Safety in Africa

Dear Reader,

The subject of Africa is seemingly on everyone's lips. The continent is undergoing significant changes and not only in the political sphere. Robert Mugabe, the controversial president of Zimbabwe, has been succeeded after 37 years in office by Emmerson Mnangagwa, who has promised his supporters democracy, security, and economic growth. And there have also been new developments in the automotive world in Africa.

Together with research partners in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania, the Technical University of Munich has developed an electric pick-up known as the aCar which was presented at the Frankfurt International Motor Show in 2017. "This is a vehicle that people in Africa can afford to buy. It is suitable for off-road use and can transport heavy loads," explained Professor Markus Lienkamp from the Technical University of Munich. The modular design of the car also allows it to be used for other purposes, such as water treatment. The researchers shipped the electric car to Ghana where they tested the technology and the transport concept under local conditions in July 2017. The aCar passed all the tests with flying colors. The local test drivers found it easy to drive throughout the trials and gave it a positive verdict.

African people no longer want second- or third-hand European cars. They too need first-class technology for their transport solutions. For this reason, Global NCAP and the Automobile Association of South Africa in Cape Town launched the "Safer Cars for Africa" initiative. The first independent crash tests have already been carried out on some of the most popular compact and small models in South Africa that make up 65 % of the market. The results of the tests for the five cars that were evaluated – the VW Polo Vivo, Datsun Go Plus, Toyota

Etios, Renault Sandero, and Chery QQ3 – unfortunately highlighted disturbing safety issues in some cases. The ratings for adult protection ranged from four to zero stars. It is the responsibility of the international carmakers to introduce the higher standards that are currently in force in Europe and the USA instead of palming off cheap technology on poorer countries.

The importance of NCAP's role in improving the safety of cars has become very clear over recent decades in the Western world. Manufacturers have constantly had to equip their vehicles with better restraint and braking systems in order to achieve the coveted stars. The NCAP program, which is promoted and supported by the UN, must act as a catalyst for improving vehicle safety standards throughout the world. Hopefully this will happen soon in Africa, because the people who live there should not be treated as second- or third-class citizens.

Best wishes,

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