

THE TYRE INDUSTRY: WORKING AS ONE

The Global Data Service Organisation (GDSO) for tyres and automotive components is only a few months old in the tyre industry but is doing an exceptional job at elevating it. The international non-profit organisation standardises data related to tyres and defines solutions to access and exchange data. Moreover, it establishes worldwide agreement on a web service to facilitate data access by stakeholders. Tyre Trends caught up with Riccardo Giovannotti, GDSO Secretary General, who explained how GDSO functions, the significance of sharing knowledge within the tyre industry and about getting more tyre manufacturers on board with the organisation.



Can you tell us a bit about GDSO?

GDSO was established in January 2022, which makes us pretty young. It was founded by five founding members that are tyre manufacturers – Bridgestone, Continental, Goodyear, Michelin and Pirelli. GDSO wants to be technology-agnostic; therefore, we aren't paying attention to just one specific technology. We want to stick to standardised technology in line with the first word of our pay-off: 'Standardise. Share. Simplify.'

When we talk about data, that could be static data like the tyre brand, tyre dimension, date of production etc. or also some possible performance data like the rolling resistance value, the uniformity data etc.

Today, the bigger challenge for the tyre industry is to retrieve tyre data. Visual inspection, data inspection etc. are causing a lot of waste of time and missed opportunities, leading to a lack of profitability – not just for the tyre manufacturers but all the stakeholders involved in the tyre value chain.



When you say data, what kind of data do you mean?

I mean the data around the tyre.



The tyre industry is one that is not very keen on sharing data, especially when it comes to raw materials. So what is the purpose of coming together to retrieve data?

We know that everyone in the industry is competing fiercely with one another. However, in the past five to six years, the tyre industry has realised that the competition will change. We are entering a digital era of opportunities and our vehicles are becoming more connected. Hence, we really need to step up together and elevate the tyre sector to the digital age. After that, tyre manufacturers will definitely compete with one another. But before we get there, we have to join forces so that the scale-up of the entire industry may be quicker. Thus, it is a win-win situation.

Plus, we need to share our knowledge with one another. Sharing knowledge is not an issue if we want to solve the industry's problems together. In fact, sharing knowledge presents opportunities. So it's all about the mindset – to



work together towards opportunities. And I am sure that tyre manufacturers will start competing once the data is available in an electronic format on the services to be provided, which would be very interesting. Therefore, we would like to unlock this potential through the sharing of knowledge and information, which should be further based on simplification.



Speaking of knowledge sharing, are you open to having more GDSO members to get their insights?

While we already have a solution for retrieving data, we are open to engaging new members. Five members are not enough, and we need to bring the tyre industry to another level. In order to achieve this, we need new members to join us who can share their input from a technical standpoint. Hence, our organisation is already shaped with a clear governance that wants to be transparent. We want to have a shared platform from a collaboration standpoint. For this, we need the cooperation of different technical aspects made by different tyre manufacturers. The point is to come together for one common goal.



Can you tell us more about your solution?

The solution that we have invented is something that is not disruptive. It is based on the common commitment towards standardisation: the Tyre Information Service (TIS). Before launching the solution, we were looking for some benchmarks. While we had a clear understanding of 'what' the problem was, we wanted the 'why' to exist. Thus, before addressing the 'how', we decided to go for a benchmarking. It was possible that some other industry (not necessarily the vehicle or tyre industry, but beyond that) may have tackled the same challenge. And the answer was that no one had done it. This was because of the old mindset that competitors cannot share. So we engaged with stakeholders and went through ISO, GS1 etc. and brought about the solution. Our target is to work with entities and not with a single owner of the vehicle or tyre. The intention is to create an ecosystem.

The fact is that the tyre industry was still perceived as an old industry. Something like a beauty product – just a black product placed on the road. However, at the same time, we decided to consider this product as an asset, because from an engineering standpoint, it is the first sensor for the vehicle. Therefore, we can start understanding the friction condition, the road condition, the vehicle behaviour and so on. Earlier, every tyre manufacturer would start building services and solutions starting from this. Hence, we have an engineering angle but also new digital services. In truth, the tyre industry is also working on prognostic services. Ultimately, the concept behind unlocking the potential is to enable services and solutions that may make mobility safer and more sustainable.



Do you have data analysts on your team?

No, we don't. GDSO acts as the highway controller – we show and provide the ticket to the correct entrance and the correct exit. However, the data and data ownership remain with the tyre manufacturer. We just provide an interface and a platform where the data provided by the tyre companies can be seen. This highway should just be an additional asset to be used and not burden the different stakeholders.



How are you making sure that the data is secure?

Cybersecurity does not really apply to GDSO. However, we want our members to have high standards of cybersecurity. We want the members and tyre manufacturers to sit together and set the standard that they must adopt for cybersecurity to apply to the TIS.



Being a non-profit organisation, what is the source of income for GDSO?

Our only source of income is the membership fees. Also, in any case, every start-up will be sustainable from an economic standpoint as well. And this is what we keep in mind as members, that is, to be sustainable as an organisation. Thus, we are already working on creating new services that we may sell (but not to make profits). The organisation itself is robust enough to be long-lasting.



Is it easy to get more tyre manufacturers on board with GDSO, especially Asian manufacturers who are establishing their base in Europe?

We are already in the spotlight made by the big tyre manufacturers. Besides, different tyre associations were involved in this journey from the very beginning. I am in talks with Japan Automobile Tyre Manufacturers Association (JATMA) about the latest updates in the tyre industry and how they can now apply in order to be members of GDSO as well. Similarly, I am doing the same with other European and American tyre manufacturers. Besides, I also have plans on getting in touch with the Chinese tyre manufacturers. Hence, the momentum is quite good.

Nevertheless, I think the biggest challenge is going to be telling some of the tyre mould companies – which do not have a very global perspective and not a very long business plan – that digitalisation is not an option; it is a must and just a matter of time. I understand that these mould companies tend to concentrate more on daily, manufacturing-oriented activities. They may not have a clear signal of digitalisation as their customers are not demanding it yet. But they can start by having a clear understanding of what will be the long-term view – even if not by implementing digitalisation immediately – and can plan a strategy for the years going forward. ■