

The Automobile as German Metaphor

Germany is a world-class industrial power. During World War II, German factories produced massive amounts of tanks, aircraft and other such machinery to support the war. Since the close of WWII, Germany has risen to the third largest economy in the world behind the United States and Japan. Germany has a history of scientific and technological achievements. Many of the important discoveries in chemistry during the nineteenth century were by German scientists. The software vendor SAP is the third largest software firm in the world behind Microsoft and Oracle. After World War II, Germany applied their industrial resources to re-building the country. One industry that quickly emerged was automobile design and manufacture. Today, companies like Porsche, Audi, Volkswagen, Mercedes Benz and Bavarian Motor Works (BMW) are well-known carmakers. German cars are built to last, have ergonomic interiors and offer the highest engine performance. The qualities of German autos can be considered as a reflection of German culture. German society tends to be designed for order. To illustrate, the Polizei (German police) keep records of domiciles and update them regularly. Citizens are required to report to the local Polizei station after a change of residence. Germans are competitive and value performance. The German national team won the 2002 World Cup. The German economy is the third largest in the World, ahead of countries like England, France and Canada. A society must have a structure that fosters economic growth to be a leading economic power. Germany is here to stay. Germans are a relatively private people. High-end German cars let in very little road noise. The driver and passengers have a sense of privacy while out on the road. Of course, no culture can be fully summed up within the confines of a cultural metaphor like automobiles. In the case of Germany, their cars are in use across the globe and they are a daily reminder of all things German.

Richard Spann, December 6, 2002

