

Press Release

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Your Concept Car – by women for modern people

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- Initiative in June 2002 by women at Volvo Cars
- All decisions made by women
- Targeting the most demanding premium customer: the independent, professional woman

The idea of an all-woman team making all the decisions in the development of a new concept car arose at Volvo in the autumn of 2001. Visiting Volvo at the time for a series of workshops was Marti Barletta, an American expert on female consumer patterns. She claimed: "If you meet the expectations of women, you exceed the expectations of men".

"We're sure it's right," says Camilla Palmertz, one of the two project managers for the YCC. "That's why that thesis has been our guiding light in developing Your Concept Car."

In June 2002, Camilla Palmertz and a small group of colleagues were invited to present their idea to Hans-Olov Olsson, President and CEO of Volvo Car Corporation. He greeted it with enthusiasm.

Women form an increasingly important customer group for Volvo Cars. In the United States, 54 per cent of all Volvo buyers are women and the percentage of female customers in Europe is growing steadily too.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for us: we can concentrate on the fast-growing group of women customers - without losing the men. Because I'm certain that our male customers will love this concept car," says Hans-Olov Olsson.

All decisions taken by women

The project management team behind the YCC consists of five women at Volvo Cars, who brought to the project a broad spectrum of experience in various automotive fields. The three chief designers are also women.

"We wanted to keep the woman's perspective all the way through," says Hans-Olov Olsson.

After a series of preliminary studies, the project was given the go-ahead by Volvo Cars Management Team in December 2002. The team's brief was perfectly clear: a free hand to develop a concept car capable of winning the approval of that most demanding Volvo customer category of all - the independent female professional.

Volvo has a long-standing tradition of listening carefully to what women want. As early as the 1980s, a women's reference group was formed at Volvo. Here, female members of staff are called upon to test and assess new models at a very early stage of their development. Moreover, during the development of the XC90, a women's focus group was convened in California - all potential buyers of this vehicle type, whose views helped shape the Volvo SUV's distinctive features and functions.

"If you divide the car-buying world into three segments: budget, mid-market and premium, our customer research shows that the woman buyer in the premium segment is the most demanding of all customer categories," says Maria Widell Christiansen, Project Manager, Design.

Women customers in the premium segment want everything that men want in terms of performance, prestige and style. But they want more besides:

- Smart storage solutions
- A car that is easy to get in and out of
- Good visibility
- A car you can personalise
- Minimal maintenance
- A car that is easy to park

Smart storage

Smart storage goes far beyond where to put your handbag - It is a question of what to do with your mobile phone, your keys, your notebook computer, your briefcase, your sports bag for the gym and so many other things we carry in our cars.

The best place for keeping all the things you want on hand in the car is between the front seats. But that is where you normally find the gear lever and handbrake. "So we moved them. In the YCC, there are gear levers by the steering wheel and the parking brake is electronic and integrated. This freed up space for storage in the centre console," says Cindy Charwick, who designed the YCC interior.

In the centre console, you find a shallow compartment for keys, mobile phones, coins and other small items. This compartment slides back to reveal a deeper one, big enough for a handbag. Another compartment takes a notebook computer and there is a cool box within reach of the driver's seat too. A wastepaper basket completes the theme of sheer convenience.

"Most of our target group said they carry a bag in the rear seat far more often than passengers. So we decided to design that area primarily for storage but instantly convertible to seats for two passengers whenever needed," says Camilla Palmertz.

That is why the rear seats resemble cinema seats - normally folded up out of the way until someone needs them. This frees up large amounts of luggage space in the rear seat, easily accessed through the wide door. Passengers simply lower a seat each as they get in.

The YCC is a one-off concept car, a Volvo showcase for sharing bright ideas and solutions with the world. The most popular solutions will be those that stand the best chance of appearing in a future production model.

"We chose a gull-wing door with a modest wingspan to help us showcase the YCC's interior solutions," says Elna Holmberg, Technical Project Manager. "And it brought other advantages - it makes it easy to lift a bag in behind the driver's seat and it increases your visibility over your shoulder to the side because the B-pillar has been moved towards the rear. And when the door opens upwards, the dropdown door sill rotates simultaneously, so getting in and out is so much easier."

An easy car to get in and out of

Easy access to the car interior was high on the list of what the target group wanted.

The YCC designers were happy to oblige. When the gull-wing door opens, the drop-down sill below it opens down out of the way, so you do not need to climb in over it. The ride height is automatically returned to Hi mode for door opening, a comfortable height for those getting in. For added space, the driver's seat moves back automatically and the steering wheel moves upwards. And the side bolsters on the driver's seat base are lowered out of the way so you can get in more easily, too.

If you have a lot to carry, you can make the YCC open the door automatically when you reach it. You simply activate Auto-Open using the key before you pick up your bags, then, when you stand by the rear wheel, the relevant side door will be opened for you. If you go to the back of the car, the tailgate opens instead.

