

# The Telegraph

calcutta, india

| Sunday, February 7, 2016 |

## Graphiti

[Frontpage](#) » [Graphiti](#) » [Story](#)

Like 1 Tweet G+1 0

### A mass movement

*Technology is making its way into budget, mass market cars faster than ever before, says **Abhijit Mitra***



The top model of the Renault Kwid (above) sells for around Rs 4 lakh and is the first model at this price to get a touch-screen infotainment system





There's a change coming over mass market cars — from entry level hatchbacks to the small sedans. Manufacturers are increasingly loading them up with features that, till recently, were the highly trumpeted offerings from luxury carmakers. Now, similar features are available in cars at price points that even first-time car buyers will find easy on the pocket.

Take multiple driving modes, for instance. This feature allows drivers to choose from a range of settings spanning from economy (highest fuel efficiency) through comfort (regular driving) to sport (most responsive). One of the first cars to sport this technology was the BMW 3 series less than half a decade ago.

A little over the year ago Tata Motors installed a very similar feature in the Zest sedan, and, more recently, in the GenX Nano. And while the 3 Series costs upwards of Rs 30 lakh, the GenX Nano comes for less than a tenth of its price at a shade over Rs 3 lakh.

Nonetheless, the cost of this feature had to be brought down to fit the GenX Nanos. Says Girish Wagh, senior vice-president, Tata Motors: "To create the various driving modes, how the car responds to driver inputs is changed electronically using additional software."





The multi-function steering wheel in Tata's budget car Zica (above) lets the driver control the audio system as well as take or reject phone calls



He elaborates that today a lot of technology is used to drive all cars. For instance, information on how far the accelerator is being pressed is conveyed electronically to the engine and gears are selected electronically depending on the car's speed and the driving conditions that are judged using sensors. This is the information that's used by the multi-drive mode too.

V.G. Ramakrishnan, managing director, Aventure Advisors, a consultancy company, estimates that the incremental cost of this feature is low as just five per cent to seven per cent additional software and little in terms of material is needed to create this feature. In fact, he says: "With fuel efficiency norms getting tighter, most cars will have to use the same or similar technologies to meet them. The difference will be in engine size and capacity."

Adds Abdul Majeed, national automotive leader at consultancy company PwC: "Very soon, the difference between luxury cars and others will be in styling, power and space. Electronic technology differences will vanish."

The electronic start-stop technology in the top spec of the just-launched Mahindra KUV100, the automaker's smallest SUV that sells at about Rs 7 lakh, appears to reflect that trend. This feature cuts off the engine when it stops at, say, a traffic signal and the gear is shifted to neutral. Then it

starts up as soon as the clutch is depressed to shift gears and move ahead. The idea is to save the fuel that would have been burned during idling and, thus, improve fuel efficiency.



The electronic start-stop feature helps Mahindra's smallest SUV, the KUV100 (above), improve fuel efficiency by cutting off the engine when the vehicle stops at traffic signals



This technology first made its appearance in India a few years ago and even today, luxury car makers such as Mercedes-Benz and BMW flaunt it as a feature in top-end cars such as the S-Class or the 7 Series, which cost more than 10 times what the KUV100 does.

Then of course, there's the touch-screen 'infotainment' system. This was a high-end feature which has steadily been making its way down the price ladder. Now, it's available in a car like the Renault Kwid, which is priced under Rs 4 lakh. Living up to the "info" in its name, apart from providing the usual radio and music, it offers navigation, maps and allows mobile phones to sync with it, among other things.

Says Majeed: “A vehicle is a device now and not just meant for mobility. People think of what they can do in the car and in terms of its productivity.” Wagh says that with lots of devices using components like touch-screens they are becoming cheap enough to put into budget cars.

Software, and some hardware, is making features like the multifunction steering wheel common. This has buttons to control the infotainment system and use the phone. The technology has trickled down even to cars like the Maruti Celerio that’s priced around Rs 4 lakh and the soon to be launched Tata Zica in the same bracket.

Contrast the speed with which all of this technology has reached the mass market with the reluctance of car companies in India to equip cars with airbags, for instance. While the technology has been around for a long time, it is only recently that companies like Maruti have made airbags available in lower variants of their models as an option.

Other companies, like Honda and Hyundai have started making them standard fitment for certain models and everyone’s expecting that tighter safety regulations are coming that will make airbags mandatory on all cars. Explaining the lag, Ramakrishnan says: “Airbags cost more to put into a car than software.”

Two big drivers of technology adoption, safety and emission rules, coupled with falling prices of electronics are helping carmakers load up their budget offerings with more convenience and economy for the buyer — who’s laughing all the way to the dealerships.”

