

SHOWROOM JOURNAL

Shell reveals Pinoy drivers become skilled fuel savers

MANILA - There are different types of Filipino drivers. While some have notorious driving habits there are also a lot who have been always courteous on the road. Some refuel once a week, others gas up only when their tank is near empty, while some consciously and consistently check the kilometers per liter that their car gets. One thing is common among them though: they all want to save fuel.

Over three-quarters of Filipino drivers surveyed say they have become more pro-active fuel savers compared with 12 months ago with nine out of ten motorists saying they are willing to change their driving habits to save fuel, according to a Shell market research which looks into how drivers think, feel, and do about fuel efficiency. The research also revealed that 67% of drivers in the Philip-

pinos drive less now in view of the current economic climate, higher than the global average of 53%. Ninety percent (90%) of the respondents agree that being fuel-efficient translates to money savings.

According to the study, Filipinos who drive more than 20,000km per year and those who refuel less than once a week check their car's kilometers per liter most. Pinoy motorists now employ an average of 9 fuel-saving tactics, a significant increase from the average of 2 actions taken two years ago. The study further revealed that drivers in the Philippines take the most number of actions to save fuel among the other six market areas surveyed, Singapore (8 actions), Germany and Malaysia (7 actions each), and Hong Kong SAR and The Netherlands with 6 actions each. The top three most popular ways that Filipino drivers employ in order to save

fuel include: (1) keeping the engine properly tuned; (2) keeping the tires properly inflated; and (3) driving sensibly and within speed limits.

For Pinoy motorists, to see is to believe. For those who are not yet fuel-efficient, approximately 30% stated that lack of information and knowledge deters them from adopting fuel-efficient methods. Looking at all the drivers surveyed, 65% are looking for proof that an increase in fuel efficiency will directly translate into more cost savings.

Pilipinas Shell Fuels Manager Stephanie Cua emphasizes the need for fuel companies to help consumers save fuel by using simple tools like Shell FuelSave tips. "We seek to help motorists get the most out of every drop of fuel, that's why we are happy to see that a lot of people are obviously doing much more now to maximize the mileage they get out of their fuel, which help ease

the pressure on their wallets," she observes. "We have been working hard to show that it's easy enough to save using the right fuel and the right driving techniques, so we are pleased to see people are trying and succeeding."

According to the research findings, drivers across the countries surveyed believe they could earn more savings monthly by changing the way they drive and using fuels that improve fuel efficiency. A clear image also jumps out: drivers significantly underestimate how much fuel they could save per month by being more fuel-efficient.

On average, respondents in the Philippines think they could save more than P700 per month if they were to adopt fuel efficient methods. However, results of the 8-week Shell FuelSave Challenge in 2008 showed that top participants were able to save up to 24% of the fuel they

use with just a few small changes in driving habits. This is roughly P1,156.68 in monthly savings, nearly double the amount estimated by survey respondents.

Over the last two years, Shell has trained over 2,000 drivers around the world to help them save fuel. Filipino participants achieved remarkable success, with half of them saving fuel and 28% saving between 10% to 30% of their usual fuel usage. "Hopefully these results can convince more drivers that taking fuel efficient steps can directly lead to savings and inspire them to become active fuel savers," says Cua.

Shell through an international research firm, StrategyOne, completed the market study in the first quarter of 2009, spanning six countries including the Philippines, as part of its campaign to help motorists get the most out of every drop of fuel. (Philstar.com)

NASCAR open to foreign automakers

BROOKLYN — NASCAR says it would be open to other foreign manufacturers joining Toyota in stock car racing.

Chief executive Brian France says nothing is imminent but talks with several companies have been ongoing for a long time.

France spoke at Michigan International Speedway ahead of Sunday's Sprint Cup race. He was asked about the likelihood of companies like Japanese manufacturer Honda and some German automakers eventually competing in NASCAR.

He says foreign companies are interested in developing the North American market and NASCAR is the "pre-eminent place to consider."

"I'm not going to name names, but we have companies that are interested in particular in developing the North American market as robust as they can, and you are well aware as we are of the foreign manufacturers now producing cars here in America," France said. "That was part of the rationale that Toyota used, that (being in NASCAR) helps them associate more with this market."

France's comments come on the heels of an announcement earlier this week by GM, which is reorganizing through bankruptcy, that it is making deep cuts in its support of NASCAR teams in Cup, Nationwide and trucks, the latest in a series of harsh economic news for the sport.

"Well, obviously ... every (GM) program is affected and we're no different," he said. "We were hoping to have the most minimal of the impact with their decision to restructure their business. The details aren't all out yet and exactly what that will mean to us, but, obviously, we are affected."

"I think our job now is to figure out how to be good partners with them. They're trying to restructure their entire company to be a different company on the other side (of bankruptcy) and for us to be a part of that. And I think we will. I'm very confident that they'll be in the sport for many, many years because it works well."

GM's Chevrolet brand competes in NASCAR, along with Dodge, Ford and Japanese automaker Toyota. All of them have been hit hard by the crumbling international economy and France left the door open for other manufacturers to become part of the sport.

"We have been talking to people for off and on for a long time," he said. "These are decisions in terms of the new manufacturers joining the sport that would take a long time to evaluate and actually enter. So those aren't something that we turn the light switch on tomorrow morning and it would happen."

"Of course, we're the pre-eminent place in North America for car manufacturers to build their business with an auto racing group. We remain that and clearly there's some companies that are going to look at opportunities that may not have even been there in the past that could be presented in the future."

Under NASCAR rules, only cars manufactured in the US are eligible to compete. Toyota joined the truck series in 2004 and, in 2007, became the first foreign manufacturer to compete NASCAR's the elite Cup series in 50 years.

"We'll have our philosophical approach to that in terms of welcoming new companies in as we did with Toyota," France added. "It is under a very clear set of circumstances that the manufacturers come to NASCAR to compete. And that will not change."

France said NASCAR will do whatever it can to help its teams, tracks and sponsors get through the tough economic times.

"The question is, with falling revenues in every sports league, what are you going to do to help to figure out the way forward?" France said. "For us, we have a huge interest in the sponsorship model. We're more dependent on it than anyone else. So we're affected."

He said NASCAR will look to new companies, new technologies and, particularly, to the growing green industry to help build the sport.

"So we'll be looking at figuring out, like anyone in our position, how to create new opportunities for new companies building brands and services here in NASCAR," he said. "Because existing companies, that our teams have in particular relied on, are changing. And that's just the reality." (AP)

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