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Citroën Brazil to sell cars via the internet

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Citroën Brazil to sell cars via the internet

George Guimarães | gguimaraes@autodata.com.br

When General Motors launched the Celta in Brazil, in 2000, it created a commotion to divulge the model would be the first to be sold through the Internet in Brazil. After more than 560,000 units produced, the hatchback went out of production last year, with very few units sold through the global computer network. Nevertheless, the model could be acquired with a 7% discount on prices offered at the dealers, which had kiosks with terminals

where the customer could acquire the vehicle «in the Internet.»

Therefore, it is not a complete novelty when Citroën revealed on Wednesday, 26, it will present at the São Paulo International Auto Show, in November, e-commerce versions of the locally-produced C3 and Aircross, baptized as St@rt, for sale exclusively via the Internet.

Perhaps the system could be similar, but times are different - a whole new generation of consumers -, the customer, even more. The manufacturer want to move ahead in the digital terrain even further, even if one step at a time.

Paulo Solti, director-General of Citroën Brazil, says, for example, that the brand today has more than 11 million fans in all of its social platforms throughout the world. In Brazil alone, according to him, Citroën has 4.2 million followers in Facebook, and 112,000 followers in Instagram.

In Brazil, the universe of people that are used to acquiring products and services through the

Internet, and are passionately at the moment of trading in their cars, exceeds 5 million per month,» stated the executive, adding that the average number of visits to the dealers prior to the purchase has dropped from 5 to 3 per person, and that 85% of customers consult sites before choosing a model.

«The incentive at the time was practically the fiscal reduction, and nothing else,» stated Solti, in reference to the pioneer adventure of the Celta. «Today, the consumer has another behavior; he is a lot more connected to the digital world and demands other mobility services that we should offer in the future.»

The executive did not reveal which services the site will make available, but admits that the versions of the St@rt will be less expensive than the equivalent versions already offered at the dealer network. In this case, he emphasizes, it is enabled also by a good agreement with the dealers, reduced distribution and inventory costs, and production efficiency gains. After all, the consumer will be able to choose only the color of the St@rt products, which come equipped with exclusive - and no optional - items.

The consumer will be able to access a dedicated site for this task. In it, he will be able to generate an electronic payment stub or even finance the car. Solti says that the presence at the chosen dealer will be necessary only for the delivery of the above or, should the client want to trade in his used vehicle as part of the payments and, for this, he will need to negotiate with the dealer before completing the transaction in his home's computer.

Solti says that Citroën does not plan e-commerce versions for all of the models that it sells here, something that would increase the complexity of the system and production in this first moment. Before, Citroën wants to gather the experiences from this first initiative - which already has additional steps that have been defined and should be revealed during the São Paulo International Auto Show - to improve it.

The learning process will be important not only for Solti's team, but for the entire dealer network and the PSA plant in Porto Real, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, where the C3 and the Aircross are produced. It will also be important to the vehicle manufacturer globally. The director says he is not aware of which PSA subsidiary already performs sales exclusively through the Internet. **WE**

Well accepted truck bed

Décio Costa | decio@autodata.com.br



The pickup truck market in Brazil is far from presenting the steaming scenario currently seen in the sport utilities category. However, judging by the launches of the past months, and what lies ahead, an interesting fight is in the making. Based on the segment's performance this year, the consumer has accepted what was offered to him, principally with the introduction of the Fiat Toro pickup.

The model, which was launched last February, registers sales of 27.6 thousand units up to September. This volume enables it to be the leader in the Fenabrave sales ranking in the large pickup category, with a market share of 24.8%. It is true, however, that the Fiat vehicle cannot

be compared, in size and price, to the other pickup options available in the market. However, the Renault Oroch, also a member of this group, and with similar size and price as the Toro, registers sales of only 10.4 thousand units during the same period. In addition, unlike the Fiat model, the sales total refers to the period ranging from January to September of this year.

It is not difficult to imagine that the Toro, although not participating of the same sales arguments present in models such as the Toyota Hilux, Chevrolet S10, and Ford Ranger, - to remain only among the vehicles that separate the Toro from the Oroch in the ranking - has not taken away business from all of the other competitors in the category.

Despite the price advantage held by the Oroch - it starts at around R \$68,000, while the Fiat model begins at around R \$80,000 -, Renault's option carries less. Both pickups arrived in the market and inaugurated the intermediate segment, between small and medium utility vehicles, with the argument of providing the comfort of an SUV and cargo capacity.

In the overall pickup market, the Toro ranks behind the small Fiat Strada pickup, which registered sales of 45.2 thousand units up to September of this year, and the Volkswagen Saveiro, with sales of 29.3 thousand units.

