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New way to sell used cars

Rahmah Daud

THE PROBLEM with buying a used car is that it may not be in tip-top condition as claimed. Often, it will be wise to get a trustworthy mechanic to take a look at the car and assess its roadworthiness first before committing yourself to the purchase.

Enter EON Motor Ria Sdn Bhd (Matoria) and their version of a 'supermarket for used cars'. The company has come up with a new concept of selling used Proton cars which is set to revolutionise the way used cars are being marketed locally.

The brainchild of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and implemented by the late Tan Sri Yahaya Ahmad, Matoria's participation in the growing used car business will provide a new standard of excellence for refurbished Protons. Moreover, the fact that the demand for used cars far outstrip those of new cars only makes good business sense for EON to venture into the used car business.

Being one of the fastest selling make of passenger cars in the country and having the high resale value it commands, the move to set up a used car supermarket by EON is indeed appealing to the Malaysian public.

EON's new chairman Datuk Mohd Salleh Sulong says that a strong second-hand market is an important factor in the sales of new cars. 'Statistics on the sales of used and new cars abroad show a ratio of two to three used cars for every new car sold. The situation in Malaysia is beginning to show a similar trend,' he notes.

Last year, about 470,000 units of used cars were transacted compared with 275,000 units of new cars sold. This speaks volumes of the state of the used car business in Malaysia.

What Matoria offers is something which one will never get from other used car dealers: its 12-month warranty for Matoria-approved vehicles. An unprecedented first in the local used car industry, Matoria puts all the used cars it sells through a thorough inspection and refurbishment before they can be sold. Worn parts are replaced while those needing a new coat of paint will be given a new shine.

The comprehensive inspection and refurbishment process by EON Servis covers a thorough 83-point checklist that includes the interior and exterior, the engine compartment as well as functional checks. After this, the cars will go through another round of inspection by Pusat Pemeriksaan Kereta Berkomputer (PUSPAKOM) to check for road-worthiness before they are offered for sale.

Through Matoria, Malaysians - particularly those from the lower income group and first-time car buyers - can purchase approved refurbished cars with complete peace of mind, albeit at a marginally higher price than those offered by other used car dealers.

The first Matoria outlet in Jalan Ampang boasts an on-line information kiosk that provides real-time information on its inventory stock of used Proton cars. All it takes is for the buyer to key in details of the budget and the type of car he or she wishes to purchase. The outlet also serves as a one-stop centre providing finance and insurance services.

Public response has been encouraging with 200 units sold so far. In fact, the outlet has outstanding orders for more than 500 cars.

Mohd Salleh says the company is studying ways to solve the problem.

'Based on the response, we plan to open a second outlet in Shah Alam by the end of the year.'

As a business approach, Matoria sales associates will also be equipped with personal computer notebooks that will give up-to-date information on cars available for sale, introduced for the first time in the Malaysian car industry. Potential car buyers can also access the company's homepage on the World Wide Web (<http://www.eon.matoria.com.my>) if they need more information on the refurbished car concept and the services offered by the company.

EON's managing director Datuk Adzmi Abdul Wahab says that EON's participation in the refurbished car business was a logical move and would add value to the sale of new Proton cars.

The supermarket concept of used car retailing will stimulate further growth of the used car industry, opening new opportunities for local vendors to venture into the recycled components business and creating greater Bumiputera participation in the used car business.

EON plans to open 20 more Matoria outlets throughout the country to meet the anticipated demand for quality, refurbished cars, with top priority given to Penang, Ipoh and Johor Bahru.

'Our expansion plan includes the promotion of Matoria franchise dealership concept which EON had carried out with great success for its sales and service dealerships,' Adzmi says.

He adds that in line with the government's policy to encourage the establishment of local branding, EON has introduced Matoria as a new brand name that signifies quality refurbished cars.

Designed to meet the needs of today's motorists, each EON Motor Ria outlet is customer-oriented to offer the convenience of a one-stop facility, including a variety of car accessories and carcare products.

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