BIZCOMMUNITY

Do motorsports rev up South African brands?

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More than a third of motorsports fans in our country state that they would be influenced by a manufacturer's success on the racing circuit when buying a car or motorcycle, according to a recent global survey by Synovate.

Synovate surveyed 1 798 motorsport fans from South Africa, the United States, Germany, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, China and Malaysia, asking which type of racing they followed and the brand perceptions formed by the sport.

Formula One is the most popular motorsport worldwide and in South Africa, followed most closely by 60 percent of motor racing fans. In the United States, however, NASCAR is the motorsport of choice for 84 percent of race fans. The World Rally Championship has a solid fan base in Saudi Arabia and the UAE (31 and 27 percent respectively), while 21 percent of Malaysians prefer the two-wheeled action of MotoGP.

Which motorsport do you follow most closely?								
	Total	South Africa	USA	Saudi Arabia	UAE	China	Malaysia	Germany
Formula 1	60%	73%	4%	65%	56%	73%	74%	90%
NASCAR	17%	3%	84%	-	-	2%	1%	-
World Rally Championship	11%	8%	1%	31%	27%	8%	2%	1%
MotoGP	4%	8%	-	1%	3%	4%	21%	1%
World Superbikes	3%	3%	3%	2%	8%	7%	2%	1%
World/ German/ British Touring Car	2%	1%	1%	1%	6%	3%	1%	1%
Other	1%	4%	1%	1%	2%	2%	-	-
Source: Synovate								

Success on the racetrack had the greatest impact on fans' future vehicle purchases in Saudi Arabia (68 percent) and the UAE (59 percent). South Africans were relatively less influenced by this - only 35% of those interviewed stated that they would make a decision based on a manufacturer's performance.

By contrast, only 15 percent of American and 17 percent of German motorsport fans would be influenced by results on the track when shopping for a car or motorcycle.

Sponsors spend heavily to support motorsports, and Synovate found that they are getting a return on their investment. Globally, 32 percent of racing fans would be more likely to buy a brand that sponsors motorsports, with the UAE (53 percent) and Saudi Arabia (49 percent) topping the list. A slightly lower percentage (37%) of South African respondents

agree that they are swayed by sponsorships. By contrast, only 15 percent of Germans are swayed by a brand's association with racing.

And which vehicle manufacturers are most associated with motorsports? Globally, Ferrari is in pole position, as shown in the table below. Local makes are top of mind in the United States, with Chevrolet and Ford, both major players in NASCAR, most strongly linked to racing by US fans.

While 40% of South African fans associate Ferrari with motorsport, 17% of those interviewed link BMW with the sport.

Interestingly, Ferrari's greatest share of mind came in Germany, probably due to the fame of seven-time Formula One champion Michael Schumacher who is indelibly linked with Ferrari, the team with which he won most of those titles.

Surprisingly, Renault, whose driver Fernando Alonso was Formula One champion in 2005 and 2006, was cited by only 1 percent of respondents globally.

Which automotive brand do you associate most with motorsports?								
	Total	South Africa	USA	Saudi Arabia	UAE	China	Malaysia	Germany
Ferrari	29%	40%	1%	16%	33%	34%	21%	65%
Chevrolet	9%	1%	37%	5%	1%	-	-	-
Ford	7%	2%	22%	8%	6%	-	-	-
BMW	6%	17%	1%	9%	9%	9%	6%	7%
Toyota	6%	4%	1%	19%	10%	3%	2%	4%
Honda	6%	3%	4%	11%	3%	4%	21%	-
Mitsubishi	5%	4%	-	16%	7%	3%	3%	-
Mercedes	5%	6%	-	6%	5%	-	4%	11%
Yamaha	2	2%	-	-	-	-	16%	2%
Suzuki	1%	1%	1%	2%	4%	-	2%	1%
Dodge	1%	-	5%	1%	-	-	-	-
Audi	1%	2%	-	2%	3%	1%	1%	2%
Renault	1%	4%	-	-	3%	1%	-	3%
Alfa Romeo	1%	1%	-	1%	5%	-	-	1%
Other	8%	5%	22%	2%	9%	9%	4%	0%
Source: Synovate								

In Malaysia, the popularity of MotoGP racing mirrors the brand association with Honda and Yamaha (21 and 16 percent

respectively), two of the two most successful makes in that motorcycle championship.

The impact of racing success on vehicle purchase decisions revealed by Synovate's survey, coupled with these strong brand associations, suggest that the adage, 'Race on Sunday, sell on Monday' still holds true.

CURIOSITIES

> 84 percent of respondents worldwide follow motorsports on TV. Only 2 percent actually go to the racetrack.

> In South Africa, 92% of South Africans cite TV as their primary way of following motorsport. 4% read the newspaper or magazines to stay in the loop, while 3% actually attend the racecourse

> Newspapers and magazines are the next most popular media for UAE motorsport fans (20 percent), while the Chinese are the most avid Web surfers (14 percent).

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