

People have been falling out of love with Jaguar

Recently I looked at the overall collapse of UK car making in Britain. Today I want to look at an iconic UK car brand which has experienced falling volumes for a while. Jaguar cars have been in retreat for some years. This April they saw sales 44% below a year earlier with just a 0.94% market share. The brand still has a loyal fan base that like the history and traditions of the cars, with many owning older vehicles as reminders of past glories. It also has a growing list of former fans who will not buy a modern product, failing to see in some of the designs much of the "Grace, pace, space" of the E type or of the Mark 2 saloon or the XJ, XK or S type of later years.

Jaguar's sales and marketing strategy is partly to blame. Their dealers had a penchant for selling down, trying to persuade XJ owners to buy an S type, or S type owners to buy an X type, as various sales promotions were doubtless offered. When they replaced the S type with the XF they allowed journalists to write that they were appealing to a new younger audience, turning their backs on the older supporters of the S type who they thought were passe. It proved easier to lose the old supporters than to find the new enthusiasts in sufficient numbers. The XF was a pleasant looking car, but arguably Vauxhall had already done a similar style well with its Insignia at a lower price than the Jaguar. The XF was not distinctively Jaguar in the way the thoroughly modern S type was on original launch with genuflections to the Mark 2. The well supported XJ with its own evolving styling was then changed substantially to look like a fattened version of the XF. The arrival of more Sports Utility vehicles led Jaguar into competition with its sister brand, Range Rover where many thought Range Rover did it better. The Sports Utility look had little in common with the past glories of the sports, GT and sporting saloons of the historic ranges.

Now today they scramble to make electric cars without defining what it was about previous ranges of their cars that people liked about Jaguar. Styling and image were an important part of it. When Jaguar cars started to look more like other cars they lost some of their fan base. Briefing against those who used to buy Jaguars was also a bad mistake.