



Overview of the Swedish car wash market

In this article Kent Johansson, from Constant Clean, offers an overview of the Swedish car wash market. The author discusses the current situation, and assesses the prospects and challenges it faces.

Swedish car owners are used to keeping their cars clean in an ever changing climate. The country has long periods of rain, sleet and snow followed by some short summer months, the busiest car wash periods are mainly in spring and autumn.

On the Swedish roads there are about 4.5 million cars, furthermore there is a steady increase in new registrations in recent years. In January 2016, for example, the registrations increased with 6%, which means the 25th consecutive month of positive figures for car sales. According to analysts the upturn will continue, in 2020 the estimated number of registered cars in Sweden will have increased by a further 500,000.

Swedish car owners wash their cars on average seven times a year, which makes a total of around 31 million car washes per year. Nearly 50% of these are made by hand in the car owner's driveway, in the street or in parking lots. Another 30% takes place at do-it yourself-self car washes and the remainder, just over 20%, in automatic car washes. A majority of Swedish municipalities have in recent years started to act on environmental problems in connection with cars being washed outside car wash facilities. This has resulted in a ban on car washes on driveways or on the street. The prohibition works only in theory though, and no Swedish car owner have thus far been punished for their action.

The trend we see now is a huge increase in demand and sales of self-washing facilities. These can be applied in parking lots adjacent to shopping malls, or other areas where there are large amounts of motoring customers.

The Swedish car wash industry has for several years worked towards a common goal to inform about the environmental hazards with car washes. The industry has launched information campaigns directed towards car owners with a goal to change their behavior. This work has also been supported by information campaigns launched by municipalities and environmental authorities. In late April, the campaign, "the great car wash day" was carried out. This was a joint activity by environmental authorities and the car wash industry, with the aim to draw attention to environmental problems

connected with car wash.

The main goal for all these activities is to increase the number of visits to car wash facilities with efficient and environmentally approved water treatment equipment. The main target group is car owners who today prefer to wash their cars at home. This will lead to significant opportunities for the Swedish car wash industry to increase its profitability and grow further.

In recent years, independent operators have entered the market; one example is GoWash, a company which is building a growing chain of wash parks. The total number of wash parks in Sweden owned by both small and big companies is at the moment close to 300 and most of them are profitable. As we can see from the statistics, a majority of Swedish car owners prefer to wash their cars themselves and people are discovering the benefits of wash parks where convenience is an important factor.

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