

Tradition or constant innovation, in both cases marketing lies hold back sustainability!

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It is autumn holidays in the Netherlands. Time to muse with an autumn beer. Some sectors emphasize their tradition, such as beer, whiskey and wine, and other sectors pride themselves on continuous innovation in order to achieve ever better quality, such as detergent producers and (high) tech. Needless to say, both sides of the marketing strategy spectrum - tradition or continuous quality improvement - are in fact selling nonsense.

Most of the beer brewed today comes from a fully automated and (partly) robotic production plant, and many detergents still use basically the same formulas as 40 years ago (sodium dodecyl-benzenesulfonate, sodium carbonate, and quartz). Still, I find advocating tradition much less irritating than all the lies about continuous improvement. As a child of 4 I already heard on the radio that the completely renewed Ajax was "Stronger than dirt!" and cleaner than ever. In the 1970s Persil and Ajax cleaned "like a white tornado". If I add up all the annual promises for improvement in the 56 years that have passed since I was 4, it would automatically result in perfectly clean laundry if you just put a pack of Ajax or Surf next to the dirty laundry! Continuous improvement of technology is absolutely rubbish!

When I was 4 my parents had an Electrolux vacuum cleaner. Granted, I remember the thing making a lot of noise, but it also worked reliably. When I was 9 my parents bought a Miele, and it stayed for a long time. When I went to college and left home I got it and they bought a new one. The hose connections broke, but the thing was now 15 years old and so I bought a new one too. As quiet as possible. And a new one again, and again at ever shorter intervals in between. In the meantime, two years ago my wife and I bought my 12th (!) vacuum cleaner, a Bosch with sensor technology. Intelligent! The thing switches off all the time because the sensor is measuring "something". Yuck, it's worthless. Same with my tumble dryer, a slightly more expensive one, with artificial intelligence (Siemens). The control keys are sensors instead of "traditional" mechanical switches (according to the advertising brochure because mechanical switches are sensitive to wear and tear). However, these and all other smart sensors continuously give the strangest error messages. The mechanic has already been there twice, and he cannot help but say that you have to press the sensors firmly. Today I couldn't get the dryer to work at all, and it is now 2 years and a month and the warranty period has just expired....

As mentioned, it is fortunately autumn holidays in the Netherlands, so I have the time to search the internet for a new vacuum cleaner and a new tumble dryer. I'm quite irritated though. Sustainability is very important to me, but apparently not the high-tech manufacturers, although their leaflets are full of it. I am convinced, I want devices without "intelligence" or any form of "smart" technology. As our friends in Portugal respond: The little advantage in terms of energy efficiency by making devices smart is lost in the production of more and more devices that function for less and less time; so-called "smart" is not that smart at all. After all, a vacuum cleaner simply needs a good electric motor and they used to last for years without electronic or digital "overload protection". However, in my search for traditional machines, I find out that they are just no longer for sale! To forget the misery I take another beer from a traditional brand. On the internet I start reading about the good old tradition of breweries when I read that there are totally different genetically modified grains and hops being used today. Are smart technology headaches inevitable these days? It's tied to the autumn beer. Cheers!