicles as a solution but is slowly fostering a culture of informed driving practices for the commercial vehicle industry at large.

Reflecting this growth, India's connected truck market is expected to see a rapid uptick in adoption, soaring from an estimated \$51.6 million in 2022 to \$205.6 million in 2027. As we navigate a period where technology continues to present new possibilities, the role and application of CVP are set to evolve further. Its potential remains vast, with opportunities ranging from fleet financing to advanced AI-driven insights, promising a future wherein the platform becomes an indispensable tool in our pursuit of a safer, more efficient, and sustainable transportation ecosystem.

Unlocking Innovation: Tapping Emerging Opportunities in Connected Vehicles Solutions

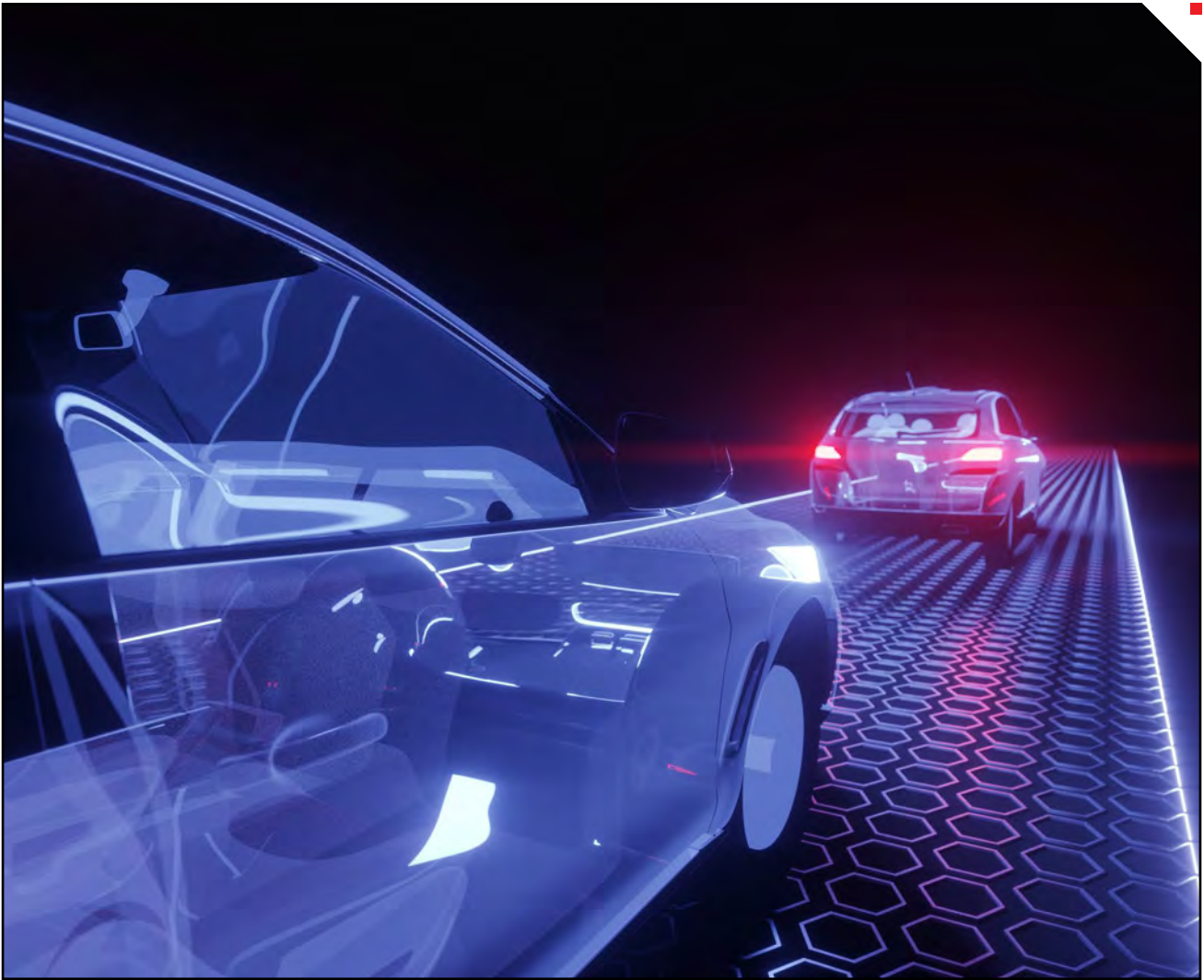
The road ahead for CVP is to

revolutionise not only how we manage vehicles but also how we envision mobility and transportation in the broader context. In fleet financing, it can overhaul traditional models by harnessing detailed vehicle usage and risk assessment data. This will facilitate the creation of tailored financing solutions, reducing costs and improving accessibility for fleet operators.

