

The implications of self-driving vehicle technology on consumer brand equity

January 26 2017, by David Bradley

Popular music is jam-packed with classic songs about cars, racing engines, heading down the highway, backseat romance at the drive-in, and simply feeling safe in one's car. The list is long, but, with the advent of the self-driving, autonomous, car will we see an emerging generation of songwriters crooning about these digitised vehicles with their fuel cells, silent motors and blocked up ashtrays? Will the list of songs about such cars be inexhaustive?

Erik Olson of the BI Norwegian Business School, in Oslo, Norway, discusses the implications of self-driving vehicle technology on consumer brand equity and relationships in the *International Journal of Technology Marketing*.

"The freedom, fun, status, and utility that the automobile provides consumers have made it one of the most widely adopted and loved products of all time, and this emotional attachment is reflected in the popular song lyrics" explains Olson. From The Beach Boys singing about drag racing their little Deuce Coupe to Janis Joplin beseeching The Lord to buy her a Mercedes-Benz, "No other product has been the subject of as many popular 'love songs' as the automobile and its brands, with Chevrolet alone mentioned in more than 100 popular songs," Olson adds.

Innovation drives us forward, but autonomy might well put the brakes on the classic automobile song. Of course such worries may be most prevalent among those of us who grew up driving our own cars, because future generations may see steering wheels as a quaint inconvenience

that interferes with their social media use during their morning ride to work, and indeed may not wish to own a car at all. Thus without the interaction that comes from owning and driving a particular car brand, it remains to be seen if future consumers and songwriters will feel the same inspiration to sing about an Uber or Google operated autonomous car.

If one of the first car songs talked of Henry making a lady out of Lizzie, referring to Henry Ford's Model T, the "Tin Lizzie", the best part of a century ago, then maybe one day, they'll be singing the Uber Google Boogie...or maybe not.

More information: Erik L. Olson. Will songs be written about autonomous cars? The implications of self-driving vehicle technology on consumer brand equity and relationships, *International Journal of Technology Marketing* (2017). [DOI: 10.1504/IJTMKT.2017.081506](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJTMKT.2017.081506)

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