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A Study of MICE Tourism Dynamics in Auto Expo 2016

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Abstract

Business tourisms sector, which is also known as MICE – Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions Sector - is a high value, high visibility niche tourism sector. It is one of the fastest growing sectors of tourism industry. As per International Congress and Convention Association, International Convention Industry is estimated to be US $ 280 billion. India ranks 31st globally with a share of US $ 4.8 billion, and a potential to be among the top 20 destinations in the world for hosting international conventions, exhibitions and events. Auto Expo is Asia's largest automotive show. From providing a platform to the Indian automotive industry for showcasing its expertise to becoming a sourcing hub for the global automobile industry to launch itself in the Indian market, Auto Expo has evolved significantly since its inception in 1985. In view of the growth potential of business tourism sector and its impact on nation's economy, this research paper envisages to contribute to the understanding of MICE Tourism dynamics in Auto Expo with respect to the perceptions of four key players, viz., delegates visiting the event; exhibitors; venue management; and key organizers. The study profiles the delegates and measures their perceptions with respect to their purpose of visit, and satisfaction levels in respect of venue infrastructural facilities and variety of automobiles exhibited. The paper also studies the various categories of organizations exhibiting in Auto Expo; their purpose of participation; the degree to which their business outcomes have been met; and their satisfaction levels with respect to venue infrastructure. The paper also discusses the roles and perceptions of key organizers like ACMA, CII and SIAM in sponsoring the event. Finally, it also studies the strategies formulated by India Expo Mart (Venue) in marketing Auto Expo to major stakeholders, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of MICE Tourism dynamics.

Keywords: Auto Expo, India, MICE Tourism, Tourism Marketing

1. Introduction

1.1 MICE Tourism

The meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) sector emerges as one of the fastest growing components of tourism worldwide (Che - Chao Chiang, 2012). The Meetings Industry has come of age. It has firmly placed itself at the centre of tourism as one of the key drivers of the sector's development and an important generator of income, employment and investment. In addition to important business opportunities, the Meetings Industry provides immense benefits to the broader economy as it generates on average a higher spending level, reduces seasonality, contributes to the regeneration of destinations, spreads knowledge and enhances innovation and creativity (UNWTO, 2014). It is at the high quality, high yield end of the tourism spectrum, complementing the leisure tourism (Pantelescu, The business travellers' motivation and behaviour, 2011). Business travel generated INR1,085.1bn (16.5%) of direct Travel & Tourism GDP in 2014 and is expected to rise by 6.6% per annum to INR2,202.2bn in 2025 (WTTC, 2015). The Indian Convention Industry is currently at a nascent stage, contributing only a small proportion of the world conventions business (ICPB & IIM).

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1.2 Business Expositions

Business expositions or trade shows are market events of a specific duration, held at intervals, at which a large number of companies present the main product range of one or more industry sectors and mainly sell it on the basis of samples (Kirchgeorg, Springer, & Ka¨stner, 2009). Trade shows are major industry marketing events (Gottlieb, Brown, & Drennan, 2011). For many years, involvement in trade shows has had a regular slot in companies' communication mix. It is of considerable interest because the stimulus it provides acts as a catalyst to economic productivity both on home markets and abroad (Kirchgeorg, Springer, & Ka¨stner, 2009). They grow the visitor base by attracting people who are primarily attending the event rather than having chosen that destination exclusively on the basis of its own merits (UNWTO, 2014). The objective of trade show organizers is to create highly effective shows that result in positive outcomes for both exhibitors and visitors, as a strong relationship between visitor perceptions' of trade-show effectiveness and post-show purchase intention appears to exist (Gottlieb, Brown, & Drennan, 2011). Despite their global popularity, comparatively little academic research has been done on trade shows (Gottlieb, Brown, & Drennan, 2011).

