



The car as a reflection of society

The unstoppable growth of the SUV

- / **The compact SUV segment is expected to grow by 25% by 2020, exceeding 1.5 million units in Western Europe**
- / **SEAT is launching its first-ever compact SUV this year, a model that will become the brand's third pillar**

Martorell, 01/02/2016. – Why do so many people like SUVs? What do these cars have that makes buyers choose them? According to the experts, the answer lies in the evolution of people's needs, and ultimately, cars **“have always been a reflection of society”**, asserts Fundació RACC's technical manager Lluís Puerto.

This same conclusion is expressed by ESADE strategic planning professor Jordi Brunat, who is also an expert in the automotive sector: **“cars are an extension of people, of their personality, lifestyle, habits, financial circumstances, social views and how they relate with society”**. For this reason, the evolution of both society and cars has always gone hand in hand.

During its more than 100-year history, the car has served several functions; first, according to Lluís Puerto, it was a status symbol, a means of transport for the upper echelons of society. Over the years, society has made increasing demands on cars. Regardless of factors such as safety, which is a fundamental concern nowadays, one of the latest current trends is connectivity, **“of paramount importance in order to understand the next ten years”**, assures Puerto. **“The services we currently have connected to the mobile that we cannot live without must naturally get integrated in cars, and this is precisely what is happening”**, he adds.

Over the years, the car industry has adapted to the changing developments of society. We are now living in an era of the compact SUV, a segment that is gaining ground due to **“its ability to respond to the needs of an entire family, in addition to the possibility it offers for long-distance city as well as inter-city travel”**, in the view of the RACC expert.

SEAT is making headway in this segment in response to this opportunity, and will be launching its first compact SUV in the middle of the year, **“the ideal moment”**, says Arantxa Alonso, who works in SEAT's Product Marketing department. **“With the formula Leon we have demonstrated that we are a mature brand with the ability to make cars that stand out for their technology and quality”**, enabling the company to increase and consolidate sales by entering new segments, such as the compact SUV.

Alonso considers that the SUV customer is looking for four main characteristics: a greater feeling a safety that comes from a more robust nature, more modern design, greater



versatility and more spaciousness. She argues that these traits are most highly considered by male customers who average 52 years in age, although it is also highly regarded by women. **“Thanks to its high driving position, women have a greater feeling of safety that does away with the fear of city driving. It’s like sitting in a fortress”**, adds Alonso.

According to data used by the Spanish brand, it is estimated that sales of this model will grow by 25% by 2020, which will result in over 1,550,000 units of this kind of car in Western Europe, proof that **“rather than a passing trend, the SUV is here to stay”**, to quote Alonso.

SEAT is the only company that designs, develops, manufactures and markets cars in Spain. A member of the Volkswagen Group, the multinational has its headquarters in Martorell (Barcelona), exporting more than 80% of its vehicles, and is present in over 75 countries. In 2015 SEAT achieved worldwide sales of 400,000 units, the highest figure since 2007.

SEAT Group employs more than 14,000 professionals at its three production centres – Barcelona, El Prat de Llobregat and Martorell, where it manufactures the highly successful Ibiza and Leon. Additionally, the company produces the Alhambra in Portugal, the Mii in Slovakia and the Toledo in the Czech Republic.

The multinational has a Technical Centre, which operates as a knowledge hub that brings together 1,000 engineers who are the driving force behind innovation for Spain’s largest industrial investor in R&D. In line with its declared commitment to environmental protection, SEAT undertakes and bases its activity on sustainability, namely the reduction of CO2 emissions and energy efficiency.

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