Good visibility

Your actual driving position and line of vision is very important for both safety and comfort in reaching all the controls.

"In the YCC, we have combined ergonomics and line of vision adjustment in our Ergovision system, which we are in the process of patenting," says Elna Holmberg. This is how it works. Your whole body is scanned at the dealership, then the data on your relative proportions (height, leg length, arm length) is used to define a driving position just for you. This is stored in digital form on your personal key unit. Once you get into the driver's seat and dock your key on the centre console, the seat, steering wheel, pedals, head restraint and seat belt will all be adjusted automatically to suit your build. The result is a recommended fully personalized driving position with the best line of vision for you.

If you want to alter the stored position, you can change the settings of the various car components in the system, then store that set of data on your key unit. The system will warn you if your line of vision is wrong by means of the lenticular hologram, which looks like a stylised eye displayed on the A-pillar, between windscreen and door.

The exterior design of the car has also been developed specifically to help the driver see better.

"The bonnet section has been lowered and the fenders have been deliberately brought into sight. Add to this the fact that the rear window extends right to the extremities of the car and the driver will know exactly where the four corners of the car are," says Anna Rosén, the designer of the YCC exterior.

More choice and flexibility

The YCC gives you all-round flexibility. You can choose the ride height - either Hi, if you like a commanding view of the road, or Lo, for a sportier feel. And you can radically change the look of the car interior whenever you feel like it. There are eight exchangeable seat pad options to choose from, everything from dark brown leather, linen and wool bouclé, to a shimmering yellow-green embroidered seat pad.

Each of these has a matching carpet - also easy to swap over - for a whole range of styles inspired by home interior design.

"No need to trade in your car just because you have grown tired of its colour scheme!" says Maria Ugglå, the Colour and Trim designer for the YCC.

Minimal maintenance

"We want cars to make life easier for their owners, not complicate things for them," says project manager Eva-Lisa Andersson.

So the YCC has made user car care about as easy as it can get. "The only time I ever open my bonnet is when I need to fill up with windscreen washer fluid," says Tatiana Butovitsch Temm, YCC Communications Manager. "So we asked ourselves whether you should have to open the bonnet just to do that. We realised that it could just as easily be done from the side of the car." That is why the YCC has two capless ball-valve filling points like those used for racing cars beside the door on the driver's side. One for petrol, the other for washer fluid. No fumbling with filler caps or bonnet latches!

With the windscreen washer fluid filler outside the car, no bonnet was needed, at least of the conventional type. Volvo service staff are the only ones who ever need to access the engine, when the time comes for routine service. When service is due, the car automatically notifies a service centre of your choice. The service centre then suggests an appointment time for you, that you can confirm or reject. The YCC also carries out its own diagnostic checks at regular intervals and notifies your service centre if anything needs attention. This also ensures that any spare parts or materials will be there when they are needed.

"To us, service is more than just mechanical maintenance. By pressing the Car Care button on the control panel, you can also book your car in for valeting, inside and out," says Eva-Lisa Andersson.

The car is finished in Easy-Clean paint. This behaves rather like the coating on a non-stick pan - dirt finds it very hard to cling on in the first place and, if it does, it washes off very easily. The interchangeable seat covers and carpets are also washable.

The YCC's tyres are of the run-flat type. Even after a puncture, the car can be driven to a service centre or a suitable place to stop.

Easy to park

Parallel parking assistance is a function both males and females requested.

In the YCC, this is a two-stage system. When you need to park between two other cars, but first want to make sure there will be enough space, you press the parking assistance button once for the space-check function. If the system says yes, you can then select the Autopark function by pressing the same button again. The car helps you with the steering to manoeuvre you into the parking space, but you control the accelerator, brakes and gearshift. Autopark streamlines your parallel parking with flair.

Engine and transmission

The YCC is prepared for a low-emission 215 bhp, five-cylinder PZEV engine with an Integrated Starter-Generator (ISG). This, like other Volvo PZEV engines, complies with the toughest emission standards in certain American "green" states such as California.

ISG has several advantages. It prevents unnecessary idling because the engine can be shut off automatically when waiting at places like traffic lights. It comes to life again as soon as the driver presses the accelerator. It also provides extra torque at low revs, which means maximum power right from the start. And the ISG provides a 60 V power supply, giving scope for even greater user convenience.

The YCC has a six-speed Powershift gearbox. You can either choose the fully automatic mode, or use the controls on the steering column to change gear.

Powershift means that the car in effect has dual wet-clutch transmission technology, ensuring that your gear changes are always at the right revs. This makes for smooth driving and lower fuel consumption.

The descriptions and data contained in this press material (release) apply to the international model range of Volvo Car Corporation. Specifications may vary from country to country and change without notice.

Descriptions and facts in this press material relate to Volvo Cars's international car range. Described features might be optional. Vehicle specifications may vary from one country to another and may be altered without prior notification.

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