1.3 Auto Expo

The Auto Expo is jointly organized by Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM). . It is Asia's largest and the world's second-largest motor show, organized biennially in New Delhi, India (CII, Auto Expo 1986 - 2010 : Miles & Milestones, 2015). The Auto Expo was conceived in the year 1985, and the 13th edition of the event was organized between 5th to 9th February, 2016 at India Expo Mart, Greater Noida. The event has become a preferred launch platform for automobile manufacturers across the world. Delhi - NCR hosts the highest number of tradeshows and conventions in the country (ICPB & IIM). The main venues in the city to host Auto Expo are Pragati Maidan (part of India Trade Promotion Council) and India Expo Center, Noida. Auto Expo, like major trade shows also serves as an indicator for technological and social trends in the automobile industry. A total of sixty eight organizations participated in the 13th Auto Expo 2016 (http://autoexpo-themotorshow.in/, 2016). These include automobile manufacturers; components and accessories manufacturers, universities and other marketing companies. Previous studies show that marketing of trade shows has an impact on its sales and non-sales performance (Moriarty, Jones, Rowley, & Teahan, 2008). It is therefore important to study the dynamics of Auto Expo, with a focus on perceptions of participants. The findings of the study will give deeper insights in understanding the perceptions of delegates and exhibitors, which in turn will help in better organization of the event.

2. Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the research are to study the:

1. Behavioral aspects and perceptions of participating Exhibitors and Delegates visiting Auto Expo with respect to the facilities at the venue
2. Perceptions about outcomes of the exhibition

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

The data for the present investigation was collected using both primary and secondary sources. The data with respect to MICE tourism dynamics of Auto Expo was collected through secondary sources like annual reports, past studies and relevant websites. The data with respect to behavioral aspects and perceptions of the respondents on various aspects of the study was collected through primary sources, using two set of structured questionnaires, personally administered to the respondents.

The first questionnaire was designed for delegates visiting Auto Expo. It sought information about certain behavioral aspects like the time they intend to spend at the event, their purpose of visit and intentions to purchase vehicles in near future. It also sought their perceptions towards infrastructural facilities available at the venue, and their level of with respect to the number and variety of automobiles exhibited. Finally, the delegates were asked to make suggestions for improvements in future.

The second questionnaire was designed for the business organizations exhibiting their products in the Auto Expo. It measures their perceptions with respect to the infrastructural facilities available at the venue and their level of satisfaction with respect to business outcomes and sought suggestions for improvement

3.2 Sample

The sample for collecting primary data for the study was selected using 'Convenience Sampling Method'. The researchers personally visited India Expo Mart, the venue for the Motoring Show of Auto Expo 2016 and collected the required information from the delegates visiting the event and corporate representatives of the organizations exhibiting in the event. In total, responses were collected from 103 delegates and 45 representatives of the exhibiting organizations.

3.3 Analysis

The data for the study was analyzed using summary statistics and non – parametric tests like Mann – Whitney U Test and Kruskal – Wallis Test of independent samples on Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21.

4. Sample Structure

4.1 Delegates

The 103 respondents to the first questionnaire i.e. the Delegates questionnaire were classified on the basis of gender, age – groups, nationality, occupation and annual income. The results show that 73.8% respondents were males and the remaining 26.2% were females. Further, about 72% respondents were up to the age group of 25 years, another 20.4% were between 25 and 35 years of age and 7.8% were above 35 years.

96.1% of the respondents were Indians and the remaining 3.9% were foreigners. Regarding occupation, a majority of 54.4% of the respondents were 'Students', followed by 24.3% of the respondents belonging to 'Self – employed & Business' category closely followed by 21.4% in the 'Service' category

A significant majority i.e., 76.7% of the respondents reported their annual income to be 'Up to Rs. 10 Lakhs' and 23.3% reported it to be 'More than Rs. 10 Lakhs'.

4.2 Exhibitors

A total of 45 responses were collected for the second questionnaire, of which 22.2% were from 'Four – Wheeler and Commercial Vehicles' organizations, 20% from 'Two – Wheeler' category, and a huge 46.7% belonging to the category 'Components, Accessories & Others' and the remaining11.1% were of 'Universities' category which included educational institutions of higher learning.

