

COMMERCE

## Bentley takes fight to Range Rover with \$700M SUV investment

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By JEN KING

British automaker Bentley Motors is extending its product line by creating a new sport utility vehicle, a decision that was championed by its fans and customers.

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The first ever Bentley SUV will be produced at Bentley's headquarters in Crewe, England. The brand made the announcement via its social media, which is likely to create excitement within the luxury car community and fans of the automaker.

"The response from Bentley owners and customers shows us that the demand for a high-end SUV combining practicality and versatility with luxury and high performance is strong," said Graeme Russell, head of public relations and communications for [Bentley Motors](#), Herndon, VA.

"This car will appeal to all our existing markets – and has the potential to increase Bentley's presence in new markets too," he said.

"It offers a further interpretation of the all-wheel-drive Grand Touring luxury Bentley, and is a natural progression for the brand."

Green means go

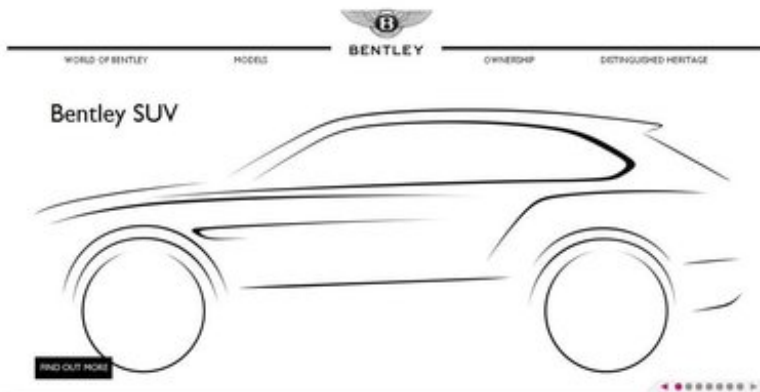
Bentley Motors plans to invest more than \$1 billion for the development of the newest

Bentley models over the next three years.

The SUV model will go into production in 2015 at Bentley's historic factory in Crewe.

Bentley's SUV will be the fourth model available for purchase. The SUV will join Bentley's three existing models: the Mulsanne, the Flying Spur and the Continental GT.

The Bentley SUV will be competing against Jaguar Land Rover's Range Rover, Porsche's Cayenne, BMW's X Series, Mercedes' G- and M-Classes and Lexus' RX, GX and LX SUVs.



### *Bentley's Web site announcing the SUV*

The automaker's plans to design an SUV will create more than 1,000 new positions at Bentley and secure existing jobs in Britain's auto manufacturing sector.

Bentley's SUV will be made to the same standards of existing models.

During a 15-month survey, Bentley discovered that brand enthusiasts showed an increased interest in an SUV option. Bentley's decision seems to be a direct result from the positive feedback that the brand received from its customers.

The SUV concept likely comes in response to increased competition from other luxury automakers with SUVs already on the market.

Consumers are encouraged to register on the Bentley Web site for news related to the Bentley SUV.



### *Bentley and British Prime Minister share news with followers*

The announcement has been publicized on Facebook, Bentley's Web site and Twitter where British Prime Minister David Cameron revealed in the news.

"Designing a Bentley SUV is a genius idea," said Lauren Fix, automotive expert and author of "[Lauren Fix's Guide to Loving Your Car](#)," Lancaster, NY. "The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge left the hospital with their newborn in a Range Rover. It could have been a Bentley SUV.

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/hBsGN6\\_P8PQ](http://www.youtube.com/embed/hBsGN6_P8PQ)

*The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge leaving hospital in a Range Rover*

"Other high-end car brands have expanded their range into the SUV market," she said. "Why would Bentley want to give up that slice of the pie?"

"The interior design won't suffer from this shared technology, we can expect the same hand-stitched leather and wood interiors Bentley is famous for in its SUV model."

New car on the block

Luxury automakers are likely to introduce new models or special features as a way to stay relevant in an ever-changing industry dictated by consumer habits and automobile technology.

For example, Jaguar Land Rover is persuading affluent consumers that the vehicles are a must for any collection with an insert advertisement in the July issue of Time Inc.'s Fortune magazine to persuade affluent consumers.

The British automaker's ad invites readers to download mobile applications, schedule test-drives and explore multimedia options, and also enlists Road & Track former editor in chief Thomas Bryant to convince readers to learn more about the Jaguar F-Type. Simple directions teamed with full shots of the car and an in-depth exposition may appeal to several types of consumers who engage with ads in different ways ([see story](#)).

Similarly, Italian automaker Maserati teamed up with high-end audio specialist Bowers & Wilkins for the Seven Notes Tour to introduce the 805 Maserati Edition speakers and ignite global interest in the Quattroporte vehicle.

The automaker is traveling the globe to throw parties in honor of the Quattroporte and its partnership with Bowers & Wilkins. Transforming the engine's sounds into conceptual music and structuring the tour around this premise will likely attract a younger, nightlife-oriented crowd ([see story](#)).

Introducing a new model to the Bentley portfolio is sure to garner financial success for the automaker.

"The SUV project is a hugely significant one for Bentley and the company will invest more than \$700 million in the total development of the SUV," Mr. Russell said. "This new model will leverage the success of the global SUV market and is a key element of the strategy to sell 15,000 cars per year."

"In turn, this will balance profit and investment in the years ahead and deliver sustainable business growth."

Final Take

*Jen King, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

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