

Volkswagen unveils electric luxury sedan at China auto show

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Volkswagen's ID.7 Vizzion, its new electric flagship sedan, is unveiled in a world premiere on the eve of the Auto Shanghai 2023 show in Shanghai, China, Monday, April 17, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan

Volkswagen unveiled an electric luxury sedan that promises a 700-kilometer (435-mile) battery range as global and Chinese automakers displayed their latest SUVs, sedans and muscle cars Tuesday at the world's biggest auto show.

Auto Shanghai 2023 reflects the intense competition in China's fast-growing electric vehicle market after the ruling Communist Party poured billions of dollars into promoting the technology. China accounted for two-thirds of global electrics sales last year.

Brands including General Motors, BMW and Nissan and Chinese rivals BYD Auto and NIO unveiled dozens of new EVs in the cavernous Shanghai exhibition center. Brands touted faster charging, satellite-linked navigation and entertainment, and the future possibility of self-driving technology.

Volkswagen's ID.7 sedan, the new flagship model for its electric vehicles, was one of 28 models displayed by the German automaker, half of them electrified.

"We are turbo-charging our electric campaign," said the CEO of VW's passenger car brand, Thomas Schaefer, who rode onto the stage aboard an electric minibus. Schaefer said VW plans to release another 10 electric models in the next three years.

The show is the auto industry's first full-scale sales event in its biggest market since 2019 following the end of anti-virus controls in December that blocked most travel into and out of China.



Models in wedding gowns showcase the Ora Funky Cat EV car model by Great Wall Motor during the Auto Shanghai 2023 at the National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai, China, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology.

Automakers are looking to China to drive sales growth at a time of [slack American and European demand](#), but that requires then to pour money into creating competitive models that can appeal to Chinese buyers in a crowded market.

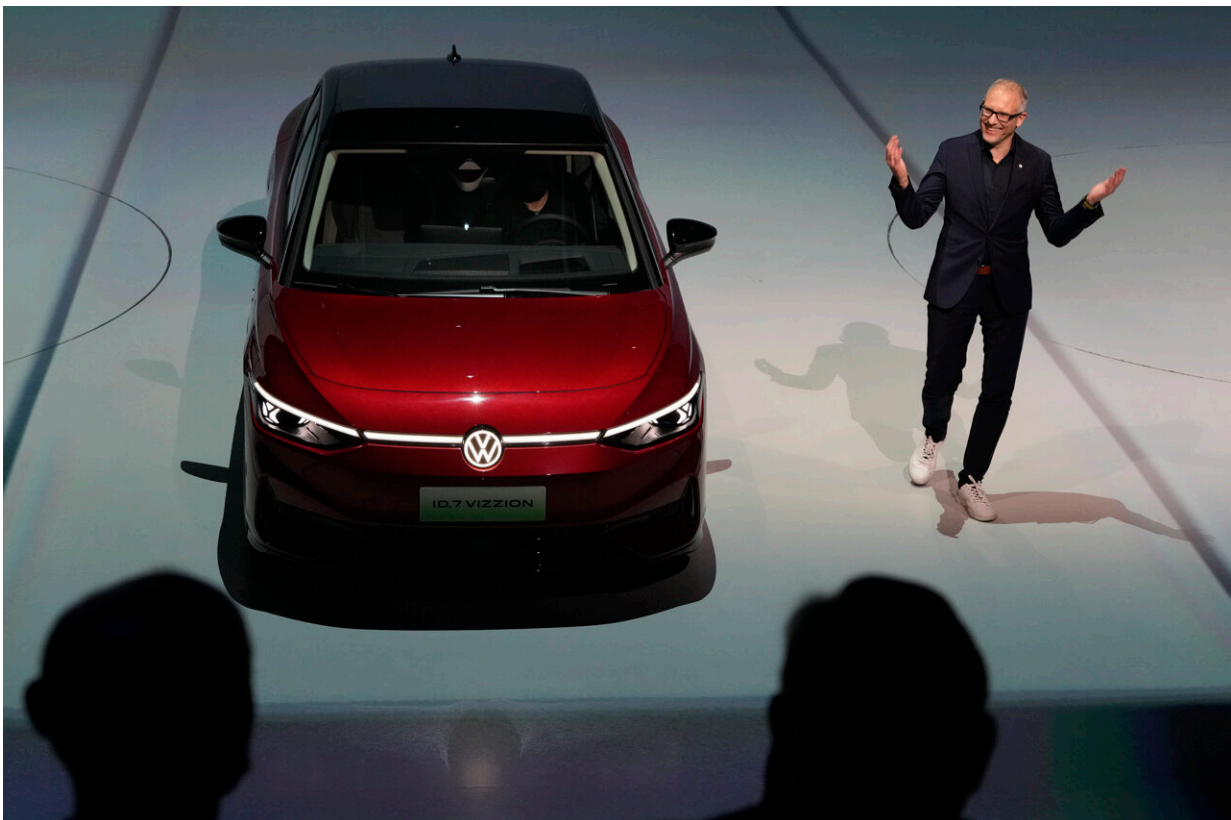
Established global brands face pressure from ambitious Chinese

