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Jul 3, 2010

Fabulously fun Fabia

Petite but perky, Skoda hatch offers more bang for your buck
 By [christopher tan](#), senior correspondent

SKODA FABIA 1.2 TSI
Price: \$73,800 with COE
Engine: 1,197cc 8-valve inline-4 turbo
Power: 105bhp at 5,000rpm
Torque: 175Nm at 1,550-4,100rpm
Transmission: Seven-speed dual-clutch
0-100kmh: 10.2 seconds
Top speed: 189kmh
Fuel consumption: 5.3 litres/100km (city-highway)
Agent: Harvest Automobiles



ST PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER TAN

The new Skoda Fabia demonstrates just how capable a puny 1.2-litre engine can be. Over the weekend, I was able to attend two football parties held at both ends of the island almost within the span of the half-time break - with four occupants in tow and without having to shift the car's transmission into Sport mode.

The Fabia is longer and taller than the new VW Polo, which has the same platform. While its wheelbase is almost identical to the Polo's, it is not as wide.

On paper the Polo 1.2 TSI is quicker but the Fabia proves to be somewhat perkier than its stated performance numbers.

Open the throttle and the pint-sized turbo power plant responds eagerly, hitting 5,000rpm promptly, repeatedly. Each time, it sounds as unburstable as the stoutest four-cylinder engines you care to name.

The energetic and efficient engine is manufactured by Skoda at its Czech plant for the Volkswagen Group.

The Fabia's 1.2 TSI is mated to a seven-speed DSG transmission, which swops ratios as urgently or as leisurely as your right foot dictates.

Compared with that of the Polo, the Fabia's chassis is a tad more edgy, a trait which raises its entertainment value by a notch, especially when you are driving it enthusiastically.

Like the entry-level VW, though, the Skoda is pretty austere in terms of equipment and choice of materials. Do not expect the level of finish you find in the Skoda Yeti.

Nevertheless, it trumps the Polo on the passive safety front - it has six airbags versus only two in the VW.

On that front, the Fabia offers more tangible value for money. And it is priced \$10,000 less than the Polo.

The car you pick is only a matter of personal taste. The Polo is arguably prettier - stylistically cleaner and smarter. The Fabia

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does not seem to have the street cred of a modern hatch.

If the cosmetic aspects are not a big consideration for you, the Fabia is most definitely the better buy.

Like the Polo, it will also have a 'GTI' version. Skoda calls it the Fabia vRS, fitted with a twincharged 1.4-litre 180bhp engine.


But more on that later. Right now, the 1.2 TSI has proven itself once again. In fact, the mighty mite is so punchy that Skoda will put it in a significantly bigger car: the Camry-sized Octavia.

Yes, I know, that would have been unthinkable just five years ago. I can't wait for the Octavia 1.2 TSI to arrive to see how it drives.

What will the Volkswagen Group do next for its 'downsizing' exercise? A 1-litre engine, perhaps? Or even a 900cc unit?

If it is able to pull this coup off, diesels may soon lose their lustre in the efficiency race.

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