

AUTOMOTIVE

Automotive sector's Top 10 headlines of 2018

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Jaguar's I-Pace. Image credit: Jaguar

By STAFF REPORTS

Luxury automakers are enhancing customer service and integrating more sustainable technology into vehicles as they look to appeal to drivers' changing attitudes amid economic uncertainty.

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Political turmoil, evolving economies and car technology are a few of the many factors that have influenced how automakers do business over the past year. The top headlines from 2018 reveal just how drastically these factors can change the automotive market.

Here are Luxury Daily's top 2018 headlines from the automotive sector:



BMW at-home charging station. Image credit: BMW.

Autonomy, electricity will transform auto industry sooner than later

As automakers continue to invest in electric mobility initiatives, the electric vehicle market is likely see a paramount jump by the year 2025.

According to a new report from Frost & Sullivan, the electric vehicle (EV) industry is expected to see a 28.3 percent annual compound growth rate, with a jump from 130,000 units to 1.8 million in seven years. Plug-in hybrids will lead the market, with a 59.8 percent share, but complete battery-powered cars will continue to gain traction ([see story](#)).



Lexus was one of the top performing brands along with Porsche and Audi. Image credit: Lexus

White-glove valet services can have major impact on auto customer loyalty

When customers are happy with the service done on their cars from brands or dealers, they are more likely to remain loyal and recommend those brands to their friends, according to a new report from J.D. Power.

The report, called the J.D. Power 2018 U.S. Customer Service Index Study, found that white-glove valet service, such as an automaker or dealer picking up and dropping off a customer's car for repair, is a huge plus for luxury clients. Brands such as Porsche, Audi and Lexus are all listed as brands making strong use of this trend ([see story](#)).



Driverless cars come with their own set of risks. Image credit: Aurora

Low costs could help usher driverless cars into mainstream US

As automotive brands continue to develop driverless technology to bring the auto industry closer to completely autonomous vehicles, consumers in the United States are still not convinced.

While automakers are excited to bring driverless cars into development, many consumers are not as enthused, with a recent accident making matters worse. According to a new Ipsos report, U.S. consumers are more hesitant than other regions with one in four saying they would "never" use an autonomous car ([see story](#)).



A controversial ban on female drivers in Saudi Arabia has ended. Image credit: Audi

Luxury automakers set sights on new Saudi Arabian drivers

As Saudi Arabia officially ends its longtime ban on female drivers, luxury automakers have been among the first to welcome women to the driver's seat.

Since the end of the driving ban was announced last fall, auto manufacturers have had time to evaluate how they will market to changing demographics of Saudi Arabian drivers. Audi, Jaguar and Ford were among the automakers that released short films commemorating the historic occasion on Sunday, June 24 ([see story](#)).



The BMW X1 was the top-selling premium compact SUV in Europe in 2018 H1. Image credit: BMW

European car market sees record growth in H1 2018

The European car market saw its best first half in two decades, with growth in Germany, Spain and France outpacing the decline in the United Kingdom.

Compared to the first half of 2017, the European automotive market grew by 2.7 percent with more than 8.6 million cars sold between January and June of this year. According to data from JATO, automakers' new models and technology updates have been driving this growth ([see story](#)).



Audi's in-car technology is focused on innovation. Image credit: Audi

Car tech, smartphones compete for drivers' attention

Consumer satisfaction with new-vehicle technology has improved, but automakers need to be keen about what features drivers use the most to make the wisest investments of their efforts.

According to the [J.D. Power 2018 U.S. Tech Experience Index \(TXI\) Study](#), navigation and voice recognition are among the most popular technologies used by drivers, but they are more likely to use their smartphones for those features than in-vehicle touchpoints. Automakers should instead focus on technology they alone can provide, though adoption of these advanced features varies widely among car manufacturers ([see story](#)).



Lexus tied for first place in customer satisfaction in the luxury sector. Image credit: Lexus

Looming tariffs could hurt driver satisfaction, vehicle value

Improved driving and safety performance and customer service have increased customer satisfaction among luxury car owners, but potential tariffs are threatening to negatively impact the trend.

According to the 2018 Automobile Report by the American Customer Satisfaction Index, customer satisfaction with cars is up 1.2 percent to a score of 82 on ACSI's 100-point scale. However, the rise in satisfaction is attributed to improved car value, which may decline if proposed tariffs lead to higher prices for both imported and U.S.-made vehicles ([see story](#)).



Land Rover looks into all-terrain driverless SUV. Image credit: Land Rover

Luxury SUV sales continue to soar

Sales of sport utility vehicles have dominated the luxury car market in 2018, but the gap between high-end and mass-market SUVs is narrowing.

More than 1 million luxury vehicles have sold this year, 62 percent of which were SUVs, according to a new report from Edmunds. Growing availability of high-end SUVs has driven this trend, but the price gap between luxury and mainstream vehicles has also shrunk 10 percent in the last decade ([see story](#)).



Tesla's Model 3 sedan. Image credit: Tesla

Tesla's future foggy as obstacles mount

U.S. automaker Tesla and its founder Elon Musk have been inundated with negative press for the last several

months, and the consequences for the brand remain unclear.

The year began with Tesla dealing with production issues and fending off criticism from consumer advocacy groups. A U.S. Department of Justice investigation and Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) lawsuit followed in the fall, thus far resulting in Mr. Musk stepping down as Tesla's chairman as part of a settlement ([see story](#)).



British auto brands have seen record growth but uncertainty about Brexit may impede that. Image credit: Rolls-Royce

British automakers warn of consequences of "no deal" Brexit

With uncertainty still surrounding Brexit, three-quarters of British automakers believe a "no deal" split from the European Union would have negative repercussions across the industry.

According to a new member survey from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, one in five automakers have already seen a loss in business. The U.K. is scheduled to leave its largest trading partner, the European Union, by a March 29 deadline ([see story](#)).