



An electric scooter designed and built by a start-up

The Ather journey – it will be nearly seven years since the company started – is one of India’s few local-bred product stories. For sure, it can’t be qualified as a success yet but in a country where services and retail trading start-ups are feted, Ather is one of a rare breed of companies taking aim at the physical products space hoping to vault into big-time leveraging new technology.



The context is well aligned: two-wheeler sales in India outpace that of cars 5:1 (bikes and scooters sell about 15 million a year, cars some three million) and offer a springboard for anyone who wants to take a shot at the product-pricing-distribution game. Throw in an emerging technology like Lithium-Ion batteries and design around it, it promises to be an exciting ride.

Still, Ather stands high and tall in the growing space with a DNA going back to research labs, a design built from scratch and a product that can 80% be traced to custom spec sheets. Will that give it customers and success as a scooter company? Time will tell. But its 7 year journey is all about learnings, sucker punches, small wins, big bets, uncharted paths, and an early positioning in a market that holds promise.

The company opines that “From a product fit perspective, there was no aspirational scooter out there in the market. Everyone is at the same place which is an Activa or a Jupiter. Whatever it is, they are exactly at the same spot and then there is Vespa, it doesn’t give you anything as a product other than the brand image attached to it. Bikes, on the other hand, had a wide range of 100cc ones all the way to Ninjas.”

Ather launched its first product on June 5, 2018. The scooter had comfortable seats, good leg space, seven-inch capacitive touchscreen display with good visibility, and a comfortable riding position. The power delivery feels instantaneous as soon as one turns the throttle. The lack of feedback – be it sound or feel from the engine – feels a bit strange especially to those used to traditional scooters or bikes.

Data is an integral part of your Ather scooter. It powers all the intelligent features like:

- On-board navigation with Google maps
- Over-the-air updates
- Diagnostics
- Ride history

Currently, the company has two models Ather 450X and 450 plus.

The scooter has a 7” capacitive touchscreen which the company claims is the gateway to an intelligent ride experience. The dashboard has a 1.3 GHz Snapdragon processor with integrated 4G LTE, new dark mode for round-the-clock visibility and a new Android Open Source OS. The dashboard also has Bluetooth connectivity. The scooter can be connected to



the mobile phone through an app, which lets one to know the charge status, help push navigation to the vehicle, view the ride patterns, get tips for improving vehicle performance and request for vehicle diagnostic.

The Ather scooters have an OTA (Over The Air) update feature which will allow the company to push updates and new features to the software that will improve the performance and functionality of the scooter. The OTA update feature helps the rider enjoy new features while the company can keep learning from the customers' ride patterns.

Ather is also planning another set of OTA updates around fleet learnings from the data the scooters on road will generate. The data collected will be around performance and parameters and other sensor data which also includes locations. In order to provide privacy for customers, the scooter has an anonymous mode which can be enabled from the dash which will prevent data points like locations to be shared.

Ather's 450X comes with a range of 85 km and top speed of 80 km/hour. It has a peak power output of 6 kW and can travel 0-40 km in 3.3 seconds. The vehicle comes with a high-capacity 2.9 kwh, Li-ion battery pack with a rated life of 50,000 km. The vehicle has a reverse mode to help glide out of tight parking spots. The vehicle also has fast charge feature by which it charges at 15 km in 10 minutes. The vehicle also comes with a portable charger that can be used to charge from any 5A power socket.

The scooter comes with 'guide me home' headlights, 22 L bootspace, auto turn-off indicators, side stand sensors, front and back disc brakes. The touchscreen dashboard is IP65 rated, which means it works fine in rains too. The vehicle's battery is IP67 rated. It means that the vehicle can go through 300 mm of water, if passing through waterlogged areas.

Ather 450X retails for ₹ 1,59,00, while 450 plus retails at ₹ 1,49,000. The price is inclusive of 3 year battery warranty and Ather Dot – home charger. The company also offers an optional add-on pack at ₹ 400/month which provides unlimited public charging, connected features & over-the-air software upgrades.

The company also has an option of only owning the scooter and not the battery. This option is available at ₹ 99,000 + battery subscription at ₹ 1699 per month. The battery can be replaced when it drops below 80% capacity.

The scooter will consume about 2.5 -3 units of electricity for a full charge of their batteries; so in Bengaluru, a full charge would cost between Rs 14 to Rs 17.

The company also offers a comprehensive service offer @ Rs.6000 + GST per year or if billed quarterly @ 1650 + GST per quarter. The company provides doorstep service.

Anil Sharma, Associate Director at research firm Markets and Markets says "Like in the case of any new technology, you will have a limited set of early adopters and they are certainly going to buy no matter what. There will always be a much bigger pool of sceptics. The challenge for EV makers would be to convert or rather target buyers from the pool of sceptics and to gradually move those potential buyers to the pool of early adopters. And the key factor playing a major role here will be the word of mouth and the experience the very early adopters share."