A significant 64.4% of the companies had an annual turnover above Rs. 20 Crores, and the remaining 35.6% of the companies have reported their annual turnover to be below Rs. 20 Crores.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1 Behavioral Aspects - Delegates

The behavioral aspects of delegates visiting the event are studied from five broad perspectives, namely, 'The source through which they heard about the event'; 'The average time visitors intend to spend at the event venue'; 'The primary purpose of visiting', 'Have they attended Auto Expo in any previous years' and finally, 'Whether they intend to buy any vehicle in the near future'. Insights in to these perspectives is important for the organizers and exhibitors to better understand the delegates' behavior and help them customize their offerings in the most optimal way. For example, Source of hearing about the event will help them target the most popular media to advertize and reach out to their target audience. The average time, a respondent spends in Auto Expo reflects the average disposable time visitors have in their discretion. This is important from two perspectives. Firstly, how organizers can plan the hall layout and how exhibitors can plan the display of most important products and services in order to maximize their business outcomes. Insights on future purchase intentions help the exhibitors to forecast the demand of their offerings and to gauge the interest shown by visitors in their products.

5.2 Source of Information

A careful analysis of these behavioral aspects show that the most popular media through which delegates hear about Auto Expo is 'Social Media'. A significant 35.9% delegates have reported having heard about the event on popular social media sites like Face Book, Twitter and LinkedIn. It is closely followed by 29.1% from 'Word of mouth' and 27.2% from 'Newspapers'. Traditional media like Television and FM Radio have scored low as only 7.8% and 9.7% respondents have reported having heard about the event on these media.

5.3 Intended Time Spend

In respect of the average time spend by delegates in Auto Expo, 37.9% of the respondents intend to spend between 2 hours to 4 hours at the venue, closely followed by 29.1% of the respondents who intend to spend 4 hours to 6 hours and 21.4% who intend to spend more than 6 hours. However, a significantly low, 11.7% of the respondents intend to spend less than 2 hours at the venue.

5.4 Purpose of Visit

The primary purpose of visiting Auto Expo by 48.5% respondents was reported to 'Witness new vehicle launches'. An equal, 10.7% respondents reported to have visited for reasons of 'Business' and 'Professional Networking'; and coincidentally an equal 21.4% respondents have reported to visit for 'Academic' reasons and 'Leisure'. This shows that how big a platform, Auto Expo is for exhibitors to launch their new vehicles and for delegates to professionally network with each other, apart from providing people a venue to rejuvenate and relax.

5.5 Frequency of Visit

Almost an equal, 49.5% respondents are repeat visitors and reported to have attended Auto Expo in the previous years. This reflects the dearth of opportunity that lies ahead of organizers and exhibitors to further strengthen their brand image and make visitors enthusiastic to visit their stalls through a correct mix of promotion strategies through reportedly popular, social media.

5.6 Purchase Intentions

A promotion strategy for a brand may be considered effective, if it generates a purchase desire in its target audience. Hence, it's important to study the purchase intentions of visitors. A majority, 51.5% respondents have reported to have intentions of purchasing a vehicle in the near future. Of these respondents, 22.3% have reported to purchase a vehicle 'Within 6 months to 1 year'; 19.4%, 'Within 3 months to 6 months' and 9.7%, 'Within 3 months'. As already mentioned, this statistics help companies to forecast their sales.

5.7 Behavioral aspects - Exhibitors

The behavioral aspects of the organizations exhibiting in Auto Expo are studied from two broad perspectives, namely, 'Frequency of participation' and 'Primary purpose of participation'. The frequency of participant signifies how regular an organization is in exhibiting at Auto Expo. It gives an opportunity to the company to showcase its offerings and get an early customer response. Purpose reflects the rationale behind an organization exhibiting at Auto Expo. Insights on these two parameters are important from the point of view of both organizers and visitors. Organizers can customize their venue and price offerings to repeat participants and ensure that their business outcomes are better met. Visitors tend to have a positive brand image of organizations exhibiting innovative products every time.

5.8 Frequency of Participation

The results show that majority 51.1% organizations are regular participants and exhibit 'Every time'. 42.2% organizations have reported to have participated for the 'First time' in Auto Expo 2016, whereas, only 6.7% organizations have reported to be participating 'Sometimes'.

