

Opel weathers GM storm

General Motors' (GM) withdrawal from South Africa sent shockwaves through the local car market but one local expert believes that the Opel brand, which was owned by GM, will not be unduly affected.



At the time of the withdrawal, GM was already in the process of selling Opel to the Peugeot group and, with the subsequent announcement of a new distribution and servicing arrangement in SA through Williams Hunt, Jeff Osborne, head of automotive at Gumtree SA, believes the future is still bright for Opel in this country.

“Opels are popular here and their recent new vehicle sales numbers have run against the generally negative trend, and we have seen no drop in the value of previously owned Opels on the site nor any dropping off of interest in listings,” says Osborne.

He says there are over 2,200 Opel vehicles currently listed for sale on Gumtree, the country's busiest virtual automotive showroom. The most popular models on the pre-owned vehicle platform are the Opel hatchbacks, followed by the classic Corsa single cab bakkie.



Opel announces new local distributor, future plans

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“Any mistaken perception that Opel had left the country will be resolved by plans to launch seven new models in the next 12 months as part of a bigger picture of 29 new models in total between 2016 and 2020,” he says. He also notes that it’s “a big positive in terms of used vehicle value” that Williams Hunt will be picking up any existing after-sales warranties and service plans from 1 January 2018.

Osborne singles out the new Opel Astra as a potentially smart investment for vehicle buyers: “It is the 2017 SA Guild of Motoring Journalists Car of the Year because of its innovative technology and road handling ability, and it should hold its value well.”

“Opel is one of the great historic automotive brands which first produced vehicles in Germany in 1898 after starting out as a sewing machine manufacturer. GM bought the company in 1931 and then introduced Opels to South Africa shortly after, so they’ve been part of our motoring landscape for over 80 years,” concludes Osborne.

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