

Could We Be About to Fall Back in Love With Our Cars?

Time for Some Clarity

Most of us don't love our cars. We don't wash them more than every six weeks. One third of us have never driven a car for pleasure. And of the other two thirds, they do so on a handful of occasions each year.

It All Used to Be Such Fun

Driving used to be all about 'the open road'. There was exploration and discovery, treasure hunts, picnicking at the side of the road, The Caravan Club.

At the same time you had an intimate relationship with your car and knew all its foibles. Breaking down was part of that bonding exercise.

A to B Driving

Most of us have become functional drivers. Our car is simply a tool. As cars have become more reliable, people have become less engaged with them.

As one person said to us; *"It's big and it's blue and I spend way too much time in it and money on it"*.

The Autonomous Vehicle (AV) Could Be Coming Round the Corner

Rapid gains in battery technology mean we now have the imminent proliferation of the electric car. Of itself the electric car is unlikely to change the functional relationship people have towards their cars, but a little further down the line...

The AV has the opportunity to completely re-frame our attitudes towards cars, just as Apple did with the iPhone.

The mobile phone has rapidly moved from being relatively functional to an adjunct of many people's lives. It can transcend all facets of living, defining expectations of connectivity, seamless integration, personalisation and instant gratification.

Paradigm Shift

The car could do the same, becoming a piece of electronics rather than mechanics.

As Suzy Bashford pithily described; *"If drivers no longer have to have their eyes on the road to ensure their safety, they are free to give their full attention to other*

things: films, ads, games, each other. That's when the potential for connectivity explodes and the car becomes an extension of our living rooms".

We Could Love the Car Even Less

Of course the AV could lead us to an even more functional relationship, where we simply use a car on-demand – that's what Uber is banking upon.

Whether we love it more or less, if the driverless car becomes reality, manufacturers will have to focus less on the 'driving experience' and more on the 'riding experience'. It's back to the old days of the chauffeur, where the priority in design was the passenger's comfort.

Don't Lose People Along the Way

From what we see, if the AV is to become a good reality, it's going to be crucial to make sure that people don't get lost in the technological breakthroughs. At each step we must talk to people, share ideas and answer; 'how will this make our lives better?'

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