India's EV Boom is Testing a Different Kind of Partnership

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India’s EV market may have reached the point where selling the car is only half the job, but the harder part may be making sure customers can live with it comfortably after the test drive.

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Electric passenger-vehicle registrations rose 50% year on year to 30,325 in August, taking EV penetration to 7.4%, according to Vahan[1]. And as EVs become more common, the dealership itself is taking on a bigger role in the ownership experience.

A conventional car buyer can usually walk into a traditional dealership with a rough idea of how the machine works. EVs come with a few more question marks. How should the battery be charged? What does ownership cost? What happens when a software issue appears? And where is the nearest technician who knows what to do?

Those questions also matter to dealers—especially those that want to have all their bases covered—because answering them well requires training, equipment and a workable business model. FADA’s 2025 Dealer Satisfaction Study surveyed more than 1,800 dealer principals representing nearly 5,000 outlets. After-sales service emerged as the most important factor in dealer satisfaction, followed by business viability and policy, while inventory, margins and training costs were among the concerns affecting dealers.

Against that backdrop, the latest FADA study offers an interesting EV-specific signal. VinFast ranked No. 1 among electric passenger-vehicle OEMs in dealer satisfaction. The study measures dealers’ perceptions and experiences in their engagement with OEMs, making the ranking less a measure of the cars themselves and more a snapshot of the relationship between an automaker and its retail partners.

That relationship becomes especially important when an EV maker is trying to build a network at the same time as it builds a customer base. VinFast recently opened its 60th dealership in Patna, a 3S facility bringing sales, after-sales service and customer support together. The company plans to reach 75 dealerships across more than 60 cities by the end of 2026, with the network extending into tier-2 and tier-3 markets. It has also signed with multiple Indian banks to support inventory financing, a crucial part of the dealer equation as new outlets require dealers to put more capital behind a growing stock of vehicles.

The push beyond India’s biggest cities also points to the next challenge for EV adoption: making ownership feel accessible wherever the buyer lives. The next wave of buyers will come from cities where the nearest service centre may be more important than another 20 kilometres of claimed range. A familiar local face can sometimes do more for confidence than another feature on a specification sheet.

Building that network, however, is not simply a matter of putting up more signs and opening more showrooms. As EVs spread into more cities, dealers have to become comfortable selling a technology that many of their customers are still learning about themselves. That means training sales teams, preparing technicians and making sure the service operation can keep pace with the sales operation.

The result is a “same same but different” kind of relationship between an automaker and its dealers, where the satisfaction of that relationship can bear fruit for both sides. A dealer that feels supported has more reason to invest in training, service capacity and inventory, while an OEM with a well-supported network has a better chance of reaching customers beyond the biggest cities. Coming back to the example of VinFast, it has built a nationwide dealer network in less than two years in India and is now among the country’s top five EV automakers. Its No. 1 ranking in FADA’s latest study does not explain that growth on its own, but it offers a useful indication of how the company’s relationship with its dealers may be supporting the expansion.

(1) www.financialexpress.com/business/industry-electric-passenger-vehicle-registrations-rise-50-in-august-4329815