



MAN'S TESTING PROGRAMME

TACKLES TCO

MAN AUTOMOTIVE SOUTH AFRICA HAS LAUNCHED ITS MOST AMBITIOUS TRUCK TESTING PROGRAMME TO DATE. PHILIP KALIL-ZACKEY, VICE PRESIDENT OF TRUCK SALES AND PRODUCT AT MAN AUTOMOTIVE SOUTH AFRICA, TELLS CHARLEEN CLARKE THAT THE PROGRAMME IS SOLIDIFYING THE COMPANY'S COMMITMENT TO DELIVERING PREMIUM PRODUCTS TAILORED TO THE UNIQUE DEMANDS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN MARKET.



Photographs by Tarryn Elaine Photography.

The extensive testing initiative, conducted on the notoriously challenging N3 route between Johannesburg and Durban, underscores the company's focus on providing the best total cost of ownership (TCO) for its customers.

"We understand that, when a customer purchases one of our vehicles, they are making a considerable investment in a premium product," says Kalil-Zackey. "Accordingly, we have invested in this extensive testing programme because we always want to deliver the very best TCO to our customers. This intensive testing exercise will enable us to enhance our products in future."

PIONEERING TESTING FOR UNIQUE SOUTH AFRICAN CONDITIONS

Traditionally, MAN's truck testing was based on European conditions. However, the demands of the South African market, including heavier loads, extreme inclines, and varying driver expertise, necessitated a new approach.

"In the past, developing markets would get what was developed for European markets. But in South Africa, we have unique conditions. So, we decided to implement a new testing programme specifically for our markets, which is what we have done. This is a first for us in looking at testing

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from the customer's point of view and focusing on TCO," Kalil-Zackey explains.

The programme involved six trucks, six trailers, and six drivers, including two highly experienced ProfiDrive instructors from Italy. MAN ProfiDrive is an advanced driver training initiative offered by MAN Truck & Bus, designed to enhance the skills, safety, and efficiency of commercial vehicle operators. The programme plays a pivotal role in reducing TCO for fleet operators, while promoting environmental sustainability and road safety.

"It was an eye-opener for them," Kalil-Zackey notes. "They confirmed what we already knew – that the conditions here are far tougher than in Europe. This feedback is invaluable because it allows us to develop trucks that are better suited for South African conditions and, by extension, other developing markets."

COMPREHENSIVE DATA COLLECTION FOR FUTURE INNOVATION

The physical testing has been concluded, but the work is far



ABOVE: The MAN team gathers before the start of the rigorous testing programme. The programme involved six trucks, six trailers, and six drivers, including two highly experienced ProfiDrive instructors from Italy. The trucks were tested on the challenging N3 from Johannesburg to Durban.

The vehicles completed six round trips on the N3, which is renowned as one of the world's most demanding truck test routes.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE WITH LOCAL CHALLENGES

The Italian drivers were tasked with navigating conditions they had never encountered before, including driving interlinks, transporting 56 tonnes, managing steep climbs such as Van Reenen's Pass and the incline from Pietermaritzburg to Mooi River, and operating on the left-hand side of the road.

from over. Each truck had a co-driver, ensuring continuous monitoring and data collection during the testing phase. Now, engineers in South Africa and Germany are analysing the vast amounts of data generated.

"Every day, we would swap drivers and gather data," says Kalil-Zackey. "The product engineers will compile all this information into a detailed analysis. This will help us make improvements not just for South Africa, but also for regions like the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, and South America."

ELIMINATING DRIVER ERROR

One of the key takeaways from the testing was the significant

impact of driver skill on vehicle performance. "Running the trucks on these routes with different drivers, we see a trend," Kalil-Zackey observes. "A good driver can achieve excellent results, while a less skilled driver may deliver subpar outcomes. Our goal is to eliminate this variability by enhancing our vehicles with systems that compensate for driver error. This will help customers achieve better TCO regardless of who is behind the wheel."

The testing programme also highlighted the importance of integrating advanced technology – such as MAN's Rio

While MAN is keen to move towards Euro 6 standards, the company remains pragmatic about the challenges of cost and market readiness. "We would love to move to Euro 6 as MAN, but this remains a Euro 2 market. Were we to only offer Euro 6 trucks, it would be extremely hard to remain price competitive," Kalil-Zackey says.

"We also face the reality of competing in a market where premium products come at a significant price difference compared to budget options," he continues. "We need to ensure that our customers receive the same TCO benefits



in-house telematics system – into its trucks. These systems will be offered in MAN trucks this year to further support drivers and optimise vehicle performance.

SA TO THE FORE AND THE FUTURE OF PREMIUM TRUCKING

This testing programme not only places South Africa on the map for MAN's global operations, but also positions the country as a leader in pioneering solutions for developing markets. "In the long term, we will see lots of improvements to our products as a result of this testing," Kalil-Zackey affirms. "It's an exciting time to see this happening here in South Africa. Very little is being done globally for markets like ours, and we're proud to be leading the way."

as they would with Euro 6 trucks, even if we're working with trucks that don't have the same emissions standards."

A MILESTONE FOR MAN AUTOMOTIVE

This testing programme marks a milestone in MAN Automotive South Africa's history. "It sends truck operators a clear message: we are committed to ensuring that MAN remains a leader in providing exceptional value and reliability. As a responsible OEM, we're constantly enhancing our products and striving to provide the best TCO to our customers," Kalil-Zackey emphasises. "This programme is a testament to that commitment. Our customers can expect innovation and excellence from a premium supplier, and we're proud to deliver on those expectations." **F**