



Supply chains: Smart cars

Innovating the aftermarket

Commentary:

It's no use working to establish a brand if you pay no attention to the after market. Here Smart have been equally innovative.

Prof. R. van Hoek, Supply Chain Management, Cranfield University:

The Smart dealer network established this concept of you tell us what you want us to make and we'll do it, but really also to develop a much deeper understanding of what really are the buying decisions that our customers make, and as we offer them twenty colours do they always go for the three that we would normally offer, or are they really interested in the one or two art colours that we never thought of offering.

Commentary:

Smart are serviced only through the network of Smart Centres, a process which includes regular computer diagnostic tests, the results of which are fed back to the Smart headquarters. Today's vehicle log book is electronic.

Daniel Preiss, Smart Dealer, Saarbrücken:

They check the electronic things like the gearbox or they see how the engine runs, or all the electrical things and so they can check if there is 32 bytes on the computer in the car, and you illustrate everything like, really like a black box in a race car because you can see if you put too much trouble or too less, or if you use something wrong so that it's really good made like the computer age.

Commentary:

The first date in the car's electronic log book is entered as it leaves the factory. Smart has now begun to establish itself in right hand drive markets, like the UK and Japan. It's a long way in a short time from Hayek's initial concept in 1994. He characterised what came to be the Smart, the same way as Swatch.

Nicolas Hayek, Founder of Swatch:

High quality, low cost, provocation, joy of life. We want everybody to be able to buy this car.

Prof. R. van Hoek, Supply Chain Management, Cranfield University:

What's particularly interesting about Smart is that they've brought to life multiple aspects that we were previously dreaming of.

John Sorrell, Design Council:

What it combines is the skills and the traditions and the brand values of two exciting organisations, Swatch and Mercedes. It brings the best of both those organisations together to create what I believe could be a very, very potent product.

Prof. R. van Hoek, Supply Chain Management, Cranfield University:

It's a great example, actively putting the customer in control, very smart in leveraging product design across the various players into the market by offering customers ability, rapid assembly, quick distribution, so many, many interesting things come together in a real life setting. So one might say that we're now seeing one of the things that we've been talking about and dreaming about coming into real life, nothing to say that it's the best possible dream one might have though.