

11 years, zero regrets: The premio that endures all

Andrew Tumuhameho has driven his 2000 Toyota Premio for more than a decade. Beyond nostalgia, he shares what it takes to keep a car running smoothly, why sharing it can be risky, and how simple habits can extend its life.

BY ROLAND NASASIRA

It is increasingly rare for a motorist to drive the same car for 10 years, especially with new models and brands entering the market almost every year. Most car enthusiasts tend to upgrade, enticed by better performance, comfort, or technology. However, Andrew Tumuhameho has passionately owned his 2000 model Toyota Premio since December 2014 and remains loyal

to it, 11 years later.

"When I bought this car, I had no intentions of replacing it. I have used it through thick and thin, and I have not found any reason to change it. Most importantly, I enjoy driving it with the confidence that I can go anywhere in this country without the worry of being stranded because I cannot find a spare part or a mechanic," Tumuhameho explains.

He purchased the 26-year-old Jap-

ENGINE AND PERFORMANCE

• The engine size of 1,800cc refers to the total volume of all four cylinders. This size allows the engine to produce enough power for smooth city and highway driving without being too heavy on fuel. A 4-cylinder engine strikes a balance between efficiency, performance, and lower maintenance costs. Running on petrol (gasoline) gives it smooth acceleration and quieter operation compared to diesel engines.

• 130 hp (horsepower) indicates the engine's overall power. This is sufficient for everyday driving, handling highways, overtaking, and carrying a full car without strain.

170 Nm torque measures the rotational force of the engine, which determines how quickly the car can start moving and how well it handles weight. This level of torque is comfortable for city traffic and longer trips with passengers or luggage.

• 4-speed automatic transmission This transmission automatically shifts gears without a clutch, making driving easier in traffic. While modern cars often have more gears (6-8), a 4-speed automatic is reliable, simple to maintain, and smooth for regular driving conditions.

anese saloon for Shs15m, a price he argues would not buy a vehicle in as good mechanical condition as his Premio, which has covered 207,000 km and continues to perform reliably. For him, the secret to longevity lies in careful ownership and attention to detail.

One driver, one mechanic

Tumuhameho credits much of his car's durability to having both a dedicated driver and a trusted mechanic.

"When my mechanic services the car, he knows exactly what parts have been replaced and what needs attention. If any spare part is required, he knows where to find it. Whenever I encounter a mechanical issue, he is the first person I turn to," he explains.

Sharing the car has been an educational experience. On two occasions, friends returned it with damage: once it had a damaged gearbox, and another time it had a ruptured transmission system. Both incidents were costly to repair.

"When I drive it myself, I learn how the car behaves under different conditions, how to navigate potholes and road humps. If I park in a public area, I leave my contact information with the security guard instead of leaving my keys behind. That is how carefully I take care of it," he adds.

Since acquiring the Premio, Tumuhameho has replaced the shock absorbers once, which cost Shs600,000 for a set of four, and the steering rack, which cost Shs300,000.

Other expenses have mostly been for routine maintenance, including brake pads, air cleaner, fuel and oil filters, transmission fluid, gearbox oil, coolant, spark plugs, and wipers, which he estimates at about Shs220,000 for each minor service.

Service intervals for older cars

Typically, mechanics recommend servicing a car every 5,000 kilometres. However, with older vehicles such as Tumuhameho's Premio, this advice changes.

As engines age, they require more frequent attention. For his car, servicing might be necessary every 3,000 to 4,000 kilometres, depending on the condition of the engine. At some point, major overhauls may be required, although he has not reached that stage yet.

"The key is to visit your garage regularly. Just because the engine starts and drives you from one place to another does not mean everything is fine. Regular servicing helps prevent minor mechanical issues, such as piston widening, from developing into costly repairs," he explains.

Driving habits matter

Tumuhameho strongly advises against sharing cars. Different driving habits can put a strain on a vehicle, impacting its longevity.

"The most important tip for vehicle maintenance is to find a reliable mechanic. Many fake mechanics may claim to understand various vehicle technologies. Often, the cost of service can scare owners away, causing them to jump from one mechanic to another. Instead, find one mechanic who understands your car brand and build a relationship with them. When a mechanic cares for your car as if it were their own, you will be able to drive it for years without major issues," he says.

Hygiene and care

Exterior and interior cleanliness play a significant role in a car's durability. Dirt, dust, and mud can gradually deteriorate the paint, sometimes beyond repair. Tumuhameho recommends washing the car at least twice a week to preserve the factory finish.

Similarly, interior detailing is essential and should be done at least once every few months. This thorough cleaning process may involve unscrewing the seats and having experts clean the floor and ceiling. This detailed approach removes dust, food debris, and pests, such as cockroaches, which can damage wiring components. Regular cleaning also helps extend the life of car seats, whether they are fabric or leather.

Resale value

A well-maintained car not only performs better but also retains higher resale value. Tumuhameho values his Premio at no less than Shs25m, reflecting both its mechanical reliability and the care it has received over 11 years. His story demonstrates that with patience, consistent maintenance, trusted mechanics, and careful driving, even an older car can serve reliably for more than a decade.

For car owners looking to extend the life of their vehicles, Tumuhameho's advice is simple: know your car, nurture it, and treat it as more than just a mode of transport. With dedication, it can reward you with years of dependable service.



SHS15M
COST OF THE CAR IN
2014

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