newcomers and to meet government sales quotas for electrics. Many are forming partnerships to split soaring development costs.

China is "playing a leading role in the industry's electric and digital transformation," said Ford Motor Co. CEO Jim Farley in a recorded message played on a video screen.

Electrics accounted for just over a quarter of the 23.6 million SUVs, sedans and minivans sold last year in China while sales of traditional gasoline-powered vehicles declined.

GM debuted an electric SUV, the Buick Electra E5, ahead of the auto show. Toyota Motor Co. unveiled two new models for its bZ line of zero-emissions vehicles. Honda Motor Co. premiered a new prototype for its China-focused electric brand, e:N.



CEO of Volkswagen China Passenger Cars Brand Stefan Mecha unveils the ID.7 Vizzion, its new electric flagship sedan in a world premiere on the eve of the Auto Shanghai 2023 show in Shanghai, China, Monday, April 17, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan

Toyota also displayed a prototype self-driving taxi developed with China's Pony.ai, a leading competitor in the country's fast-evolving autonomous vehicle industry.

Chinese luxury electric brand NIO Inc., which competes with Tesla Inc. at the premium end of the market, unveiled its latest SUV, the ES6, and an update of its flagship sedan, the ET7. Both have digital cockpits and an onboard computer with connections for tablet computers and other devices.

BMW AG showed an all-electric lineup including two new models, the i7 M70L and XM Label Red. The German sport luxury brand's M760Le had its China debut.

Automakers also highlighted China's growing role as a source of exports and innovation, especially EVs.

NIO and BYD Auto are among a growing group of Chinese EV brands that are starting to sell in foreign markets. BYD Auto exports to Europe and opened a dealership in Japan this year. NIO started selling in Europe in 2021 and says it plans to serve 25 countries by 2025.



Journalists film the NIO es6, its new electric flagship SUV after unveiled by NIO Chairman William Li during the press day of the Auto Shanghai 2023 at the National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai, China, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan

Global brands all have design centers in China and increasingly are drawing on Chinese talent for engineering, software and other development.

VW is adding as many as 2,000 employees to a research and development center in the eastern city of Anhui to work on "intelligent connected vehicles," Schaefer said. He said a separate software unit would add up to 1,200 employees this year.

"We are gaining innovative strength by taking on local R&D responsibility," Schaefer said. "Our guiding principle: Developing in China for China."

The organizers said automakers would debut 100 new models, 70 of them electric, according to Chinese media.

Drivers in China bought 5.4 million all-electric vehicles last year—about two-thirds of the global total of 8 million—plus 1.5 million gasoline-electric hybrids. This year's EV sales are forecast to rise another 30%.



Attendees and journalists watch NIO Chairman William Li unveil the es6, its new electric flagship SUV during the press day of the Auto Shanghai 2023 at the National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai, China, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan

Beijing is winding down government support and shifting the burden to automakers by requiring them to earn credits for EV sales.

China's BYD Auto, which competes with Tesla for the title of world's biggest-selling EV brand, displayed the U9 supercar from its luxury Yangwang brand and an SUV, the U8. The automaker says the U9, with a 1-million-yuan (\$145,000) sticker price, can accelerate from zero to 100 kph (60 mph) in two seconds.

