

The smarter mobility revolution has started

The first-ever Electric Vehicle Road Trip (EVRT) Africa was a resounding success, not only in raising awareness around smarter mobility but also in inspiring the public and other stakeholders to join the smarter mobility revolution.



Driven by Generation.e, the EVRT Africa powered by ACDC Dynamics and in partnership with the Department of Transport and Government of Gauteng, proved it was possible to drive fully electric vehicles the length of the country. It also shone an experiential light on where the immediate challenges lie, as well as providing pointers on the importance of teamwork, partnerships and regulatory support.

Maintaining momentum

Generation.e CEO, Ben Pullen, said he could not be happier and that following the inaugural road trip, the next step is to maintain the momentum of the smarter mobility revolution. “We have learnt that more partnerships are vital, that funding is desperately needed to turn innovation into a viable industry and that the tax environment needs to become more conducive.”

Echoing this sentiment, Minister of Transport, Fikile Mbalula, said at the launch of the ACDC Dynamics charging stations at the Vineyard Hotel in Cape Town, that funding at all levels – internationally, nationally and locally – must be mobilised, to support green transport.

“It is also vital that transport investments are appropriately screened according to specific sustainability criteria to ensure that sufficient resources are channelled towards low carbon, green transport. This would ensure that adequate funding is

made available for green transport technologies, capacity building, operations and infrastructure.”

The three vehicle brands that took part in the EVRT Africa - BMW, Jaguar and Nissan - are also continuing to drive the conversation forward.

Brian Hastie, Jaguar Land Rover Retailer Network Development Director, responsible for South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa says incentives would go a long way to realising mass uptake of electric vehicles.

“Currently the adoption of EVs is significantly hampered by higher import duties compared to a ‘normal’ internal combustion engine car, which impacts the selling price,” he said, adding that in markets where there are incentives beyond price parity with internal combustion vehicles, there has been meaningful uptake of electric vehicles.

Mobility revolution in SA

Tim Abbott, CEO of BMW South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, agrees that the current tax environment is an obstacle to the mass uptake of electric vehicles.

“We have a long journey ahead of us. We cannot hide from the realities of limited infrastructure, slow uptake of EV offerings, and the geographic, cultural and political roadblocks the mobility revolution faces in South Africa.

“It is impossible to grow the electric vehicle market in South Africa when these vehicles are taxed as luxury items. Clean mobility should not be a luxury and a 25% tariff on an electric car when an internal combustion car attracts 18% makes our future harder to manage.

“This country’s extraordinary renewable energy endowment, its abundant mineral resources and its highly regarded engineers make it a country that ought to be at the heart of the electric vehicle revolution. Those are the qualities we as the public and private sectors in South Africa should be supporting with our collective efforts,” he said.

Policies in support of electric mobility

Wonga Mesatywa, Corporate Affairs Director for Nissan South Africa said that in countries where EV uptake has been successful, there has been significant government support in the form of infrastructure, special tariffs and incentives to manage power usage and costs.

“Government is working on ground policies in support of electric mobility. However, current activities are primarily driven by the private sector,” he said, adding that in addition to a significant amount of supporting infrastructure, such as charging stations, the country also needs a reduction of duties on EVs to mitigate the high purchase price,” he said.

He added that incentives to help manufacturers offset the more expensive cost of this new technology or invest more in the supporting charging infrastructure are also needed.

“It will become imperative for manufacturers to focus more on electric vehicles and other forms of advanced propulsion if they want to continue building vehicles for the export market,” said Mesatywa, adding that Nissan, via the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa, maintain engagement with government and other stakeholders for the advancement of electric mobility in South Africa.

Hastie added that there were immense possibilities for downstream industry with the business sector investing in home chargers and services and products associated with the industry.

Hastie added that business can contribute significantly to the economy as the growth of EVs takes hold, specifically in areas such as the supply and installation of home chargers and public charge points, as well as the specialised service equipment and skills training associated with EVs.

Standardisation of the EV industry

“While standardisation of the electric vehicle industry is required to support an easy customer experience, the growth of the EV eco-system and inevitable entrepreneurial opportunities should be left to business to develop on a supply and demand basis. Opportunities and job prospects will flourish hand-in-hand with the proliferation of electric vehicles,” he said.

The UN Environmental Programme joined Generation.e on the road trip to raise awareness around the possibilities of electric mobility in fighting and beating air pollution. Pullen says the support from UNEP and all stakeholders, and the widespread excitement around the potential for smarter mobility’s impact on the environment, was inspiring.

“We glimpsed the future on this road trip. How soon that future materialises hinges on government, the private sector and all stakeholders continuing to work together with a renewed vigour,” he said.

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