---

Like 1

Tweet

G+1 0

---

## IN PRINT

### The Look

*Suparna Trikha Dewan has natural solutions to all your beauty problems*

### Star Track

*Kusum Bhandari on the week ahead*

### Survival Strategies

*Suhel Seth has an unconventional take on personal problems - and their solutions*

---

## MORE STORIES

### Smokin’ hot

You could say he’s the rock star of the cigar world. Nobody gave non-resident Indian Rocky ‘Rakesh’... [Read»](#)

---

### One from the heart

How about surprising your special one with a quirky designer bag? Or, would you like to see her... [Read»](#)

---

### Blast from the past

Food, as we know, is not just to be eaten, but to be seen as well. Chefs have been focusing on the... [Read»](#)

---

### A heritage high

You stand warned if you've allocated just a day to Hoi An in Vietnam for it's going to be hard to... [Read»](#)

---

### A healing touch

Did you know that rhinoplasty or nose surgery was first done in ancient India as described in the... [Read»](#)

---

### A creative edge

I've seen it happen in way too many households, once-prized iPads gathering dust. Blame it on the... [Read»](#)

---

### Striking the high notes

The first turning point in my life came when my father sang the song Ek Pyar Ka Nagma Hai from the... [Read»](#)

---

6%  
off

[SmartFish Hard Disk Drive Case Covers ...](#)  
MRP: ~~Rs. 299.00~~ **Rs. 279.00**

# The Telegraph

calcutta, india

| Sunday, February 7, 2016 |

## Graphiti

[Frontpage](#) » [Graphiti](#) » [Story](#)

Like 1 Tweet G+1 0

### A mass movement

*Technology is making its way into budget, mass market cars faster than ever before, says **Abhijit Mitra***



The top model of the Renault Kwid (above) sells for around Rs 4 lakh and is the first model at this price to get a touch-screen infotainment system



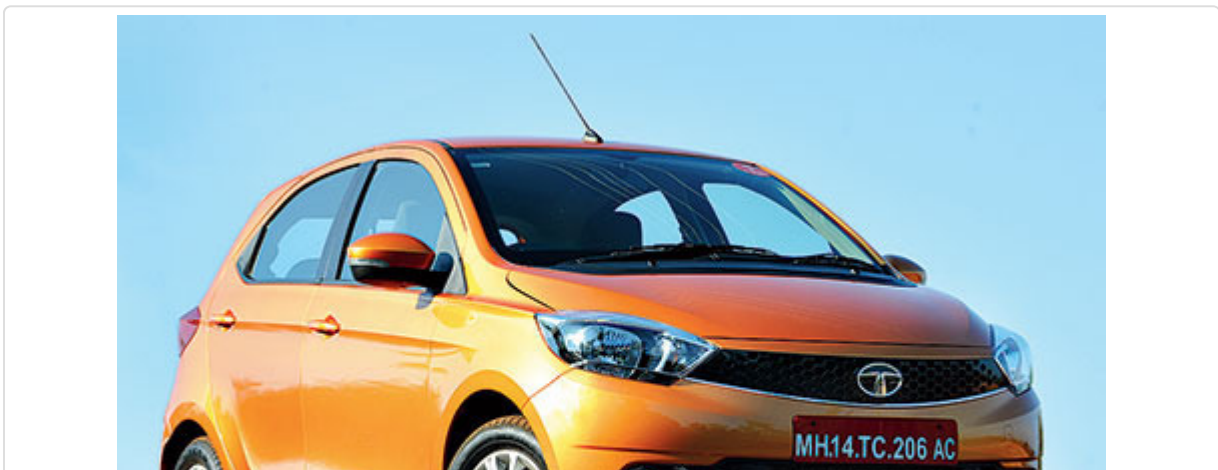


There's a change coming over mass market cars — from entry level hatchbacks to the small sedans. Manufacturers are increasingly loading them up with features that, till recently, were the highly trumpeted offerings from luxury carmakers. Now, similar features are available in cars at price points that even first-time car buyers will find easy on the pocket.

Take multiple driving modes, for instance. This feature allows drivers to choose from a range of settings spanning from economy (highest fuel efficiency) through comfort (regular driving) to sport (most responsive). One of the first cars to sport this technology was the BMW 3 series less than half a decade ago.

A little over the year ago Tata Motors installed a very similar feature in the Zest sedan, and, more recently, in the GenX Nano. And while the 3 Series costs upwards of Rs 30 lakh, the GenX Nano comes for less than a tenth of its price at a shade over Rs 3 lakh.

Nonetheless, the cost of this feature had to be brought down to fit the GenX Nanos. Says Girish Wagh, senior vice-president, Tata Motors: "To create the various driving modes, how the car responds to driver inputs is changed electronically using additional software."







