

UK car washes clean up despite recession

LONDON, UK: Britons spent a whopping £523 million (almost R6 billion) on car washes last year despite thinking that washing our own cars achieves better results, finds Datamonitor.

Research* by the independent business analyst has revealed that we are far more likely to pay for our car to be washed than do it ourselves despite economic pressures, showing that it is a low cost luxury that we won't give up.

Datamonitor found that last year each car in the UK was cleaned more than 8 times in total - and drivers paid to get it cleaned an average of 5 times, spending £15 (about R170) on commercial car washing in the year.

Alex Jeater analyst at Datamonitor said: "Drivers are clearly prepared to spend cash on paying to have their car washed even during the height of the recession when this is something we could easily cut back on, particularly as our research shows that most car owners believe cars are cleaner when they do it themselves.

Hand washing winning hands down

"When paying, it is hand car washes that are winning in the commercial sector. Although the jet wash and more traditional automatic car washes still have a firm future on forecourts in the UK, hand car washes, including those we see in our supermarket car parks, now account for 45% of the commercial wash market".

However, service station car washes are fighting back. Operators are highlighting the environmental benefits of using automatic machines over hand washing - a relevant issue, especially with water shortages and a hosepipe ban for much of the north west of England.

The UK still lags behind much of Europe in acting on the environmental impact of commercial car washing. For example, in Germany stringent water recycling regulation means that in many regions it is illegal for motorists to wash their car at home. Consequently last year German motorists spent on average £35 (about R400) at commercial car washes - over twice the amount spent by motorists in the UK.