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Ranger rear view


Ranger interior

Ford pickup penetrates

By Ahmad Muto

For a long time, Toyota has been the biggest vehicle brand in Uganda, with the biggest market share. Last year, it sold 546 new Toyota Hilux pickups, followed by Mitsubishi L200 at 242 units, according to the Uganda Motor Industry Association data. However, newcomer Ford was the major highlight of the year, with its tally of 135 Ranger pickup trucks sold.

Ford's Ranger grabbed a big part of the market that once belonged to Toyota, Mitsubishi L200, Nissan Hardbody and Isuzu DMAX.

Mohammed Ssali, a driver at the information ministry, says the Ford Ranger he is currently driving is his fourth vehicle and he likes it for its size and stability on the road.

Ssali notes that when changing gears, the vehicle takes time to respond and it is here that he thinks the Toyota Hilux is better. He says with the refresher training they get at Cooper Motors Corporation, understanding the car is getting easier.

Toyota sold their biggest number of pickups in March, with 108 units, accounting for 68% of total sales, while the Ford had their best sales in May, with 20 units, accounting for 23% of their total sales.

Is Toyota worried that Ford is picking up?

Franklin Beemanya, the Ford sales manager, says set on the Ugandan market because the biggest buyer of new vehicles is the Government. He says in the public service manual of vehicles, engines have been benchmarked on Toyota.

"The Government says a permanent secretary should get a vehicle with 4.5cc and directors not more than 3.0cc because traditionally, it believed the bigger the engine, the better the performance. But now with Ford, you can have a small engine and still get good power," Beemanya explains.

Ford benchmarks all their cars on what is already on the market. The Ford Ranger has a 2.2 litre engine, but it does not compromise on power.

"It is still more powerful than all the cars we have in the midrange below 2.5litres. The one that can match is the Volkswagen Amarok, which is a bi-turbo 2.2cc and gives 218Kw of power, while the new Toyota Hilux's 2.5cc engine gives 110Kw of power. Beemanya says

Amarok matches because Volkswagen started using the GD engine in 2015 yet Ford has been using it for a long time. It is also important to note that Ford has the longest service interval in this market, according to Beemanya, with pick-ups at 7,500km, while their competitors do about 5,000km.

"In the life of a car, say 200,000km, you will service a Toyota HiLux 40 times, but service a Ford Ranger only 26 times. Let us say servicing a Ford is expensive. This is 13 extra free services. Worldwide, it is even better," he says.

Beemanya adds: "We service after 7,500km because of the conditions. It would be after 10,000km, but it is less because of our poor roads. If one is looking at the total cost of maintenance, I do not see why one would not buy a Ford," he adds.

Other brands

Beemanya says the Isuzu DMAX, Nissan Hardbody and the Mitsubishi L200 are not as technologically advanced as the Ford Ranger.

"For a long time, the Toyota Hilux did not change their KD engine because it used to work well. Hilux used to have longer legroom than the previous Ford Ranger, but not the Ford Ranger T6 that was introduced in 2013," he says.

Robert Musamali, a driver at the Uganda Cancer Institute, says the new Ford Ranger is not only fuel-friendly, but also has an appealing design and six airbags.

Musamali adds that he has driven an Isuzu DMAX pickup before, but likes the Ford Ranger's performance. The furthest he has driven is from Kampala to Gulu and Soroti.

Penetrating the market is not an easy task, given the many brands struggling for the small market of new cars – mostly the Government, NGOs and corporate companies.

Beemanya says if they can put a tally of the features on different cars, people would know why some vehicles have a certain price. But the Toyota Hilux will eclipse the offering price of a Ford in Uganda because of brand value.

Hamis Masabe, a driver with the information ministry, says the Ford Ranger has several features such as the cruise control. He says he likes manual transmission vehicles.

"I like manual transmission cars and the furthest I have travelled with a Ford Ranger was with a friend's vehicle to Kigali and South Sudan. The Ford Ranger responds well to different terrain," he says.

Nissan

The Nissan Hardbody was Nissan's bestseller last year, at 120 units. The highest sales were in December at 31 units. However, there has been an increase on their tally this year with 103 units, up from last year's 75 units by September, with the highest sale of 39 vehicles in the same month.

Isuzu

The Isuzu TFS did a total 98 units last year, with the highest sale in December with 18 units. However, there has been an increase this year, tallying 108 vehicles by September from 67 units last year for the same period.

Meanwhile, Mitsubishi L200 has done 120 units so far from January to September, with their highest sale in January and February being 26 units in each. This is a decrease from last year's 28 units in January and a significant fall from last year's 133 units in February.

By September last year, Mitsubishi had tallied 245 vehicles, which has dropped to 120 for the same period this year. The new Toyota Hilux is still raking big numbers in, but not necessarily having a good year unless something changes.

Hilux has sold 382 units as of September compared to 431 units during the same time last year. It is not a good year for Ford either. Last year, Ford had sold 114 units by September, but has suffered a drop in the Ford Ranger this year. It is the same for the Wildtrak, which sold 10 units last year, but dropped to four this year for the same period.

Mazda

Mazda also managed to make a big leap this year from five units last year to 27 units by September this year.

On Toyota getting worried about the Ford Ranger, Isaac Kyazze, the general/sales manager of Walusimbi's Garage, says that will depend on performance of the two pickups and besides, Toyota has a high resale value.

"Toyota has a high resale value. If you buy a Ford Ranger today and put a number plate, the moment it hits the road, it may lose about sh50m. Toyota has a high resale value in that respect," Kyazze says. He adds that the market is generally excited about the Ford Ranger because it is new and looks elegant. However, the car is not easy to maintain because the spare parts are expensive.

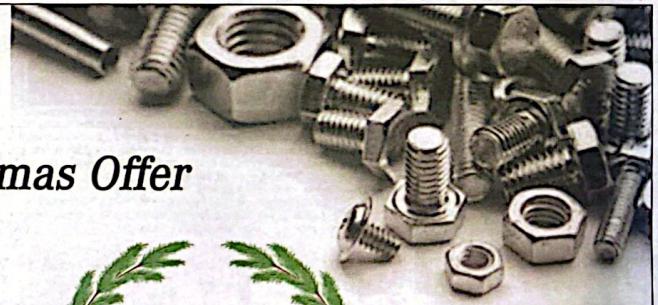
'Toyota' market




Ranger cargo bin


The Ford Ranger is spacious. Photos by Ahmad Muto

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