

Datsun GO gets extra drive from strong history in SA

The strength and association that motorists have with their favourite brands depends largely on their memories associated with a name and the iconic status they have achieved - all aspects that have helped Datsun re-enter the South African market and immediately gain acceptance of their new Datsun GO.

So says Des Fenner, General Manager of Datsun South Africa, when reviewing the success of the GO - the model that spearheaded the introduction of the Datsun brand to a new generation of South African motorists.

“It is the connections with the past, acknowledgement of Datsun’s heritage, and the expectations these have helped create, that undoubtedly led to the Datsun GO being the leader in South Africa’s motoring A segment in August YTD - the crowded, highly competitive entry level market. When combining these elements with affordability, it is no wonder that the GO sold 5 561 units August YTD in South Africa - in a short 11 months. It was ultimately the Datsun pedigree that made the difference when it came to selecting the GO against models from other countries that did not have the high consumer identification levels of our vehicle.”

The heritage of the Datsun GO stretches back to 1976, when Datsun’s 120Y model did to the South African market what the Datsun GO is doing today, namely opening a new market for younger drivers looking for an economical, responsive and stylish entry into car ownership.

“Before this, paving the way for the success of the 120Y, was the market acceptance of the Datsun 1200 GX sedan, as well as the two-door coupe - best known as the ‘fastback’, which initially featured twin SU carburettors. Twin-barrel Hitachi carbs were fitted to the four-door model, giving these offerings the edge when it came to perky performance. The engine was also the base for the legendary 1200 bakkie (later fitted with a 1400 cc power plant), which became an icon and subsequently took up the Nissan name and faded from production, only in 2007, after 27 years in the market.”

No look-back at Datsun’s heritage in South Africa would be complete without a reference to the Datsun 1600 SSS (Super Sport Sedan), which set alight the local rally scene in the late 60s and early 70s, and performed with honours in the East African Rally in Kenya, winning the event in 1970 and handing the laurels over to a Datsun 240Z in 1971. These achievements, in no small part, contributed to Datsun’s position as market leader in South Africa in 1978.

Giving life to the SSS in a standard saloon body was a larger camshaft, and high compression ratio engine fed by twin Stromberg carbs, producing more than 82kW. Aiding the phenomenal road-holding for the time was an independent rear suspension set up that had motoring pundits applauding.

“Undoubtedly, one of the highest points in Datsun’s early history was reached by the introduction of the Datsun 240Z in 1970. Designed as a performance vehicle with eye-catching styling, the 240Z brought sports car driving into the reach of those who could not

afford the more expensive sports models of the time. Its durability can be seen through the number of these vehicles that are still available today and their status as a classic car of the future,” says Mr Fenner.

Turning to the Datsun GO and a new generation of buyers, Mr Fenner says that the links with the past are based not only on the pricing and market segments of the time, but on the recognition that the younger market wants something that they can truly make their own.

“During the 60s and 70s, Datsun was renowned for producing a car that could be personalised through the addition of body striping and decals, as well as trim and interior options that could make a vehicle unique.

This tradition was reintroduced in 2014 with the Datsun GO. Rather than offer the vehicles in a set format, buyers were introduced to the GO base model and offered a selection of options to upgrade their rides according to their personal taste.

We have seen considerable up-take of these accessories and look forward to personalised Datsun GOs becoming a common sight on our roads.

We have no doubt that the addition of a driver’s airbag, something requested by the South African market, will further entrench the Datsun name in South Africa. We expect demand for the Datsun GO to increase as motorists, already under pressure because of increased prices, turn to the vehicle that offers many the opportunity to own a brand new car with a highly competitive sticker price,” Mr Fenner concludes.

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