

AUTOMOTIVE

Tmall connects Mercedes, Audi cars with AI integration

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Mercedes-Benz, Audi and Volvo are the first cars to use Alibaba's AI+ Car. Image credit: Alibaba

By STAFF REPORTS

Chinese ecommerce giant Alibaba is linking consumers' cars to their homes with an automotive artificial intelligence solution.

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The retailer's AI + Car solution allows consumers to interact with their vehicles through its Tmall Genie voice assistant, checking the car's status or controlling settings from their home. Daimler, Audi and Volvo are the first automakers to incorporate AI + Car into their vehicles, with more brands expected to follow in the future.

Vehicle voice assistance

The Tmall Genie is a smart voice assistant, similar. Similarly to Amazon's Echo, consumers in China can purchase Genie speakers for their homes that allow them to perform tasks such as ordering.

Now, Tmall is making its AI interface compatible with cars. From their homes, consumers will be able to use the Tmall Genie to check on their car's fuel level and location.

Owners can also run status checks to see how certain parts of the car are running, such as the engine and battery. Prior to a journey, drivers can lock car doors, turn on air conditioning and plan a route from inside their homes.

Alibaba's AI Labs is also looking into further car connectivity. The Aligenie bot that powers the Tmall Genie has speech interaction and natural language processing that can be incorporated into cars to enable voice commands.

Voice commands can also be used to interact with the Tmall Genie devices in a consumer's home from the car. For instance, consumers could control connected appliances while driving.



Consumers will be able to check on their cars from their homes. Image credit: Audi

China has become the largest car market in the world, with 30 million vehicles sold last year. As a result of these additional cars on the road, consumers are spending more time in their cars as they commute.

“Cars are an environment, alongside home and the office, where individuals spend a significant amount of time and through connectivity can become an important part of life. Identifying how to serve car users with Tmall Genie’s skillsets is one of our top priorities,” said Lijuan Chen, head of Alibaba AI Labs, in a statement. “We are thrilled to partner with distinguished auto brands like Daimler, Audi and Volvo Cars to drive the revolution of smart mobility in China.

“We hope the collaboration can create a more intelligent and personalized mobility experience for consumers and enhance users’ commute by exploring more AI-powered services through our Auto AI solution.”

With the growth of digital assistants such as Amazon's Alexa and Google Home expected to reach more than 1.8 billion consumers by 2021, the luxury landscape is open for a multitude of capabilities by integrating with this technology, illustrated in a new report from iProspect and Bing.

High-end automakers as well as numerous other luxury brands have been continuing to integrate with digital assistants as the experience exudes opulence, catering to affluent consumers. According to [Digital Assistants: Reordering Consumer Lives & Redefining Digital Marketing](#), currently more than 500 million individuals use some version of a digital assistant, which makes it imperative for luxury brands to stay ahead of the curve now that it has become universal for consumers across the board, and not just the affluent ([see story](#)).

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