



Daryl Young, general manager, Mc Eneaney Motors and exclusive Ford Motors dealer.

Mc Eneaney Motors: New vehicle sales likely to pass 18,000 units

For the first time in five years, vehicle sales in T&T are likely to pass 18,000 units per annum since the impact of the global financial crisis back in 2009, says Daryl Young, general manager of Mc Eneaney Motors. According to numbers recorded for industry registered vehicles so far this year, sales for January to September totalled 13,767 units.

The number of units moved for the corresponding period five years ago equalled 13,941 - a mere 174 fewer vehicles.

In a Business Guardian interview on Tuesday, Young, who headed the Ford partner dealership owned by ANSA Automotive, said at the end of 2008, 18,908 new vehicles rolled out of showrooms across the country and that volumes for 2014 were likely to surpass that number.

At the end of 2013, 17,246 automobiles were sold. "Mc Eneaney Motors sold a total of 807 units for 2013. At the end of September (2014), we were at 655. We are looking to end the year at about 955 units. The market is a little bit wider than it's been over the last five, six years. Things are a lot more competitive, but at the end of the day, the market has grown from strength to strength and people are buying more cars. The industry is at the highest point I have seen since 2008. There is a market for new vehicles," he said.

Young added, "Interest rates are at an all-time low this year, particularly with the high liquidity in the system. There are so many players that the market has become a lot more competitive and prices are a little more affordable. People in T&T place cars very high on the value listing. A car is the second highest investment after your home."

At present, Mc Eneaney Motors had five per cent of the local automobile market - a figure the company hoped to double in the next five years.

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Young said the objective required a lot of work, but the company was making strategic investments to boost its efforts, which included expanding the models made available at the dealership.

To stay competitive in the market, he said, the role of the sales team had to be strategic - including using traditional advertising medium to increase showroom traffic. But in a market this robust, the company includes the road show concept where its models were displayed at strategic points across the country - be it at malls or other high traffic consumer centres.

Asked what the challenges to its plan were, Young admitted that the two Korean brands Kia and Hyundai had emerged as market contenders and Japanese made Toyota stayed strong. Meanwhile, Nissan maintained its competitive price point.

"It's now a level playing field. Everybody is competing for the same piece of the pie while trying to get their slices bigger. There is no such thing as anyone not being a competitor in our market. We are all going after the same pie. Everybody has a unit in every segment and everybody had a competitive price point going after the same consumer," he said.

Mc Eneaney Motors' culture ensured that savings on the manufacturing end were passed on to local consumer, said Young.

When the Ford Focus and Ford Cougar debuted on the local market, customers noticed the reduction in the price point and the benefits applied to parts, too.

"In some cases, it ranged from five per cent to as high as

eight per cent. Parts have come down by well over 28 per cent," he said.

But how had Government's decision to allow older foreign used vehicles into the system impacted those from the factory?

Young said these two segments were not as interconnected when compared to the entry of foreign used vehicles on local soil.

"The new vehicle market took a bigger hit than it was now. People eventually shifted into their own segments. The second market is large enough to support its own business. The Trinidadian who can afford a Mercedes or a BMW is very unlikely to buy a roll-on roll-off car," said Young.

He added, "That's really for someone who wants to own that type of car. In terms of the middle-income (earner), I think more and more people are gravitating towards newer vehicles because the warranties tend to be a little stronger, the support services are a little more structured and there is more recourse. You can come to a new dealer and feel as though you are almost dealing with the principal now."

One of the true benefits of dealing with ANSA Automotive, he said, was the fact that ANSA Merchant Bank and insurer Tatil fell under the umbrella of the ANSA McAL Group. That facilitated the creation of the In-One product for new vehicle owners where the monthly instalments and premiums were covered in a single monthly payment.

In the ANSA Automotive family, Ford is accompanied by Mitsubishi, BMW and Land Rover brands.

They were managed independently and had individual targets with unique and aggressive marketing strategies.

As competitive as they were, however, Young said they complemented each other.

In cases where clients of one brand had requests that could not be met by another, company official would direct new business to the designated dealership.