Furthermore, CVP can also assist the insurance industry by enabling usage-based insurance models. Insurance companies can leverage connected vehicles data to assess fleet usage more accurately. This could lead to fairer premiums based on actual vehicle utilisation and driving behaviour. In emergency response services, the immediacy and accuracy of connected vehicles data can be a game-changer, enabling quicker dispatch of services to incident locations, potentially saving lives and reducing the impact of accidents and emergencies.

In the coming years, the integration of sophisticated connected vehicle platform systems can lead to greater efficiency and optimisation. While





the platform currently provides valuable insights into driver behaviour and vehicle performance, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) technologies will elevate these capabilities as AI and ML algorithms excel at recognising complex patterns and correlations within vast datasets, enabling them to uncover subtle trends. Moreover, these technologies are adept at detecting anomalies and deviations from normal behaviour, allowing fleet owners to identify potential issues such as aggressive driving or mechanical problems more effectively.

By leveraging historical data and real-time inputs, AI and ML models can also predict future outcomes with

greater accuracy, enabling proactive maintenance scheduling and optimised route planning. In fact, Tata Motors already uses ML in its fleet management solution, Fleet Edge, which connects over 600,000 commercial vehicles across the country to analyse real-world customer usage and offers solutions to its customers to significantly reduce their fuel consumption. Through smart technologies, Fleet Edge provides in-depth insights and analytics to enhance fleet performance, operational efficiency, and thus customer profitability.

Accelerating Change: The Road Ahead

The future of connected vehicles in India is fuelled by technological

advancements and the growing demand for connectivity. This emphasises the importance of seamless integration and real-time data exchange among ecosystem players for wider connected vehicles-enabled use cases and adoption. Additionally, government initiatives promoting digitalisation and road safety will further accelerate the adoption of connected vehicle platforms across sectors. As the industry evolves, the convergence of technology, customer demands, and regulatory frameworks will drive a transformative shift towards highly intelligent and interconnected transportation ecosystems, placing the need for connected vehicles at the forefront.



OnePlus Nord CE4 5 Lite G



SPECS

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- 80W SuperVOOC Charger
- Super-bright 120 Hz AMOLED Display
- 2100 nits Peak Brightness
- Aqua Touch
- Qualcomm® Snapdragon™ 695 5G
- 300% Ultra Volume Mode
- 191g
- 50MP Sony LYT600 Camera with OIS + 2MP depth Assist Camera
- 16 MP Front Camera
- 3.5mm headphone jack
- Expandable Storage upto 2Tb

Colour

Mega Blue, Super Silver, Ultra Orange

Plus

- Best Display
- Aqua Touch at low cost
- Ultra Volume Mode

Minus

Low light performance

One Line Review

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- 8 GB RAM + 128 GB Storage - 19,999

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Boult Trail Smartwatch

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- 3D curve display
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- 190+ Watch faces
- Working Crown
- 5.3 Single Chip Bluetooth Calling
- 120+ Sports Modes

Plus

- Working crown is brilliant
- Voice Assistant is good
- Very good Battery backup
- Readings are perfect

Minus

- Connection drops




One Line Review

Best at this price range

Price

1,499

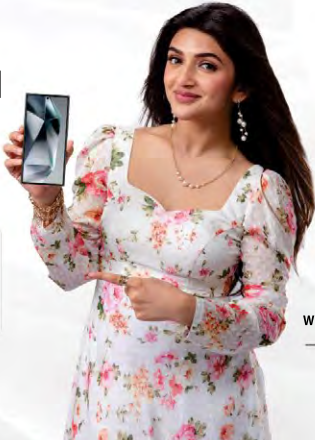



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Price
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Rating ★★★★★★★★

SPECS

Triple microphone system * 2 + ENC
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8 Hours Standby time for buds
Active Noise Cancellation (46DB)
Dual Dynamic Drivers
IP54 Rating

Plus

Three hours of usage with just 10 mins of charge
Best fit to most ears
Wireless Charging

Minus

Not compatible with iOS

Colour

Forest Grey, Beach Sand

Rating 8

One Line Review

Right choice for sound bass quality lovers.




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 120Hz Refresh Rate
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 5500 mAh battery
 50MP Sony LYT-808 OIS + 8MP Sony IMX355 + 50MP Samsung S5KJN5 triple Rear camera
 32MP Sony IMX615 Front Camera
 2160Hz PWM Diming
 10,014mm² Iceberg Dual VC Cooling
 Super Linear Dual Speakers



Colour

Fluid Silver, Razor Green

Price

8 GB RAM + 256 GB Storage - ₹40,999
 12 GB RAM + 256 GB Storage - ₹42,999
 16 GB RAM + 512 GB Storage - ₹44,999

Plus

Brilliant camera
 So many AI options
 Vibrant Display
 Huge and fast charging battery

Minus

Might face real time issues with AI

Rating ★★★★★★★★

One Line Review

Realme does it again with a real beast

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