

Is Simpler Better?

A Closer Look at Stellantis's Connected Service Packages

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1. A Brief History of Connected Services in Cars

In a case of in-car innovation correctly following consumer demand, internet-connected services were introduced to cars in the late 2000s and began spreading throughout model lines into the 2010s.

In designing, deploying, and improving the first in-car connected services, automakers were faced with 3 main challenges:

- The first challenge involved identifying the value proposition. This was a multi-layered process:
 - What do consumers want from internet-connected services delivered via their devices?
 - What do consumers want to do in a car?
 - Is there an overlap of the 2 sets of requirements described above? If so, where is it? Or what is it?
- The second challenge involved delivery of that identified value.
 - Once a value proposition is established, how might connected services be delivered safely in or for a car, especially while the car is in motion?
- The third challenge dealt with commercialization of the innovation.
 - Can OEMs make money on in-car connected services, and if so how?

Early service deployments such as [Toyota's Safety Connect](#) focused on leveraging monthly or annual subscriptions for advanced safety features like remote diagnostics and roadside assistance. Gradually the features spread from safety to infotainment, such as [GM/AT&T](#) and [Audi](#) offering in-car Wi-Fi. These subscription models typically had different tiers of services, as well as different individual features which could be included as singular "add-ons" to the subscription.

Uconnect from Chrysler/FCA (now Stellantis) was another early innovator of onboard connected services for both safety and infotainment, especially screen-based infotainment. And as with most automakers at the time, these services were offered as part of a monthly subscription, typically after a free trial of a certain length after vehicle purchase.



Figure 1. FCA Uconnect apps circa 2015 (source: Stellantis)

The Uconnect service model consisted of several tiers and add-ons. By the later 2010s, the Uconnect packages had evolved into this scattered menu of offerings:

- The Uconnect “Assistance” package (cost: \$14.99 month after trial) included the following:
 - Remote ops/vehicle status
 - Vehicle finder
 - Vehicle skill for Amazon Alexa enabled devices
 - Drive alerts
 - PHEV smartphone controls
 - An extension for smartwatches
- The Uconnect “Connected navigation” package (cost: \$9.99 per month after trial) included the following:
 - Connected traffic
 - Dynamic range mapping
 - Charge station locator
 - Last mile navigation
 - “Send and go” for mobile devices
- Other “add-ons” could be included in either of the above packages. Add on features included the following:
 - Wi-Fi hotspot
 - “Off Road Pages” (targeted to certain Jeep owners for overland performance and status)

1.1 A Simplified Offer from Stellantis

In summer of 2025, Stellantis began a revamp of its connected service suite, rolling out [new simplified offerings](#), starting with 2 packages for customers in the US and Canada.

- The Connect ONE package (free of charge to owners of any eligible vehicle) includes the following:
 - Over-the-air updates
 - Vehicle health reports, alerts, and service scheduling
 - Automatic SOS calls and recall notifications
 - Remote lock and unlock via the car's branded app
 - Digital key for smartphone-based access and engine start
 - In-vehicle games
 - EV charging controls and management
 - "Basic navigation"
- The "Connect Wi-Fi Plus" package (costing \$17.99 per month in the US and \$13.99 per month in Canada, both after a trial period) includes the following:
 - Wi-Fi hotspot (US only)
 - Advanced remote operations
 - Remote vehicle start
 - Remote climate control
 - Remote horn and lights
 - Stolen vehicle tracking
 - Drive alerts
 - Voice assistant
 - Connected navigation, including several advanced satnav features:
 - Real-time traffic
 - Speed camera alerts
 - Fuel prices
 - Map updates
 - Last mile guidance
 - Alexa Built-In (though it should be noted that Stellantis and Amazon ended their development partnership in 2025)

2. Your Product vs Your Market: Analysis of Simplified Service Tiers

The connected products automakers develop (with help from supplier partners) have historically provided a mixed bag of relevant usefulness for their market of car owners:

- Some features provide an immediate safety benefit (such as automated SOS calls).
- Some features provide a tangential safety or cost-saving benefit (such as remote telematics or diagnostics).
- Other features provide some car-related convenience or comfort (such as advanced satnav features or satellite radio).
- Still other features provide minimal benefit beyond a mere experimental proof-of-concept for the supplier.
 - One prime example: Restaurant ordering from an in-car screen, as with [the failed GM Marketplace experiment](#).

Another historic observation is that automakers often spread connected services across multiple pricing tiers, plus add-on packages for certain individual features. But in practice the mixed usefulness of features and oversized menu of pricing packages only served to confuse the market. Once a free trial period was complete, these factors also helped to keep renewal/upsell rates low or stagnant.

So given this state of the industry, Stellantis's new-look packaging/pricing for its connected services should be lauded for its radical simplicity. Two packages only. No add-ons. No muss. No fuss.

However, on first glance at Stellantis's new feature and pricing tiers for US and Canadian customers, the placement of specific comfort/convenience features within those tiers (free or paid) seems nonsensical. It seems to misalign the product Stellantis wants to offer, with the market they wish to offer it toward.

