

State of the Motoring Industry: As seen by Toyota

 By [Naresh Maharaj](#)

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The sixth instalment of the State of the Motor Industry (SOMI) event, hosted by Toyota South Africa Motors (TSAM), took place at Kyalami Race track recently and as per usual, it was a real eye-opener. But whilst it was a sneak preview of the carmaker's design direction, corporate plans as well as 2023 product info, looking back was also very important.



Source: Supplied | Dion Chang and Andrew Kirby

TSAM really took a battering from the April 2022 floods that hampered production like never before seen in their history. Practically everyone knows of 'Toyota City' in Prospecton, just south of Durban. The plant has been there for decades. But the plant was out of action for 16 weeks. What TSAM soon learnt is that thanks to their people, they all rose above the challenges of those devastating floods.

But back to the State of the Motoring industry which affords the President and CEO of TSAM Andrew Kirby and his colleagues the opportunity to discuss the affairs of the local automotive industry, its socio-economic context as well as global trends in the sector.

Simon Humphries on Toyota and Lexus Design

Simon Humphries, head of Toyota and Lexus Global Design, says the automotive industry has literally spent the last 100 years following a tried and tested formula but right now we are undergoing an unprecedented period of upheaval. "Where we used to have only one powertrain, now we have five; where we used to be isolated, now we are connected."

"The Land Cruiser is a vehicle you literally entrust with your life. This is a vehicle whose design should celebrate its unique functionality - not try to hide it under unnecessary decoration".



Source: Supplied | New Urban Cruiser

"The Crown is a completely new genre experience where you get all the dynamic experiences of a sedan with a new viewpoint – thanks to the increased tyre size and lifted height. The exterior design enhances the slick, lifted nature of the car whilst not letting it become unstable by finding new ways to plant the car to the road."

Andrew Kirby on 2023 sales and carbon neutrality

President and CEO of TSAM Andrew predicts that a total of 570,000 vehicles will be sold in South Africa this year – including 375,642 for passengers, 161,317 for Light Commercial Vehicles (LCV) and 33, 041 for others. "We got to this calculation based on how we see the market, coupled with what we can physically supply as Toyota. I must just stress that if stock constraints weren't a real factor, we would actually be forecasting a 580,000 market."

Last year, Kirby had forecasted a total of 540,000 vehicles to be sold in South Africa in 2022. However, a totally unexpected challenge came in the form of the floods in April which resulted in the complete cessation of production for three months at Toyota's Prospecton Plant in Durban.

New vehicles

Senior vice president of sales and marketing at TSAM, Leon Theron is pleased that Toyota is still South Africa's favourite brand in the six decades it's been operating in the local motoring industry.

Posting the company's 43rd straight year as the market leader, Toyota (including the Lexus and Hino brands) outperformed a number of retail challenges to achieve a laudable total of 132 035 new-vehicle registrations. This translates to a market share of 24.9% for 2022.



Source: Supplied

From a new product perspective, Theron also introduced the following models to the audience:

Toyota Mirai: "This is the company's flagship hydrogen-powered fuel-cell electric vehicle which is not available at our dealers yet."

Lexus UX Bev: "Once we're ready for BEV roll-out, this will be one of the first models in our battery-electric portfolio."

Lexus NX Phev: "These models will become more mainstream over the next transitional period. Key numbers for this one are 60km range in full electric mode, and this one dispatches the zero to 100 in 6,2 secs."

Lexus RC: "The new generation RX range comprises five models including Hybrid and a petrol variant. The model we're showing here today is the Plug-In Hybrid which will only join the local line-up later."

Toyota Fortuner: "The refreshed Fortuner sports an aggressive new styling with revised LED headlamps, front grille and bumper treatment. There is also an added red and black interior trim option."

Toyota Vitz: "The Vitz takes over the mantle from the outgoing Agya which has already established our presence in the A segment. It will be in showrooms during the second quarter of this year."

Toyota Urban Cruiser: "Built in Toyota's plant in India, this model boasts an all-new SUV design, a larger body with more space, increased safety specification, climate control, cruise control and reverse camera. The all-new Urban Cruiser will also go to market during the second quarter."

ABOUT NARESH MAHARAJ

Naresh Maharaj is a petrol head who loves cars and writing about them. He is also a Member of the SA Guild of Motoring Journalists. Naresh is also an international sports correspondent and an acclaimed corporate MC and voice-over artist. Naresh is a sports/news producer for community radio stations and also an award-winning sports journalist. Contact Naresh on nimaharaj321@gmail.com

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