

CUHK MBA: Why Automotive Sector Is Ripe For Disruption From Silicon Valley Tech

Harish Sivashanmugam anticipates innovation in automotive space

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Uber is developing driverless cars

Will technological change spell the end of the automotive industry as we know it?

Former Hyundai and Volkswagen

(<http://www.businessbecause.com/news/making-the-headlines/3607/the-business-of-ethics>) engineer Harish Sivashanmugam, now a full-time MBA student at Hong Kong's CUHK Business School (<http://mba.cuhk.edu.hk/>), thinks so.

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The traditional car-making industry is being shaken up by Silicon Valley-based tech giants such as Apple and Google, which are investing huge sums in the development of autonomous electric vehicles.

Meanwhile, Uber's ride-sharing platform is disrupting traditional car ownership patterns. Perversely, the sharing economy venture, which has more than one- million drivers worldwide, has a commitment to a future of smartphone-controlled driverless cars at its very core.

For Harish, traditional car manufacturers that fail to adapt to these pioneering technological developments could soon face extinction.

Alongside his engineering career in India, Harish also pursued his passion for movies, writing freelance as a film critique for The Hindu national newspaper and then Bollywood review site Wogma.com.

Keen to stay at the cutting-edge of business and technology, Chennai-born Harish relocated to China for his MBA.

What does the future hold for the automotive industry?

The future is immensely promising. I see automobiles moving away from everything we associate them with right now, to become mobile homes and work places.

With the advent of 3D printing and software giants testing their hands at making cars, the industry is facing competition from all quarters of the business world.

The traditional players who fail to adapt to these disruptive innovations will cease to exist.

What advice do you have for MBAs looking to work in the automotive industry?

Change is slow, compared to the IT industry for example, because of the huge capital and physical infrastructure involved.

MBAs should see the greater length of each project as an opportunity to be creative.

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Why did you decide to pursue an MBA at CUHK?



I want to enter the Chinese market and CUHK gives me a strong platform to do that.

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I realized that to soar higher in my professional life I needed more feathers and fuel, and I wanted to infuse business sense into my thought-process as early as possible.

An MBA, with its all-encompassing package, was the perfect fit.

How have you profited from your MBA experience so far?

The biggest takeaway has been a better understanding of my strengths and the areas which need improvement.

I can't wait to see how this experience will change my approach to work when I get back into the job market.

What are your career plans?

I am equipping myself to enter the field of strategy and operations. I want to be in a space that allows me to excel in thinking, analyzing and executing my ideas.

How was your experience working for Volkswagen?

At Volkswagen the dialogue is free flowing in all directions, creating an amicable working atmosphere.

One unique feature about the company is the promotion system. At manager level, candidates' progress up the ladder is not only decided by the boss but also by the results of multiple screening tests by a separate committee.

What are your thoughts on Volkswagen's recent emissions scandal?

I still don't see how the people involved thought they could get away with it! These kinds of scandals come about when one sees a law as a barrier instead of a safety belt.

Can the company recover its reputation?

It's a big setback in terms of trust. But with the way the internal investigations are being carried out, I'm more than happy with the direction in which the company's heading.

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History has shown that, provided companies come clean on such issues and create better fail-safes for the future, consumers can move on.



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