5.9 Primary Purpose of Participation

There are various purposes for which organizations participate in Auto Expo. The most common purpose, as reported by 48.9% exhibitors is 'New product launches'. This is closely followed by 'Company image promotion', as reported by 46.7% organizations. 'Establishing new business relationships' is close third with 37.8% responses. The other purposes as reported are 'Strengthening distribution networks' and 'Booking order for future sales' by 17.8% and 6.7% organizations

6. Delegates' Satisfaction in Respect of Infrastructural Facilities

Overall satisfaction with infrastructural facilities as perceived by the responding delegates has been reported in the Table 1. It may be observed that the median satisfaction score for each of the infrastructural facility, on a five point scale, has worked out to be 4 indicating above average satisfaction across all the respondents

Table 1. Age wise and Occupation wise differences in satisfaction

Factors	Average (Median Score)	Age-wise				Occupation-wise			
		Upto 25 Years	25 years to 35 Years	35 Years to 45 Years	Kruskal Wallis Sig Value	Service	Self-employed and Business	Students and Others	Kruskal Wallis Sig Value
Hall Layout	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	.056	5.00	4.00	4.00	.050
Transport Connectivity	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	.113	4.00	4.00	4.00	.337
Parking Facilities	4.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	.025	3.50	4.00	4.00	.397
Information Desk	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	.437	4.00	4.00	4.00	.898
Online Ticket Booking	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.50	.213	5.00	4.00	4.00	.252
Cleanliness	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	.396	4.00	4.00	4.00	.821
Entertainment	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	.541	5.00	4.00	5.00	.043
Food Court	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	.011	4.00	4.00	3.00	.087

6.1 Differences in Level of satisfaction

Differences in the perceived level of satisfaction of respondents categorized on the basis of age show that the median score of satisfaction for each of the factors for the three age groups ranged from 3.00 to 5.00. However, the value of the Kruskal Wallis test examining the significance of difference was found to be within acceptable limits at 5% level for all factors except two factors, namely 'Parking Facilities' and 'Food Court'. In other words, the null hypothesis for these factors is rejected indicating that the respondents belonging to '25 Years to 35 Years' age group perceived significantly higher level of satisfaction than the other two age groups. For all other factors, the null hypothesis indicating no difference is accepted.

Similarly, the differences in the perceived level of satisfaction, worked out on the basis of occupation, as depicted in Table 1, revealed that the median satisfaction score across these categories ranged from 3.00 to 5.00. Kruskal Wallis test values at 5% level of significance shows significant differences in two categories of factors, namely 'Hall Layout' for which respondents citing 'Service' as their occupation had significantly higher satisfaction level and 'Entertainment' for which 'Self employed and Business' category respondents had lower satisfaction For all the remaining factors the null hypothesis indicating n difference is accepted

The gender wise and level of income wise differences in the perceived satisfaction with infrastructural facilities have been reported in Table 2 as follows

As shown in the Table 2, the median satisfaction score of Males and Female respondent, for all factors except 'Online ticket booking' and 'Entertainment' worked out to be 4. However the score of Male respondents for the factor 'Online ticket booking was high at 4.5 as against 4 for the Female respondents. As against this, the median score of Males for the factor 'Entertainment' was lesser at 4 as compared to the score of Female respondents, at5. The Mann Whitney test examining the significance of differences shows that at 5 percent level, these differences were statistically insignificant. Thus the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the level of satisfaction on the basis of gender is accepted.

Table 2. Gender-wise and Income wise differences in satisfaction

Factors	Median	Gender-wise			Income-wise		
		Male	Female	Mann – Whitney U Test Sig Value	Up to Rs.10 Lakhs	More than Rs. 10 Lakhs	Mann – Whitney U Test Sig Value
Hall Layout	4.00	4.00	4.00	.493	4.00	4.00	.183
Transport Connectivity	4.00	4.00	4.00	.860	4.00	3.50	.157
Parking Facilities	4.00	4.00	4.00	.504	4.00	4.00	.826
Information Desk	4.00	4.00	4.00	.371	4.00	3.00	.007
Online Ticket Booking	4.00	4.50	4.00	.897	5.00	4.00	.052
Cleanliness	4.00	4.00	4.00	.952	4.00	4.00	.044
Entertainment	4.00	4.00	5.00	.132	5.00	4.00	.145
Food Court	4.00	4.00	4.00	.641	4.00	4.00	.990

Further, the median score of satisfaction of respondent categorized on the basis of level of income, as shown in the Table 2, ranges between3 and 5 for different factors. ,showing wide variations particularly with respect to the factors Transport, Information Desk , Entertainment and On Line Booking However , the Mann Whitney U test which was used to analyze the significance of differences in the values between the two income groups was found to be significant only with respect to the factor Information desk . This shows that the respondents in the income group of l0 Lakhs or less perceived significantly higher level of satisfaction with respect to this factor than those belonging to the group whose income was more than Rs 10 Lakhs.

