



When elephants race...

Do you remember your history lessons at school about Hannibal and the elephants? During the second Punic war in 218 B.C. he “rolled” over the Alps with a great army and almost 40 elephants to teach the Romans a thing or two about fear.

Still today, elephants teach us about fear when they have their so-called races or “duels”. And these don’t just take place over the Alps. These “mammoths” (also referred to as trucks) are no longer lovable when they “cripple” whole motorways for hours and kilometres with a 2 km/h difference in overtaking speed. In official jargon this illegal behaviour, which brings beads of sweat to the brows of many motorway users, is called “overtaking with insufficient speed”. The immediate impact of this is anger, stress and incomprehension. This is followed by political intervention, which is mostly longer term and undesired, particularly when measures such as a general ban on overtaking for lorries comes into consideration. Is that really necessary?

Let’s look at the evidence. It’s not just the fact that this type of overtaking manoeuvre isn’t exactly safe (load security for abrupt sideways movements, etc.), international reports prove that these duels are nonsense both economically and ecologically. Fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions increase dramatically. According to tests, up to 10% of fuel can be saved through defensive driving. The amount of time gained is also limited as this can easily be lost again through unforeseen, lengthier waiting times at one or two of the loading points. Not to mention the damage to the image of professional drivers and hauliers.

I think that hauliers and their interest groups should invest more in enlightening and educating drivers, and should perhaps consider a couple of different transportation strategies. Just-in-time service is not so much about fast driving, but good organisation. There is so much that you could do to relieve tension on Europe’s already afflicted highways and also take the wind out of the sails of some of the industry’s bitter adversaries. Those who frequently drive on motorways and take note of which lorries repeatedly carry out reckless overtaking manoeuvres, can often recognise a pattern. After all, such behaviour is also an indication of a company’s quality and its social awareness. This begs the question whether the customer should perhaps also take this into consideration when choosing a service provider.

On this note, I wish you a “clear run” or as the saying goes “less haste, more speed” and a safe arrival at your destination.

Yours,
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