

Chinese automotive brand Chery returns to South Africa

In the years between 2007-2010, South Africa enjoyed an incredible spate of Chinese brand introductions.



Most of these were simply aged Japanese bakkie platforms, sold as new, on the cheap. With the local market at record strength during this time, the demand was there.

But as customers discovered that these Chinese bakkies were not quite as durable as Japanese legacy products, and lacking credible aftersales support, the Chinese brands folded, dramatically.

The only Chinese car company that has navigated local market expectations with credibility, has been GWM. Its latest P-Series bakkie is a serious bit of kit and the Haval SUV and crossover ranges, sell very well.

But now, one of the departed Chinese brands is making a return. Chery is aiming to meaningfully engage with the local market by September this year, as a more agile local entity - it won't use a distributor but will enter as Chery SA standalone.

There is no question that Chery has more to offer than Tiggo. Product strategists at Chery have observed the success of

GMW, with its Haval sub-brand, and must believe that South African buyers are now finally willing to pay more, for the latest-generation Chinese vehicles.

What will make a difference for Chery, beyond Tiggo? Exeed and Jetour. The names might be odd, but the product is a world beyond Tiggo.

Chery's Exeed is a very convincing crossover, about the size of a Rav4. It uses a platform jointly developed with esteemed Austro-Canadian automotive supplier, Magna, and is powered by a choice of 1.5- or 1.6-litre turbopetrol engines.

The 1.6-litre version is available in all-wheel drive, and with 145kW and 290Nm, should make a decent drive, even at Highveld altitudes.

Both the front- and all-wheel drive Exeed variants use a seven-speed dual-clutch transmission and there is a long-wheelbase option, with third-row seating.

The Jetour is a slightly bigger seven-seater, which oddly, is only configured as a front-wheel drive. Despite its size, the Jetour uses a similar range of 1.5- and 1.6-litre turbopetrol engines, although there is the option of a six-speed manual gearbox, on the base version.

These new Cherys offer progressive styling, loads of kit and a better finish than any Chinese vehicle from a decade ago.

The only issue, as is the case with Haval, would be an absence of diesel engine options.

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