The multi-function steering wheel in Tata's budget car Zica (above) lets the driver control the audio system as well as take or reject phone calls



He elaborates that today a lot of technology is used to drive all cars. For instance, information on how far the accelerator is being pressed is conveyed electronically to the engine and gears are selected electronically depending on the car's speed and the driving conditions that are judged using sensors. This is the information that's used by the multi-drive mode too.

V.G. Ramakrishnan, managing director, Aventure Advisors, a consultancy company, estimates that the incremental cost of this feature is low as just five per cent to seven per cent additional software and little in terms of material is needed to create this feature. In fact, he says: "With fuel efficiency norms getting tighter, most cars will have to use the same or similar technologies to meet them. The difference will be in engine size and capacity."

Adds Abdul Majeed, national automotive leader at consultancy company PwC: "Very soon, the difference between luxury cars and others will be in styling, power and space. Electronic technology differences will vanish."

The electronic start-stop technology in the top spec of the just-launched Mahindra KUV100, the automaker's smallest SUV that sells at about Rs 7 lakh, appears to reflect that trend. This feature cuts off the engine when it stops at, say, a traffic signal and the gear is shifted to neutral. Then it

starts up as soon as the clutch is depressed to shift gears and move ahead. The idea is to save the fuel that would have been burned during idling and, thus, improve fuel efficiency.



The electronic start-stop feature helps Mahindra's smallest SUV, the KUV100 (above), improve fuel efficiency by cutting off the engine when the vehicle stops at traffic signals



This technology first made its appearance in India a few years ago and even today, luxury car makers such as Mercedes-Benz and BMW flaunt it as a feature in top-end cars such as the S-Class or the 7 Series, which cost more than 10 times what the KUV100 does.

Then of course, there's the touch-screen 'infotainment' system. This was a high-end feature which has steadily been making its way down the price ladder. Now, it's available in a car like the Renault Kwid, which is priced under Rs 4 lakh. Living up to the "info" in its name, apart from providing the usual radio and music, it offers navigation, maps and allows mobile phones to sync with it, among other things.

Says Majeed: “A vehicle is a device now and not just meant for mobility. People think of what they can do in the car and in terms of its productivity.” Wagh says that with lots of devices using components like touch-screens they are becoming cheap enough to put into budget cars.

Software, and some hardware, is making features like the multifunction steering wheel common. This has buttons to control the infotainment system and use the phone. The technology has trickled down even to cars like the Maruti Celerio that’s priced around Rs 4 lakh and the soon to be launched Tata Zica in the same bracket.

Contrast the speed with which all of this technology has reached the mass market with the reluctance of car companies in India to equip cars with airbags, for instance. While the technology has been around for a long time, it is only recently that companies like Maruti have made airbags available in lower variants of their models as an option.

Other companies, like Honda and Hyundai have started making them standard fitment for certain models and everyone’s expecting that tighter safety regulations are coming that will make airbags mandatory on all cars. Explaining the lag, Ramakrishnan says: “Airbags cost more to put into a car than software.”

Two big drivers of technology adoption, safety and emission rules, coupled with falling prices of electronics are helping carmakers load up their budget offerings with more convenience and economy for the buyer — who’s laughing all the way to the dealerships.”

Like 1

Tweet

G+1 0

---

## IN PRINT

### The Look

*Suparna Trikha Dewan has natural solutions to all your beauty problems*

### Star Track

*Kusum Bhandari on the week ahead*

### Survival Strategies

*Suhel Seth has an unconventional take on personal problems - and their solutions*

---

## MORE STORIES

### Smokin’ hot

You could say he’s the rock star of the cigar world. Nobody gave non-resident Indian Rocky ‘Rakesh’... [Read»](#)

---

### One from the heart

How about surprising your special one with a quirky designer bag? Or, would you like to see her... [Read»](#)

---

### Blast from the past

Food, as we know, is not just to be eaten, but to be seen as well. Chefs have been focusing on the... [Read»](#)

---

### A heritage high

You stand warned if you've allocated just a day to Hoi An in Vietnam for it's going to be hard to... [Read»](#)

---

### A healing touch

Did you know that rhinoplasty or nose surgery was first done in ancient India as described in the... [Read»](#)

---

### A creative edge

I've seen it happen in way too many households, once-prized iPads gathering dust. Blame it on the... [Read»](#)

---

### Striking the high notes

The first turning point in my life came when my father sang the song Ek Pyar Ka Nagma Hai from the... [Read»](#)

---

6%  
off

[SmartFish Hard Disk Drive Case Covers ...](#)  
MRP: ~~Rs. 299.00~~ **Rs. 279.00**