7. Exhibitor's Satisfaction with Respect to Venue Infrastructure

Table 3 shows that the average satisfaction with respect to 'Wi-Fi availability' at the venue was below average. While, for factors 'Foreign exchange counters' and 'Panel of service providers', exhibitors were moderately satisfied. Exhibitors showed above average satisfaction for factors 'Transport connectivity', 'Parking facilities', 'Information Desk', 'Business centers & Meeting rooms', 'Storage & warehousing facilities', 'Security arrangements' and 'Media Rooms'. The maximum level of satisfaction was with respect to 'Layout of exhibition halls'.

Table 3. Exhibitor's satisfaction with venue infrastructure

Venue Infrastructure Factors	Average (Median Score)	Business Category					Company Turnover		
		Four-Wheelers & Commercial Vehicles	Two - Wheelers	Components, Accessories and Other Co.	Universities	Kruskal – Wallis Test Value	Upto Rs. 20 Crores	More than Rs. 20 Crores	Mann Whitney U Test Value
Layout of exhibition halls	5	5	4	5	5	.945	5	5	.762
Transport connectivity	4	3	4	4	5	.834	4.50	4	.719
Parking facilities	4	3.50	4	4	4	.702	4	4	.990
Information desk	4	4	5	3	4	.035	4	4	.768
Business centers & Meeting rooms	4	3.50	4	3	4	.489	4	3	.863
Storage & Warehousing	4	4	4	3	4	.325	3.50	4	.863
Foreign exchange counters	3	3	3	3	3	.612	3	3	.990
Panel of service providers	3	3.50	3	4	3	.862	4	3	.568
Central Wi-Fi	2	3	3	3	4	.180	3	2	.061
Security	4	4.50	5	4	4	.034	4	4	.218
Media rooms	4	3.50	5	3	4	.015	3	4	.583

While analyzing the significance of difference in satisfaction levels across the four business categories, the Kruskal – Wallis test scores at 5% level of significance show that satisfaction of 'Components, Accessories and other Companies' was significantly lower for the factors 'Information desk' and 'Media Rooms'; and the satisfaction level of 'Two – wheelers' was significantly high for the factor 'Security arrangements'.

In respect of differences in the level of satisfaction amongst responding exhibitors categorized on the basis of turnover of their firms, the Mann – Whitney scores, as given in Table 3 indicate that there is no significant difference in the satisfaction level.

8. Satisfaction with Business Outcomes

The perception of responding exhibitors regarding outcomes of the exhibition was taken on a five point scale from low to high. It may be observed from Table 4 that the overall median score for the outcomes 'Trade enquiries generated', 'Business deals finalized' and 'Networking opportunities leveraged' worked out to be 4, while the same for the outcome 'Visitor's footfall', was maximum at 5 indicating above average to very high level of satisfaction with respect to the outcomes.

Analyzing the level of satisfaction with the four outcomes across the four Business categories of exhibitors, it may be observed from Table 4, that median scores for different outcomes ranged from 3 to 5. However, the value of the Kruskal – Wallis test was not found to be within the acceptable limits of 5 percent significance. This shows that there was no difference in the level of satisfaction from all the outcomes amongst all the four categories of respondents.

The results in Table 4, also indicate that level of satisfaction was above average for all business outcomes except 'Visitor's footfall', where it was maximum for exhibitors having annual turnover to be 'Up to Rs. 20 Crores' and 'Above Rs. 20 Crores'. Further, there was no significant difference found in their satisfaction, as indicated by the Mann – Whitney scores.

