

Singapore car 'vending machine' dispenses with tradition

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A vending machine that dispenses luxury cars to well-heeled buyers is the latest space-saving innovation in land-starved Singapore—just don't try to shake it if it gets stuck.

Used car dealer Gary Hong has taken to displaying his wares in a glass-fronted, 15-storey building.

Like choosing a chocolate bar, the buyer can see everything on display, before pressing some buttons and having their choice delivered.

Hong, 45, said he got the inspiration for the new showroom during a trip with his four-year-son to buy toy cars.

"From there I realised that the Matchbox arrangement is a mini version of our inventories that can be displayed and arranged nicely," he told AFP.

From the comfort of a plush sofa on the ground floor, potential buyers can order a Ferrari, Maserati or Lamborghini among other brands, all with the touch of a hand-held device.

Once a selection is made, a promotional video of that car is played on a flat-screen television while the vehicle is automatically transported down by a lift.

"When the customers see a car that is presented in a best way like a

beauty pageant, they just decide that this is a winner, and we got a deal," said Hong, who added that sales have risen by 30 percent since the move to the new premises in December.

With a population density ranked by the World Bank to be third highest in the world, behind Macau and Monaco, land comes at a premium in the tiny city-state.

But Hong said his unorthodox Sg\$3.0 million (\$2.15 million) solution can boost land use.

The company stores between 70-80 cars at its facility—an amount that would otherwise require five times the space if the vehicles are parked traditionally, Hong said.

A similar car vending concept currently exists in the United States, through online auto retailer Carvana, which was last reported by US media to have five such facilities around the country as of April.

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