

Lexus F-Sport: Winning hearts and wallets

By  Henrie Geyser

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Lexus has been a determined soldier in the tough and highly-competitive battle for the hearts and wallets of South Africa's ever-growing army of SUV fans.



Over the years, it has been working hard just to match, let alone outshine, the Germanic dominance of Audi, BMW and Mercedes-Benz, and to compete with other key players such as the Jaguar F-Pace, Land Rover Discovery, Sport, and Range Rover, as well as the Jeep Cherokee.

In spite of the brand-loyalty of the SUV market, Lexus has steadily grown its popularity, thanks mainly to its status as the luxury brand of Toyota which has been the darling badge of South African motorists for many years.

Growing from the solid base of Toyota reliability, affordability and value retention, Lexus has been extending the appeal of its vehicles, particularly in the looks department which is clearly demonstrated by the way-out styling of its latest four-model NX five-door SUV range.

Looks

In line with its edgy styling, the latest NX, particularly the NX 300 F-Sport I recently had on test, now sports slit-eyed headlamps and a prominent chrome-edged black grille.

The rear end has LED combo lights and a cosmetically enhanced bumper, along with fat 18-inch mag wheels and F-Sport badges on the front sides.

Its redesigned living quarters are now richly furnished and include a 10.3-inch display screen and 10-speaker audio system, Satnav, leather upholstery, heated and ventilated seats, panoramic roof and press-button power back door. The knobs, buttons and switches have also been regrouped for easier, more intuitive usage.

There is cabin space aplenty to comfortably host five biggies and the luggage space is could accommodate all the accessories for a fashion model photo shoot.

Drivability

However, where the F-Sport impresses most is on the road where it dishes up a surprisingly spirited ride, thanks to AWD configuration, six-speed auto transmission and lively turbo-charged 2.0-litre engine which kicks out 175kw and 350NM to deliver 0-100km/h in 7.1 seconds.

What is surprising is this SUV's eagerness to gallop, even in standard mode, but now the driver has the option of selecting Sport, Sport+ or the newly-added Custom modes. Sport + can also be used to increase dampening for more dynamic cling.

This sporty Lexus is pure pleasure to pilot along a stretch of snaking country road devoid of traffic. It clings to the tar with tenacity, and the car displays little inclination towards body lean when being hustled through the twisties.

Peace of mind features include a comprehensive occupant safety net of ABS, EBD with Brake Assist, Traction Control and (on our test model) Blind Spot Monitor and Rear Cross Traffic Alert.

Overall, this particular Lexus is refreshingly different from the rest of the rather bland box-shaped SUV herd.

The F-Sport we piloted wears a price tag of R789,700 which includes a four-year/100,000km warranty and a full maintenance plan for the same period.

ABOUT HENRIE GEYSER

Henrie Geyser joined the online publishing industry through iafrica.com where he worked for five years as news editor and editor. He now freelances for a variety of print and online publications, on the subjects of cars, food, and travel, among others; and is a member of the South African Guild of Motoring Journalists. henrieg@iafrica.com

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