

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Lexus catches a wave with luxury yacht debut

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*Lexus has revealed first luxury yacht. Image credit: Lexus*

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus is taking to the water with the debut of its first yacht, as the brand builds its luxury pedigree while expanding to a new category.

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The Lexus LY650 yacht emphasizes the craftsmanship central to the brand's philosophy, as well as design and connectivity. As the automotive industry continues to adapt for a new era, automakers including Lexus are shifting towards becoming lifestyle brands.

"Successful luxury brands are in constant motion they understand and act with intent to continue to evolve," said Rebecca Miller, founder/CEO of **Miller & Company**, New York. "The key is to know what categories are appropriate for the brand and which are not.

"Too many brands assume the customer will follow no matter the category," she said. "The line extension or new categories must align with the core ethos and products a brand is known for.

"Lexus is known for its quiet and sleek designs. A new mode of transportation such as a yacht follows suit and escalates the brand's core competencies and places them in front of a new consumer."

Ms. Miller is not affiliated with Lexus, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. **Lexus** was reached for comment.

Lexus at sea

The 65-foot LY650 was premiered in Boca Raton, FL on Sept. 19, the culmination of years of design and production work. Its elegant and coup-like exterior is reminiscent of its automotive origins.

Lexus first dove into the boating sector with its Sporting Yacht Concept in January 2017, alluding to a future in new lifestyle markets.

The automaker's metaphorical jump into boating started with a sport yacht design with high-performance twin engines, not intended to be put into production. The idea was to build a recreational sporting yacht with twin high-

performance Lexus V8 engines that accommodates six to eight people ([see story](#)).

#### *Lexus emphasized its craftsmanship tradition in the LY650*

Last year, Lexus confirmed that the LY 650 yacht was entering into production, positioned as the automaker's fourth flagship alongside the LS sedan, LX SUV and LC coup.

Lexus chose Wisconsin-based Marquis Yachts, which has decades of experience in bespoke boat building, to build, sell and service the yacht ([see story](#)). During production, Marqui Yachts applied the Toyota Production System to ensure efficiency and quality.

Reflecting the "takumi" heritage of Lexus, each of the yachts has a hand-molded, custom-painted hull. Metallic accents are found throughout the exterior, including the bow and side windows.

Inside, the LY 650 has three spacious bedrooms, each with a private head and shower, as well as a lounging area and galley.



*Interior rendering of the LY650 yacht. Image credit: Lexus*

For connectivity on the high seas, the Lexus yacht is outfitted with LY-Link technology.

The system provides information about the vessel via text message and allows users to manage amenities such as air conditioning or lighting through smartphones. Captains can use a touchscreen instruments panel, and owners can also add on a custom Mark Levinson surround system.

Sales of the LY 650 will launch on Oct. 30, the same day the yacht will make its first appearance at the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show.

"Lexus has carefully elected to expand its brand into another luxury product category, which is easy for the consumer to understand and embrace," Ms. Miller said. "A yacht further showcases the details of a Lexus product, a core element of quality."

#### *Automotive lifestyle*

Other luxury automakers have looked to branch into hospitality or lifestyle categories to expand their reach.

British automaker Aston Martin has partnered with a real estate developer to design luxury residences in downtown Miami, translating its brand ethos to at-home comforts.

Located at 300 Biscayne Boulevard Way and the mouth of the Miami River, the Aston Martin Residences is already one of the most in-demand addresses in South Florida. Aston Martin is lending its design expertise to the interior of the residential tower, including communal amenity spaces ([see story](#)).

Apparel and accessories is another popular sector in which automakers establish partnerships with other luxury brands.

Earlier this year, German automaker BMW collaborated with Montblanc on a set of luggage that is designed to fit in the trunk of its 8 Series Coup.

The Montblanc x BMW Luggage Set features five different bags that are inspired by California, such as a surf bag and guitar bag. With a suggested retail price of 14,900 euros, or about \$16,900, the set is available at BMW Welt in Munich, Germany ([see story](#)).

Even when branching out, brands should consider their existing audience.

"The worst decision a brand can make is one that includes a disparate product that is far from the core of the brand, which is confusing and frustrating to their customer," Ms. Miller said. "They want to follow do not make it hard for them to do so. And do not take a leap that affronts the customer, because it is not well thought out strategically or logically."

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