

Chinese cars at eye level

The ADAC Technical Center in Landsberg has examined 13 Chinese car models from the last three years and has come to the conclusion that Chinese vehicles are serious competitors and are convincing in many of the test categories. With two exceptions, all cars achieved five out of five stars in the Euro NCAP crash test. In the swerve test, in which the safety behavior and in particular the proper functioning of the ESP are checked, the test candidates did not show any weaknesses either. Many vehicles from European manufacturers achieved worse results.

The ADAC experts also found that the quality of the materials and workmanship of the bodywork and interiors was mostly good. "Our tests show: Chinese manufacturers have caught up considerably in recent years and can now keep up with established brands," says ADAC Technology President Karsten Schulze.

On the other hand, the car club saw a recurring shortcoming in the assistance systems. Traffic sign recognition, lane departure warning and distance systems often only functioned unreliably. This is where European manufacturers benefit from their decades of experience with these highly complex systems. However, you can also see how quickly Chinese manufacturers react to criticism: In newer models from Nio, for example, the systems have already improved significantly.

Not everything always runs smoothly in terms of operation either, which is mainly due to the strong focus on touchscreens. Complex menu structures in combination with sometimes sluggishly responding displays, software errors and incorrect translations repeatedly cause problems when controlling the air conditioning, navigation or entertainment.

In terms of price, Chinese models almost always undercut European manufacturers, often by several thousand euros. However, a car with a low purchase price could turn out to be more expensive later on, for example due to unexpectedly high depreciation or repair costs. In addition, the dealer network is not yet as dense as that of the established competition. While BYD, Maxus and MG are broadly positioned, it is currently unclear how a new vehicle will be delivered at Aiways, for example. For maintenance and repairs, Chinese manufacturers often cooperate with providers such as ATU and Euromaster.

Florian Hördegen, Head of Vehicle Technology at the ADAC Technical Center Landsberg, contradicts the image often conveyed by the media of a "flooding of the European market": "In terms of total sales, Chinese cars currently account for less than two percent in Germany." However, the boundary between European and Chinese manufacturers is no longer as clear-cut as it was a few decades ago. BMW and Citroën, for example, have some of their models manufactured entirely in China and the Smart brand has been relaunched in a joint venture between Mercedes-Benz and Geely. (aum)

Images for article



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