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Construire le schéma d'analyse du GERPISA

Company Actors on the Look Out for New Compromises
Developing GERPISA's New Analytical Schema

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AUTOMOTIVE DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN GLOBALISATION AND LOCAL CONTEXTS: THE ROLE OF DEALER GROUPS IN EUROPE

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This paper looks at the reorganisation process taking place in the car distribution industry, with particular reference to the profile of franchised dealers of larger size (dealer groups). While in the past manufacturer strategies were aimed at achieve territorial coverage through a high number of franchised dealers, whose growth was often restrained in order to limit their acquisition of bargaining power, current pressures towards concentration, plus new attitudes by manufacturers are stimulating the growth of retailers who manage relationships with a growing number of manufacturers (brands) and in a growing number of areas (market territories).

Among the most relevant pressures there are:

- ✓ a very low profitability,
- ✓ high competitiveness (particularly intra-brand, that is among dealers representing the same franchise),
- ✓ the opportunities lying in the new information and communication technologies and the unfolding implications of the new regulation (Block Exemption).

There are also some other aspects (e.g. succession problems) which in some cases enhance the drive towards an increased role of dealer groups. But while there is a general trends towards an increase in scale and scope of dealer groups in Europe, when looking at the individual markets, one sees that such trend towards higher concentration takes place at various speeds, and through various forms. Dealer groups feature different traits and strategies in each market, without any 'one best way' yet emerging. Furthermore, initial evidence from research on the performance of dealer groups indicates that scale does not necessarily represent an answer to the system pressures, as it does not translate automatically into better performance (profitability). This underlines even further the fact that there is no current single 'attractor' model, but rather a range of strategies unfolding, with a considerable degree of experimentation.

This document is based upon research carried out by the author and other colleagues within the ICDP (International Car Distribution Programme[1]). It must be said that while in the UK market there is a considerable amount of information available on dealer groups, in the other major European markets research had to make extensive use of other means such as direct contact with retailers themselves in order to acquire basic information.

[1] ICDP (International Car Distribution Programme) is the world's largest cooperative research network into all aspects of car distribution and after-sales, established in 1994 (www.icdp.net).