	SAFETY	CONVENIENCE/COMFORT	“EXPERIMENTAL”
FREE (“Connect ONE”)	Over-the-air updates Automated SOS Recall notifications	Vehicle health reports Service scheduling Remote lock/unlock Digital key EV charging management “Basic navigation”	In-car gaming
PAID (“Connect Wi-Fi Plus”)		Wi-Fi hotspot Remote start Remote climate control Remote horn and lights Stolen vehicle tracking Drive alerts Voice assistant Advanced satnav	Alexa Built-In

Figure 2: Stellantis’s connected service tiers, organized by feature type

To be clear, car buyers and owners are not averse to paying for connected services via subscription. They are open to paying for certain features, especially if those features are car-specific or add some car-specific (not just travel-specific) benefit. These desirable features also must offer something more than what is available on their smartphone. Therefore, by these criteria (car-specificity above-and-beyond what might be offered via a smartphone app), the inclusion of certain non-car-specific features in a paid tier is a surprising miss for Stellantis.

Consider for example the “advanced satnav” feature and the voice assistant, both offered as part of Stellantis’s “Connect Wi-Fi Plus” package for \$17.99 per month in the US. A large majority of car owners (if not all of them) already have “advanced satnav” and a voice assistant on the smartphone they bring into the car for every drive. Therefore embedded “advanced satnav” features and voice assistants are already seen as “smartphone copycats” competing with mobile devices. Putting “smartphone-copycat” features in an embedded ecosystem is already questionable practice, and putting those features behind a paywall (especially at a \$17.99-per-month price point) will simply assure that they won’t be used at all.

Putting advanced satnav and voice assistants behind a paywall could even have implications for the sale of the vehicle itself. Google Automotive Services are rapidly proliferating across brand and model lines worldwide. And vehicles with Google Built-In offer the opportunity to include advanced satnav features (traffic information, advanced routing, etc.) on the embedded console screen for no additional charge, as long as the car’s user has a Google login. Therefore as prospective buyers consider their purchase decision, brands that require an extra expense for advanced satnav (in Stellantis’s case: \$18 per month, or over \$200 per year) immediately put their brand at a disadvantage against comparable vehicles equipped with Google Built-In.

Additionally: The inclusion of “Alexa Built-In” in the paid tier, without further explanation or feature breakdown, is another odd choice in Stellantis’s service design. In its initial marketing blast, no additional value is communicated to potential buyers regarding what Alexa Built-In is, what it does, or what specific car-related value it could offer a potential car buyer.

2.1 “So What?”

A number of takeaways can be noted from Stellantis’s simplification of its connected service subscription tiers:

- Stellantis is to be lauded for listening to its buyers, and using that information to pare down its connected offerings to a simpler menu that is far more lean and understandable.
- The inclusion of safety features in the free subscription tier is best practice and should stand as an example for all automakers.
 - If OEM technology (or technology developed by an OEM’s suppliers) has the potential to save lives, that technology should be unlocked and included as standard with a car purchase. Safety features are not areas that consumers want to be “nickel-and-dimed.”
- The organization of the comfort/convenience features among different tiers appears scattershot, and the value has not been clearly communicated to the market.
- Recall the challenges automakers faced when rolling out the first connected services 20 years ago:
 - Identifying the value proposition, or what consumers want from car-specific connected services.
 - Determining how to deliver those services in a car.
 - Then, only after the above 2 challenges have been addressed, determine how to make money off of those services.
- Stellantis’s simplified connected service tiers address some of these challenges but not all, especially for comfort and convenience features:
 - **Unclear value proposition:** Car owners will not use a feature that has no practical benefit for their specific car or use case. (e.g. in-car gaming in any non-electric vehicle)
 - **Unclear value delivery:** Consumers will not use, let alone pay for, an inferior in-car experience. The mere presence of an experience on an in-car HMI is not enough for that feature to overcome being inferior to a free/cheaper smartphone experience.
 - **Wrong commercialization strategy for certain features:** Stellantis seems to be leaning on subscriptions to pay for delivery of features that are already offered for “free” on their car buyers’ smartphones.

2.2 “Now What?”

Our recommendations for automakers’ future connected service marketing, packaging, and pricing include the following:

- **Services already offered on smartphones (e.g. advanced satnav and voice assistants) should be included in a free tier of services.**
- **At rollout, if products/services from partner collaborations are included (e.g. “Alexa Built-In”), automaker brand marketing should point out the car-specific value propositions associated with that product or service.**
 - Relying on a car buyer to understand a consumer tech company’s branding/packaging can potentially introduce confounds to your own brand’s messaging, and risks misaligning your product from your target market.
- **Automakers should consider attaching advanced or experimental features to any paid service tier, to entice tech enthusiasts who might be open to them.** Examples might include:
 - Video calling/conference capabilities on embedded screens while parked.
 - Forward/rear/blind spot camera recording.

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