

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Future of luxury travel soaring to extraordinary heights

April 5, 2021



*There are several factors to consider when promoting autonomous vehicles and flying cars. Image credit: Vertical Aerospace*

By KATIE TAMOLA

If one is looking forward to the future of luxury travel, they may want to look up, as it involves flying cars as well as more autonomous vehicles.

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During the [Technology in Luxury Conference](#) on March 31, panelists discussed how reimagining the future of luxury travel will involve continued dedication to technological innovation and brands continuing to both stay true to their brand ethos and envision the needs of the consumer. The panel discussed the progression of technology within these luxury means of travel, what draws consumers to these products as well as the challenges that await.

"We are really talking about changing the way people travel, bringing in a really amazing product," said Michael Cervenka, CEO at [Vertical Aerospace](#), Bristol, U.K. "Inevitably, if you want to buy that product that is going to be very much a premium product, you know that there is a huge amount of technology that goes into these kinds of vehicles, to deliver the safety standards that are required and takes the best engineering talent, some of the best materials and therefore, if you want to buy these vehicles, they are multimillion pounds, and they are certainly very much a luxury item.

"But, what excites me is that this can over time, have a much broader opportunity," he said. "Over time, through the efficiencies that we can get in the vehicles and the economies of scale, we will see that they start to be available to a much wider part of the public."

The event was hosted by Luxury Briefing. Michael Schneider, managing principal at [InfraStrategies](#), moderated the panel.

### Reimagining travel

Panelists discussed how there are several factors to consider when promoting autonomous vehicles and flying cars. With such unique and exciting forms of luxury travel, comes the need for rigorous testing and elevated expectations.

Mr. Cervenka discussed the importance of following regulations and developing products that address and assuage

any consumer anxiety. Abundant consideration, technological innovation and testing help brands to garner consumer excitement.



*The ACH130 Aston Martin edition. Image credit: Airbus/Aston Martin*

"We have been dreaming of having flying cars since the 1960s," Mr. Cervenka said. "We are now seeing a convergence of technologies, actually largely driven by the automotive industry, significant improvements in batteries, rechargeable batteries in electric motors, and really advanced flight control systems of the sort we have got in this vehicle."

The VA-X4 aircraft from Vertical Aerospace aims to offer luxury consumers shorter missions across single cities and can carry four passengers and one pilot. It will be flown by experienced pilots certified through the CAA and EASA, the strictest global regulator, at the same safety levels that can be expected from commercial airlines.

The aircraft is completely emission-free, 100 times quieter than a helicopter, can fly at 200 mph and up to a 120-mile range. It is set to be one of the world's first certified all-electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft and is on track to be certified in 2024 where it will begin commercial services shortly thereafter.

Customer experience also needs to be addressed when automakers design, test and craft autonomous vehicles. He discussed how the automaker responds to any potential apprehension about self-driven vehicles.

"It's constant empirical testing, obviously, that that has to happen in a safe environment, in an environment that allows you to study, test and test and test and constantly test [the vehicles]," said Marek Reichman, chief creative officer at [Aston Martin](#), Warwick, U.K. "I think that's one of the areas of testing that must be accelerated and has to be improved."

Aston Martin tests prototypes of AV at racetracks because of safety, as they are without mainstream traffic while effectively offering a road network.

Mr. Reichman also discussed how certain luxury brands, including the automaker, exhibit prominent and shining brand ethos. The marque also emphasizes an attractive exterior and interior aesthetics in every vehicle, whether autonomous or not.

"We have to keep the consumer engaged, entertained and they must have desire, they need to have the desire to purchase therefore, beauty and how something looks, is really, really important, both now and into the future," Mr. Reichman said. "Because we still want to own things that we admire, whether it is autonomous, whether I drive it myself, our consumers, consider the Aston Martin cars beautiful, therefore, they have to have that experience."

"Now as we all have a device that we use to make telephone calls, search the internet receive our emails, we make the choice of who we use, and who we want to have as our provider there," he said. "So, it's very much the same, you have to keep the brand ethos, the meaning of the brand has to be very, very important to give desire into the future."



*Marek Reichman, chief creative officer at Aston Martin; Michael Cervenka, CEO at Vertical Aerospace; Michael Schneider, managing principal at InfraStrategies. Image credit: Luxury Briefing*

For motor brands to stand out in an electric world, Mr. Reichman believes brands must consistently highlight who they are. Brand loyalty will also come into play.

"Whereas I mentioned early on brand is so important what your brand stands for, what the ethos of the brand is, what the meaning of the brand is, the materiality of the brand and heritage that exists," he said. "[It is important that] the confidence you can give the consumer in both an electric or an autonomous vehicle is that they are, they are getting something very, very special."

Both panelists also expressed optimism and faith in the interest of their brands' products and travel.

"Aston Martin is not the ubiquitous A to B product, it is something that people desire and it is something that people admire," Mr. Reichman said. "It's something that people look at and stare at.

"When they see our cars, they fall in love with them," he said.

While the aviation industry is going through a revolution with more consideration towards issues like climate, Mr. Cervenka also believes the desire to travel will always remain.

"People still really want real experiences and want to experience different things, and the only way to do that, I think, is to travel," he said. "Climate change is going to become a really important factor in how people travel, I see travel becoming more and more personal, more on demand.

"But I personally think that there is very much a future where people will want to travel around and therefore whether that means cars or aircraft, that demand is not disappearing," he said.

Sky is no longer the limit

With constant technological innovation it seems that the future of luxury travel will continue to offer a wide range of options to fit a wide range of desires.

Several transportation and travel brands are considering the future as well, and the steps to take to implement similar groundbreaking products.

Luxury automakers are going beyond ground transportation to better meet future customer demand for urban air mobility in an elevated fashion. Aston Martin and Porsche have both launched partnerships centered on the creation of consumer-manned or concept aircraft, extending their sports car driving experience to flying ([see story](#)).

British automaker Jaguar Land Rover has created a new system that it hopes will increase consumer trust in autonomous vehicles as the development of self-driving cars continues.

As automakers continue to invest resources into self-driving vehicles, consumers are still apprehensive about the new technology, particularly about sharing the road with autonomous cars. Jaguar is testing new projection pods that are designed as one way to help ease drivers' concerns ([see story](#)).

The future of luxury travel relies on ample options for consumers that give them the freedom to be and do what they wish.

"It is about personal choice, it is about having the ability to then customize to personalize to bespoke, your personal autonomous vehicle," Aston Martin's Mr. Reichman said. "Because at the end of the day, everybody wants to make whatever they own their own."

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