

Going Better with Age

- Global Famous Car Stories

50 time-honored stories about 50 car brands with a history more than 50 years

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*Brand
History*

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Glorious History of Citroen

It is the most beautiful and fashionable magnum opus of France, which fully reveals the romantic, free and personal spirit in French descent.

Set Foot in the Auto Industry

Born in Paris in 1878, Andre Citroen was a child of a diamond merchant family. He was a big fan of science. When he was 6 years old, Andre witnessed an upheaval in his family. His father committed suicide for being cheated in business. Before long, his mother also passed away. A sweet well-off family broke up in an instant. Thanks to his relatives, Andre survived and was admitted to a famous college, i.e. the École Polytechnique. In 1900, Andre went to visit his grandmother for vacation after his graduation. On the trip, he noticed a set of gears put herringboned together in a device. He got inspiration from that. When he came back home, he invented a herringbone gear system. And in 1905, Andre established his own small company to produce his patented products. Because of the steady and efficiency features, herringbone gears started to be sold to the entire Europe. In 1912, a

crucial year for Andre Citroen, he came to the United States and visited an automobile factory of Henry Ford. This trip aroused him, and he realized what he should do, that was to manufacture automobiles. He named his company Citroen Gear Factory that aimed at production of geared motors, and started his attempt to manufacture cars. Before his car was manufactured, WWI broke out. 36-year-old Andre Citroen was drafted into the army as a second artillery lieutenant. When he discovered that they were short of shells, he volunteered to build a factory to produce shells. In less than 40 days, resolute Andre built an arms factory by the renowned River Seine. His talent in management was given a full play there. In few months from pilot to SOP production, the daily output of shells increased from 10 thousand to 55 thousand.

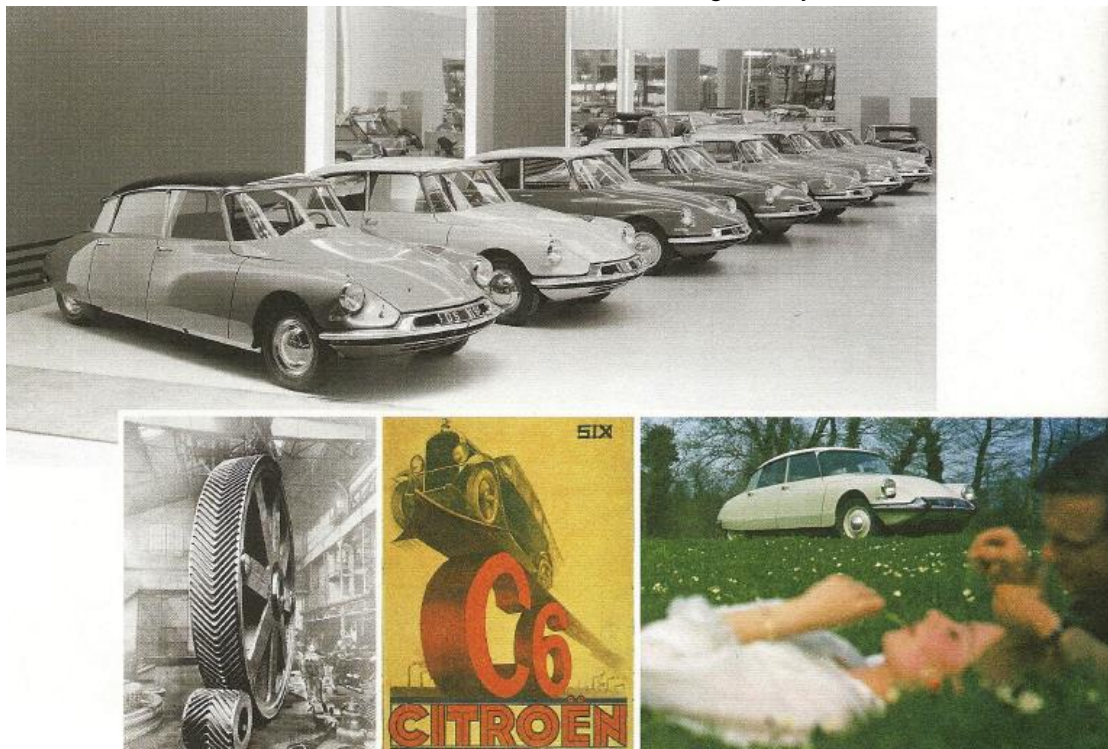
By the end of the war, Andre had made a little fortune by his success in arms business. Therefore, he could devote himself to automobile manufacturing. In May 1919, Citroen Type A appeared and got 16 thousand orders very soon, becoming a star of car in France and even in Europe. In July 28, 1924, Automobiles Citroen was officially listed and established.

