

IN-STORE

Rolls-Royce targets blooming Asia-Pacific market in boutique expansion

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By TRICIA CARR

British automaker Rolls-Royce Motor Cars is keeping its brand top-of-mind with trend-savvy, affluent consumers in Thailand through a new boutique experience set to open in the fourth quarter of this year.

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The new Rolls-Royce Central Bangkok boutique will be the first of its kind in Asia. The automaker has additional plans expand its presence in Thailand due to strong interest from consumers in the emerging market, which seems to welcome status brands with open arms, experts say.

“Rolls-Royce understands that Asia has a lot more opportunities than just China,” said Milton Pedraza, CEO of the [Luxury Institute](#), New York. “It has large populations that are growing in their economic and demographic profiles.

“The slowdown in China, while it is still a wonderful opportunity, is causing the brand to move further out,” he said. “Now you have to open your eyes a little wider, and you will find out that Asia is much bigger than China with a tremendous amount of growth opportunity.

“There is a proliferation of wealth in those countries as well, and they may have ups and

downs, but these countries continue to have a strong, young population with great opportunities for luxury brands.”

Mr. Pedraza is not affiliated with Rolls-Royce, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Rolls-Royce could not comment before press deadline.

Bangkok boutique

Rolls-Royce is following up the opening of a two-story showroom at Central Plaza Rama 3 in Bangkok, with its new Central Bangkok-based boutique.

The boutique will offer Rolls-Royce products that will complement the existing showroom. It will be located in Siam Paragon, an upscale shopping mall, and will be the first of its kind to be located in a luxury retail center.

The concept store “allows us to reach a broader audience who will be able to view first-hand why the elegance, quality and craftsmanship of our cars earn them the title of the ‘best cars in the world,” per Rolls-Royce CEO Torsten Müller-Ötvös, who is in the midst of a four-city tour of Asia-Pacific.

Meanwhile, the Rolls-Royce seven-car showroom at Rama 3 was the first in Asia-Pacific to have two stories and an underground consumer parking lot. It also has an exclusive delivery room for customers.

There are currently 27 Rolls-Royce showrooms in Asia-Pacific.



ROLLS-ROYCE MOTOR CARS
GHOST SIX SENSES CONCEPT

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Rolls-Royce Ghost Six Senses concept car

“Emerging markets will drive the growth of luxury for the foreseeable future,” said Chris Ramey, president of **Affluent Insights**, Miami. “China may be slowing, but there are other opportunities in Asia and certainly Thailand is on that list.

“Rolls-Royce will be successful because it is a niche player,” he said. “Before it seriously considers a market, it identifies its best prospects and knows on a granular basis its opportunities.”

Perhaps Rolls-Royce will approach Thailand with a strategy that it used to build relationships with China’s elite.

The automaker met with the China Entrepreneur Club, a group comprising the most prominent and important businessmen in the market, to tour through Britain in July.

Given that China was the No. 1 sales market for Rolls-Royce last year, the automaker was likely attempting to maintain this relationship through close, personal contact ([see story](#)).

Eastern strategy

There is potential in Thailand that luxury marketers should consider.

“In Thailand, there has always been a culture of luxury,” Luxury Institute’s Mr. Pedraza said. “As more money flows and there is more communication in the world including the Internet and social media, consumers have access to the best products in the world.

“Rolls-Royce and brands of that hilt are well-known and should seek out those consumers,” he said.

Emerging markets in Asia-Pacific seem to be hot-spots for luxury travel brands.

For instance, Starwood Hotels & Resorts’ Luxury Collection is establishing 10 new properties in the Asia-Pacific region in 12 months, likely due to the surge in luxury spending in the East and to familiarize affluent residents with the brand.

Destinations include Shanghai and Sanya, China; Jaipur and Chennai, India; the Blue Mountains, Australia; Koh Samui, Thailand; and Jakarta, Indonesia ([see story](#)).

In addition, Ritz-Carlton Hotel Co. has a presence in eight major Chinese provinces and is planning to add another branded property in Changdu by 2013 as part of a \$2 billion expansion.

Other locations where the Ritz-Carlton is planning to expand in the next few years include Puerto Rico, Panama, Egypt, Thailand, Japan and Morocco ([see story](#)).

The culture in Thailand lets luxury marketers thrive, per Affluent Insights’ Mr. Ramey.

“Thailand is a beautiful country and is attractive to the affluent,” Mr. Ramey said. “It has a free-enterprise economy and has a pro-investment government.

“It welcomes global companies like Rolls-Royce, and it is notoriously generous to the affluent,” he said.

Final Take

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