

# Past gets a 2nd drive as carmakers revive legacy nameplates

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Mumbai, 7 December

Indian automobile (auto) makers are increasingly tapping into legacy nameplates to capture consumer attention, leveraging brand equity and nostalgia in a fiercely competitive market. This strategic reliance on established badges is emerging as a key tool for manufacturers to cut through the noise of dozens of new models.

Industry experts say this renewed emphasis on familiar badges is a logical response to a market crowded with dozens of new models and variants across segments. “Most of these brands have well-accepted equity, and the connection with customers gets established relatively faster, especially in an already crowded model portfolio,” said Srikumar Krishnamurthy, senior vice-president and co-group head, corporate sector ratings, Icra.

The marketing expenditure required to promote a revived nameplate is often considerably lower, making the approach attractive to automakers, he added.

The trend, which has strengthened in recent years, was seen with the recent Tata Motors decision to revive the Sierra, nearly three decades after the original model became a cult favourite. The Sierra comeback mirrors the revival of the Safari in 2021, which helped Tata re-establish its identity in the



**Tata Motors’ decision to revive the Sierra comes nearly three decades after the original model (left) became a cult favourite**

sport utility vehicle (SUV) segment among both older buyers who remembered the brand and younger consumers discovering it for the first time.

This strategy is not unique to Tata. Maruti Suzuki set the template years earlier with the Baleno, a sedan from the early 2000s that was reintroduced in



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2015 as a premium hatchback under the Nexa umbrella. The modern Baleno went on to become one of the company’s highest-selling models, proving that a known name can significantly shorten the time needed to build trust and familiarity.

Hyundai attempted something similar with the

Santro, one of India’s earliest mass-market hatchbacks, when it relaunched the model in 2018.

Mahindra, too, refreshed its iconic Scorpio nameplate through the Scorpio-N in 2022, even retaining the earlier version as the “Scorpio Classic” to preserve loyalty among existing customers.

Anurag Singh, advisor at Primus Partners, observed that reusing strong brands gives original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) an edge in a cluttered marketplace. “There are so many OEMs and each of them have many models, so brand strength is very important to stand out. It makes sense to reuse brands where equity already exists, and its persona matches the new product,” Singh said.

The industry has seen other legacy-inspired relaunches as well. Maruti Suzuki’s Grand Vitara revived a once-familiar name for the midsize SUV segment, while Mahindra’s Bolero Neo, though not a direct comeback, leveraged the appeal of the Bolero brand. However, analysts caution that not all revived models have resonated equally, as shifting consumer preferences and evolving design expectations can dilute nostalgia-driven appeal.

Still, given the rising clutter in the market and the increasing cost of customer acquisition, automakers appear set to double down on the formula, offering modern vehicles packaged under familiar, trusted, and emotionally resonant nameplates.