When the Toro was launched, it was the first Fiat model to be produced outside of Betim, in the state of Minas Gerais. It is produced at the FCA Industrial Complex located in Goiana, in the state of Pernambuco. At the time, the brand's executives said the target public was the consumer of medium pickups. They estimated sales of 50,000 units during the first year, that is, in 2017. According to its performance up to September, the objectives have been reached. After all, around 4000 units/month of pickup are being licensed.

However, the segments should see more competition in the coming years, according to the plans of vehicle manufacturers. At least two product launches have been confirmed for 2018, the Renault Alaskan and the Mercedes-Benz X-Class.

Seat against drowsiness

Décio Costa | decio@autodata.com.br

A seat capable of preventing truck and bus drivers from falling asleep is the proposal currently being developed at the Marcopolo Innovation Center, in partnership with Cemsu, the Multidisciplinary Center of Drowsiness and Accidents, linked to the Sleep Institute. The prototype is on exhibition at the bus body builder's booth at the SAE Congress, from October 25 to 27, at the Expo Center Norte, in São Paulo.

According to Eduardo Kakuichi, Marcopolo's design engineer, the seat is currently being field tested and the search is on for partners to take it to the production level. We have negotiated the suppliers for an eventual line of seats for drivers, which can be for Marcopolo products, as well as supplied to third parties.»

These so-called Anti-sleep Seats, incorporates a series of mechanical and physiological distraction mechanisms to prolong the state of alertness of the driver in times of critical periods of drowsiness and fatigue. «Contrary to the current resources, which identify and go into action when the



Marcopolo

driver is already drowsy, the seat prevents the state of drowsiness from establishing itself.»

Kakuichi added that the conditions for drowsiness, in addition to natural tiredness or a badly slept night, can also be found when the body temperature or luminosity drop. «Since the illumination of the cabin is not recommended, due to the reflection on the glass, we provided mechanical resources in the seat.»

This seat is equipped with thermal mantles at the lumbar support, air puff exits at the levels of the neck and calves, vibratory movements, and voice alert messages. In summary, the seat vibrates, heats up, blows, and speaks.

Throughout a long trip, starting from a database containing driver-related information such as hours of sleep, family life, chronic illnesses, among other variables, an application calculates the moments and frequencies in which the resources of the seat can be actioned on the driver. «The prototype is still in the conceptual phase, but, in the initial simulations, we've been able to prove that the seat contributes to increased attention and, more importantly, is not reactive, which could be too late to prevent sleep from setting in.»

According to the bus body builder, the final tests and the presentation of the seat to customers and operators are scheduled to take place between the end of 2016 and early 2017.

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Automotive parts sector registers a new deficit

AutoData Newsdesk | redacaoad@autodata.com.br

The foreign trade deficit of the automotive parts sector between January and September of this year was valued at US \$3.84 billion, representing a drop of 18.67% when compared to the same period last year, indicating an additional drop in the value of the deficit. The information was divulged by Sindipeças during the previous weekend, based on information from the Ministry of Industry, Foreign Trade, and Services, MDIC.

Exports and imports of automotive parts dropped during the first 9 months of the year. Total exports to 176 countries were valued at US \$4.9 billion, representing a drop of 16.1% when compared to the same period last year. Imports from 156 countries totaled US \$8.74 billion, represented a drop of 17.3% when compared to the same period last year.



In September, the value of automotive parts shipped abroad from Brazil totaled US \$544.3 million, representing a drop of 17.38% when compared to the same month last year. Imports totaled US \$1.1 billion, an increase of 2.54% when compared to September 2015.

The automotive parts sector in September registered a deficit of US \$525.2 million, representing an increase of 36% when compared to the US \$386.2 million deficit registered in September 2015.

Between January and September, sales of automotive parts to Argentina, which accounted for 27.85% of Brazilian automotive parts exports, totaled US \$1.3 billion, a drop of 30.54% when compared to the same period last year. Following Argentina, the United States was the second major market of Brazilian automotive parts, accounting for 16.35% of sales. Year to date, shipments to that country have totaled US \$800.9 million, representing a drop of 15.31% when compared to the same period last year.

The United States was the biggest exporter of automotive parts to Brazil, 13.68% of shipments up to September of this year. This year, the country shipped a total of US \$1.8 billion in automotive parts, representing a drop of 9.6% when compared to the same period in 2015. Germany was the second biggest supplier of automotive parts to Brazil, accounting for 11% of the total up to September. During the period, imports from Germany totaled US \$961.9 million, representing a drop of 6.84% compared to the same period.

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