The Most Effective Advertising Car Brand

Andre Citroen not only introduced American assembly lines into France, but also practiced American style marketing modes and after-sale service methods. Under his leadership, Citroen became one of famous car brands which took the best advantage of advertising. To improve its popularity, Citroen spent 2% of its turnover in advertising. In this respect, Citroen was better than its American peers.

Citroen did the best to advertise the

company and its products. After WW I, all traffic signs on roads were damaged in France. Citroen offered and set up all signs on each road in the name of the company. These signs not only solved the traffic management problem of the French government, but also became advertisements of Citroen. In 1922, on the 7th Paris Motor Show, a plane puffed out some smoke at the length of 5 km that formed letters of "CITROEN" up in the sky. It was just 9 years later after American Wright brothers invented the first airplane which was a rare thing at that time. The unprecedented marketing campaign was amazing. Besides, Citroen also hung a 30m-high giant light box on the Eiffel Tower. In the evening, letters of "CITROEN" were particularly bright and eye-catching in Paris. As long as people saw the tower, they would remember the name of Citroen. This was later regarded as a successful example in the world advertising history.





Logo Story

The double-herringbone shape is the everlasting theme of Citroën in honor of Andre Citroën, the founder of Citroën who invented the herringbone gear transmission system.

The Downs and Ups

In 1933, under the influence of the world economic crisis, French automobile industry met its Waterloo. Automobile production plunged. However, Andre Citroën still insisted on the principle of “mass production decreases unit cost” that he demanded a daily production of 1,000 cars. This tactical blunder stored up trouble for the future. In December 1934, Automobiles Citroën officially filed the bankruptcy petition to the court. Its chief creditor Michelin & Cie agreed to take over the brand and made guarantee to pay all the debts. The new owner of Citroën asked Andre to leave the factory. Misfortunes never come singly. Few weeks later, Andre was diagnosed with gastric cancer. He died in July 1935.

The new Automobile Citroën took a series of measures to improve the stability of the front-wheel drive system and to solve the shortage of funds problem of the factory. A strict management system was also practiced. Eventually, at the end of 1935, the company became profitable and got on the track again. After years of practice, Citroën lost its splendor of the past, becoming an ordinary brand.

The 2CV was also a piece of work designed by Andre Lefebvre and Flaminio Bertoni together mainly for French farmers. It was also popular among citizens who preferred economical cars. It meant to bring chances for Citroën. However, the slow rhythm and small scale of production made it

missed again.

In 1955, Citroën DS came into the world. Soon it took place of the Traction series. In 1960s, though 3CV, the upgrade products of 2CV appeared, the market share of Citroën still declined obviously.

In 1971, GS, SM sports car and Mehari recreational vehicle unveiled. They enriched the product lines of Citroën. In 1973, SM sports car stopped its production for the sake of energy crisis. Michelin & Cie also ran out of its patience on Citroën. It signed transfer agreements of Citroën with Peugeot. From 1974 on, Peugeot became the new owner of Citroën.

Two types of Citroën were adjusted because of their similarities with certain types of Peugeot. Again, Citroën went into trouble. CX, the substitute for DS, was a success on the market. Thanks to CX, Citroën could keep its brand, but Visa and LNA had to become products under the name of Peugeot.

The talent and spirit of bravery of Andre Citroën has influenced Automobiles Citroën profoundly. If Citroën was a butterfly waiting to break out its cocoon, then 1980s was the crucial period. In 1990s, new leader assumed office. Automobiles Citroën renewed by steering its development direction and working out a considerate marketing plan.

In 1991, Citroën expanded its Chinese market. The joint venture Dongfeng Peugeot Citroën Automobile Co., Ltd. was established. Citroën cars started its production in China.