Table 4. Satisfaction with business outcomes

Business Outcomes	Average (Median Score)	Business Category					Company Turnover		
		Four-Wheelers & Commercial Vehicles	Two - Wheelers	Components, Accessories and Other Co.	Universities	Krusskal – Wallis Test Value	Upto Rs. 20 Crores	More than Rs. 20 Crores	Mann Whitney U Test Value
Trade enquiries generated	4	4	4	4	4	.309	4	4	.850
Business deals finalized	4	4	3	4	3	.539	4	3	.418
Networking opportunities leveraged	4	4	4	4	4	.996	4	4	.532
Visitors footfall	5	5	5	5	4	.275	5	5	.915

9. Satisfaction with Number and Variety of Automobiles Exhibited

In respect of number and variety of vehicles exhibited, the general level of satisfaction of responding delegates for both Indian and foreign automobiles were perceived to be above average. However, delegates were found to be relatively more satisfied with foreign automobiles than Indian Automobiles, as the median satisfaction scores were computed to be 5 and 4, respectively. Age-wise distribution of median satisfaction score for the Indian automobile manufacturers for the three age – groups of respondents was found to be 4, 4 and 4.5. While for the foreign automobile manufacturers, it was 5, 4 and 5. The value of Kruskal Wallis test analyzing significance of difference in the level of satisfaction was found to be significant for the Indian automobile manufacturers.

The two exhibits that attracted the attention of a large percent (40%) of the respondents were BMW and Audi. This was followed by Maruti Suzuki (20%), Ford (20%) and Honda (19%). Other exhibits which attracted the attention of visitors include Mahindra & Mahindra, Jaguar Land Rover and Toyota.

Of the automobile models exhibited, the most attractive model, as per the views of about one – third of the respondents was BMW i8.this was closely followed by Ford Mustang (22%) and Audi R8 (20%). Some of the other models found attractive by responding delegates were 'Honda Navi' and 'Mahindra Thar'.

10. Suggestions for Improvement

Though the general level of satisfaction with the arrangements and organization of Auto Expo was found to be above average, several suggestions were made by the delegates and exhibitors for improvements in the future. Some of the important suggestions were to make good quality food available to the visitors at reasonable rates. A large number of delegates suggested that greater number of new cars to be displayed with relatively more price related information. It was suggested by many delegates that the venue for the Motor – show should be shifted back to Pragati Maidan, as it is centrally located and comparatively convenient to reach than India Expo Mart. 'Arrangements for smoking rooms', 'Upgraded mechanism to control crowd at the venue' and 'Improvements in drinking water facilities' were among other important suggestions reported. Wi-Fi facility was reported to be an important aspect of the infrastructure. Both exhibitors and delegates suggested better Wi-Fi connectivity at the venue. Another important area of improvement suggested by the responding participants was in transport connectivity to the venue.

11. Conclusion

The study examined behavioral aspects and perceptions of exhibitors and delegates visiting Auto Expo 2016, with a view to know their satisfaction.

It was observed that 'Social media' and 'Word of mouth' were the most important sources of disseminating information about Auto Expo. Most of the delegates intended to spend up to six hours in the exhibition and reported their purpose of visit was to witness new vehicle launches. About half the responding delegates were repeat visitors with an intention of purchasing a new vehicle within six months to one year.

The primary purpose of exhibitors to participate in the event was to showcase their offerings and to solicit an early customer response. About half of the exhibitors were regular participants in the Auto Expo, while another two – fifths participating for the first time.

Overall satisfaction of the responding delegates with different infrastructural facilities was found to be above average. However, significant differences in satisfaction were found in the delegates categorized on the basis of age groups, income level and occupation.

All exhibitors had above average to high level of satisfaction with respect to business outcomes of the event, with significant differences reported in satisfaction in venue infrastructure by exhibitors belonging to different business categories.

The exhibits that attracted the attention of delegates the most were BMW and Audi, with BMW i8, Audi R8 and Ford Mustang being the most sought after models.

Some of the important suggestions for improvement made by the participants were in respect of making quality food available at reasonable prices, more information to be made available for vehicles displayed and providing better Wi-Fi connectivity at the venue.

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