Another Chinese EV brand, Aion, part of state-owned GAC, announced rapid charging technology it said needs as little as five minutes to power up a battery to go 200 kilometers (120 miles).

Aion also unveiled a system it said can remove a drained battery and install a fresh one in as little as two minutes. The company said that would be quicker than filling a gasoline tank, eliminating a drawback to EV ownership.



An executive of BMW speaks as he unveils a BMW iX1, its new electric flagship SUV during the press day of the Auto Shanghai 2023 at the National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai, China, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan

China's auto sales peaked in 2017 at 24.7 million but collapsed in 2020 to 20.2 million after dealerships closed as part of efforts to contain COVID-19. They are recovering but have yet to return to the pre-pandemic level.

For drivers who aren't ready to give up fossil fuels, state-owned BAIC unveiled a hulking, American-style pickup truck, the Mars, with a 6.8-liter diesel engine. The company boasted that with its flaring wheel wells, the Mars is 2.1 meters (6.9 feet) wide.

The ruling party's support for EV development is part of plans to gain wealth and global influence by transforming China into a creator of profitable technologies.

That campaign has strained relations with Washington and other trading partners, which are [cutting off access to advanced processor chips](#) used by makers of smartphones, electric cars and other high-tech products. China's own foundries can supply low-end chips used in many cars but not processors for artificial intelligence and other advanced functions.



Attendees film the BMW's new electric flagship models after being unveiled in the press day of the Auto Shanghai 2023 at the National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai, China, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



BMW's i7 M70, its new electric flagship sedan is unveiled in the press day of the Auto Shanghai 2023 at the National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai, China, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars

and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



Oliver Zipse, chairman of the Board of Management of BMW AG, speaks as he unveils the new Mini Concept Aceman during the press day of the Auto Shanghai 2023 at the National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai, China, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



A worker wipes an Ora, a Chinese-made electric car brand during the Auto Shanghai 2023 at the National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai, China, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



Visitors film models in wedding gowns showcasing the Ora, a Chinese-made electric car brand during the Auto Shanghai 2023 at the National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai, China, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



A chef and workers hang out near an advertisement for Volkswagen ID.3 on display at the National Exhibition and Convention Center during the Auto Shanghai 2023 in Shanghai, China, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



Floral decorations frame a car from Ora, a Chinese electric car brand during the Auto Shanghai 2023 show at the National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai, China, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



Nissan Executive Ashwani Gupta presents a concept car, Arizon during the Auto Shanghai 2023 show in Shanghai, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



Attendees pass by an advertisement for Nissan cars during the Auto Shanghai 2023 show in Shanghai, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



Attendees look at the es6, the latest electric vehicle from Chinese automaker NIO during the Auto Shanghai 2023 show in Shanghai, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP
Photo/Ng Han Guan



Attendees look at the Nissan Max-Out concept car displayed during the Auto Shanghai 2023 show in Shanghai, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



Ford presents its latest Explorer vehicle during the Auto Shanghai 2023 show in Shanghai, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



Chinese automaker BYD presents its latest cars during the Auto Shanghai 2023 show in Shanghai, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



Attendees take part in virtual reality experiences at the Auto Shanghai 2023 show in Shanghai, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



Oliver Zipse, chairman of the Board of management of BMW AG talks about a digital concept system Dee for BMW during the Auto Shanghai 2023 show in Shanghai, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



Attendees watch a presentation at the Nissan booth during the Auto Shanghai 2023 show in Shanghai, Tuesday, April 18, 2023. Global and Chinese automakers plan to unveil more than a dozen new electric SUVs, sedans and muscle cars this week at the Shanghai auto show, their first full-scale sales event in four years in a market that has become a workshop for developing electrics, self-driving cars and other technology. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan

Sales of gasoline-electric hybrids and all-electric vehicles rose 26.2% over a year ago in the first three months of 2023 to 1.6 million, according to the China Association of Auto Manufacturers. Sales of purely electric vehicles rose 14.4% to 1.2 million while hybrids increased 75.1% to 433,000.

Tesla and some other brands cut prices by 5% to 15% starting in January

after sales growth slowed, though to still-robust levels compared with the slack U.S. and European markets. That prompted warnings that the squeeze on an industry with dozens of fledgling brands might force smaller automakers into mergers or out of business.

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