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For your electric car, will you take a European, an American, or an Asian?

How nice it is to see Europe being so desirable! It seems to be at the heart of all the world's car manufacturers attention, and more specifically those who are trying to conquer the hearts and garages of electric car enthusiasts. Whether they come from the United States or Asia, manufacturers, sometimes still start-ups, are making Europe a key part of their strategy and are keen to offer an added value that is different from their European competitors. The battle is on.

It has taken only a decade or so to put Tesla on the automotive map. As auto journalist Lawrence Ulrich writes in Forbes Wheels, now Tesla's Model S is getting as much attention as a Toyota Camry. What's really new now is opting for a neo-car manufacturer, whether it's a subsidiary of an industrial giant - like many Asians - or a start-up, as we see emerging in the US.

Their common point? Focus on electric vehicles and try to remove the obstacles that still exist around their use. Take the Chinese company Nio. At the end of December 2021, it announced

at its major annual event, Nio Day, that it wanted to penetrate 25 new markets by 2025, including Sweden and Germany. One of the cornerstones of its offering is its electric battery rental proposition, called Battery as a Service. No more worries about loss of autonomy or obsolescence.

Surge on Europe

Nothing says that Nio will win the European market, as many Asian manufacturers are currently structuring their offer and their range to adapt it to this market.

In the high-end electric segment, Voyah, a subsidiary of Dongfeng launched in 2021, will make its first appearance on the streets of Oslo next June, before heading to France in one or two years. Almost the same schedule for Vietnamese VinFast, barely older than Voyah: this subsidiary of a Vietnamese conglomerate was created in 2018. It announced at the CES in Las Vegas its intention to market its vehicles in France, Germany and the Netherlands from the end of the year. Proof of its European ambition, it also plans to open a factory in Germany dedicated to electric vehicles. As for the European expansion of the Chinese company Xpeng, which wants to be a rival to Tesla, it is described by some observers as "aggressive". It is banking on its in-house technology to make a difference. An argument that it will have to make against another Chinese rival, Great Wall, also adept at technology - augmented reality and facial recognition in the vehicle are some examples. And he hides nothing of his European ambitions: 'Chinese car makers now have the courage and ability to tackle European brands head-on', as Great Wall Motors published at the last Munich Auto Show. As proof, last January, twelve of the twenty or so electric neo-manufacturers with ambitions in Europe registered vehicles there. The EV Volumes study centre on electric vehicles listed Polestar, MG, Hongqi, BYD, Nio, Xpeng, Aiyas, Maxus, Seres, Jac, Changan and Geely.

On the American side, the automotive sector is not escaping the wave of start-ups. One of the latest, set up by a former Tesla employee, is called Lucid. It offers nothing less than one of the longest-range electric cars in the world - alongside the Chinese GAC Aion V. It allows you to go from New York City to Cleveland, from Chicago to Kansa City or from Los Angeles to San Francisco without needing to recharge. A first. The model, which is worth \$170,000, is already sold out in the United States. How long will it take to export to Europe?

Seducing the European way

Some of these brands are beginning to find their audience, as shown by the sales of MG. After being bought out by a Chinese car group, the brand made its return to Europe just over 18 months ago, with a range of five vehicles, including four electric. In France, it is close to 5,000 vehicles sold in 2021 and is aiming to double this year, making France MG's largest European market outside the UK.

MG's range includes an SUV, a feature it shares with many of its Asian counterparts. Indeed, the competition seems to be crystallizing on the electric SUV offer. Global manufacturers have

taken the measure of European interest in these models, which reached a 50% market share on the continent last January, according to Jato. Vehicle quality, battery range, technology and price positioning are all criteria on which the competition is played out. A battle that should accelerate in the coming years, with the expansion of the ranges offered to Europeans. The question now is to know what type of offer manufacturers will go for.

Because soon, competition will force them to find additional and differentiating arguments to win over new customers. In addition to the vehicle itself, it is therefore likely that the focus will shift to the range of services that they will be able to offer drivers - all the more so since, as Caarea observes, European manufacturers have already made the development of services one of their priorities.

