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"The right product at the right time"

Bernhard Maier, the board member in charge of Sales and Marketing, talks about Porsche Intelligent Performance in the Cayenne and an automotive concept with best-seller qualities.



What is the first thing you think of when you hear the name Cayenne?

Bernhard Maier: The Cayenne is an example of how Porsche is always inventing itself anew, yet always remaining true to itself. The Cayenne is a sports car in the sector for premium SUVs—and it is a true Porsche. It incorporates our brand values, including the apparent contradictions of tradition and innovation, performance and suitability for everyday use, design and functionality, and exclusivity and social acceptance. All of that combined with a lot of driving pleasure.

Did Porsche expect the car to be this successful?

It was a daring step to set off on this journey in 2002. But it had also been well thought out. Our ideas were based on a clear strategy. We maintain close contact with our customers, and frequently solicit their opinions in very concrete terms at product clinics. The results indicated that an SUV from Porsche would sell if we developed it in keeping with our approach to performance, quality, and suitability for everyday driving. But I'm pleased to admit that we didn't imagine that it would mark the start of so successful a trajectory. At first the notion of a sports-oriented SUV was polarizing. It led people to question whether Porsche should even attempt to make such a vehicle. That's a legitimate question, which shows how the public discusses the identity of the Porsche brand when a new model is introduced or when a new market or sector is entered. Similar questions were raised when the 996 series of the 911 was introduced, for example, or when we switched from air to water cooling for the boxer engine. But our arguments have always prevailed. That includes the Cayenne, given the impressive sales figures thus far of more than 500,000 cars.

Why has the Cayenne been so successful worldwide?

It's the first sports car in its sector, and it shows that character in every detail. In addition to ample space for five people, what it offers above all is the chance to experience typical Porsche driving dynamics. That is precisely what speaks to the hearts of our customers around the world. The sum of all its abilities is what enables the Cayenne to conquer entirely new terrain. And of course the car has the right pedigree. The brand is and will remain the number one reason why people decide to buy our cars.

What does the Leipzig site mean to the brand and the customers?

We offer our customers unparalleled quality, as can be seen once again in the latest study from J. D. Power. The Cayenne's production facilities in Leipzig and the interplay with the group's plant in Bratislava laid a stable and expandable foundation that has been able to support the Panamera and the Macan as well. Leipzig has taken on a significant role in our family of sites.

Do you too view the Cayenne as something like a "conqueror"?

The desire to win new markets was one of the reasons why Porsche decided to embark on this project back in the late 1990s. The Cayenne enabled us to enter regions that had seemed unassailable to us as a manufacturer of two-seater or 2+2-seater sports cars. In the meantime the car has been crucial to our success in China, for example; it was the right product at the right time. China has now become our second-largest single market. In eastern Europe, too, Porsche only really established itself and expanded substantially after introducing this sporty all-terrain vehicle, for example in Russia and other growth markets.

How do you explain this growth?

We entered new sectors and expanded our customer base. The Cayenne combines suitability for every-day use, sportiness, and comfort for a range of different road conditions, and it also offers enough space. It was the ideal response to what a lot of customers were asking us. And the Cayenne has also introduced many new customers to the brand, both in established markets and in those that don't yet have a comprehensive highway infrastructure. The SUV sector promised the highest rate of growth for the company. We've also expanded our sales organization to accommodate it, built new Porsche centers, and expanded existing ones. In China, by the way, we're opening a new Porsche center every two weeks this year.

Has the success of the Cayenne encouraged sales of other model series there?

Before introducing the Cayenne we were selling around 200 cars a year in China, and last year we sold about 36,500. That enabled us to set up an extensive structure that we'll be expanding further with the Macan. This expansion allows us to increase our customer proximity and offer all of our services. And that in turn has awakened interest in the other sports cars and either fueled sales or in some cases triggered them in the first place. Our sale of two-door sports cars on the Chinese market has increased from just a few in 2004 to more than 3,600 in 2013. These market shares are comparable with those in established regions. In other words, we're also the clear leader in China in the sector for the 911 or the Boxster/Cayman. Without the Cayenne we probably would not have shown such rapid growth. The car truly did take on an ambassador role for Porsche there and in other new markets as well.

... and its message is?

That people notice the Porsche brand, that they associate it with a variety of exclusive models, and that the brand represents the sportiest and most exclusive cars in every sector. The Cayenne embodies Porsche Intelligent Performance—the core of our brand—in every respect. And it stands for the fascination for sports cars. When it comes to Porsche, that fascination applies to cars with two, four, or five doors, and to cars with rear, mid, or front engines.

Consumption data

Cayenne: Combined fuel consumption: 11.2 – 9.9 l/100 km; CO2 emission: 263 – 236 g/km

Cayenne (model year 2015): Combined fuel consumption: 11.5 – 6.6 l/100 km; CO2 emission: 267 – 173 g/km

Cayenne S E-Hybrid: Combined fuel consumption: 3.4 l/100 km; CO2 emission: 79 g/km; Electricity consumption: 20.8 kWh/100 km

911 (Type 991): Combined fuel consumption: 9.0 – 8.2 l/100 km; CO2 emission: 211 – 191 g/km

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