

Marketing Communications Strategy and Brand Sustainability of Toyota Astra Motor Indonesia

Ivan Riza Belgrade
 Communication Department
 Bina Nusantara University
 Jakarta, Indonesia
 ivanrizabelgrade@gmail.com

Viriena Puspita
 Communication Department
 Bina Nusantara University
 Jakarta, Indonesia
 nia_206@hotmail.com

Abstract— *Strategies applied to build brand and customer loyalty have an influence on a company's financial position. Toyota Astra Motor Indonesia, one of Japanese automotive companies running in Indonesia, maintains its brand sustainability in Indonesia by applying a communications strategy through collectivist culture approach. This strategy is implemented by displaying advertisements that attract the attention of Indonesian people and offer to fulfil their needs, for example, by featuring the themes of family, friendship, art and culture as well as the need to congregate. This strategy is implemented on a face-to-face basis by establishing more outlets in outlying regions or via media by issuing advertisements on mass media and digital media with the involvement of influencers. This is aimed to maintain Toyota's brand sustainability.*

Keywords: *Marketing Communication Strategy, Brand, Brand Sustainability, Collectivism*

I. INTRODUCTION

In maintaining or building up a brand through integrated communications, selecting which promotion strategies and programmes are the most effective poses the biggest challenge. Being an intangible asset, brand is important to the improvement of a company's performance. It has been proven that brand can leave an impact on loyalty and a company's financial position. One of the most prominent automotive manufacturers in the Indonesian market today is a Japanese company, Toyota. As an old player, this company constantly stabilizes its position as a favorite brand, especially in the Indonesian market. Having its sales trend constantly moving upwards over time, Toyota is leading in the four-wheel vehicle market in Indonesia.

GAIKINDO data (the Indonesian Automobile Industry data) reveals that Toyota secured 29.8 per cent of market share from January to August 2018. Following behind were other popular automobile brands: Daihatsu (17.1 per cent); Honda (14.0 per cent); Mitsubishi Motors (13.2 per cent); and Suzuki (10.8 per cent). As a market leader in the automotive industry in Indonesia, Toyota continuously develops its marketing communications strategy according to the existing condition in Indonesia to achieve brand sustainability. This is performed by marketing techniques including having attractive promotion, providing a wide variety of products ranging from multi-purpose vehicle, sport utility vehicle, hatchback, sedan to coupe and maintaining Toyota's brand equity towards customers, all of which are intended to increase Toyota's sales volume from time to time. With the

increasingly intense competition, making innovations to provide customers with the best possible service is a must.

Marketing communications strategy is a mix of communications planning and communications management intended to meet a preset goal, in which case, the communication is aimed at specific consumers, whose needs are fulfilled with the use of various media. In a simple term, the process of integrated marketing communications strategy development comprises several stages, namely setting the communication goal, assigning the role of each medium, conceiving a message, placing the message on suitable media, observing the message outcome and making adjustments to the message or media.

According to Chaudhuri, A. and Holbrook in their marketing journal entitled *The Chain of Effects from Brand Trust and Brand Affect to Brand Performance: The Role of Brand Loyalty*, serving as a determinant factor of customer commitment is the ability of the brand manager to select a brand concept [1]. A brand concept is the brand image that is based on consumers' needs and is a culmination of direct and indirect brand equity features such as brand awareness and brand identity [1]. In other words, brand management is a process of concept selection [1].

Fournier in his journal entitled *Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, states that increased interest among brand managers is focused on a strong brand relationship as it reflects customer loyalty through emotional bond and commitment [2]. Emotional bond is an affinity for a brand with respect to other available alternatives [2]. Emotional bond can range from warm feeling to true passion [2]. Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H. and Zarantonello, L. in *Journal of Marketing* state that marketing managers may justify promotional expenses that have the potential to produce long-term effects on consumers such as emotional attachment and commitment [3].

The aim of this research was to present a Toyota's marketing communications strategy and brand sustainability model, which will describe a structure that is useful for brand concept management development. To determine the construct brand concept, this research started with the discussion on marketing based on the Indonesian Automobile Industry data, followed by the identification of the communications strategy applied, investigation of the concept of Toyota's brand sustainability and identification of

their effect on customer attachment and commitment to Toyota's brand.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Brand may serve as a key to a company's long-term competitive advantage. Every brand is unique and distinguishable from other brands. A brand is presented with a specific image and purpose to fulfil the needs of its audiences. This process of presenting a brand is called branding, which is not only about market share but also about mind share and heart share.

Brand is one of pivotal elements that can contribute considerably to a company. The company expects that the brand becomes top of mind in the memories of consumers. In general, brand is used as an initial guide for the evaluation of a product's quality, which serves as the most essential element in building a strong brand image of the products offered by a company to its consumers or customers. David A. Aaker (1997) classified brand equity into the following four categories:

- A. Brand awareness, shows the willingness of a potential buyer to recognise and recall that a brand is part of a specific product category.
- B. Brand association, shows the image of a brand against a specific impression with respect to habit, lifestyle, benefit, product attributes, geographical condition, price, celebrity (spoke person), to name but few.
- C. Perceived quality, reflects how a customer perceives the overall quality/advantage of a product or service in relation to the intended purpose.
- D. Brand loyalty, reflects the degree of attachment of a consumer to a product brand.

Marketing communications strategy, according to Clow and Baack (2012), is the coordination and integration of all communications devices, channels and sources in a company into an integrated programme designed to maximise impact on consumers and other stakeholders [4]. Therefore, marketing communications assume a pivotal role to marketers. Without communication, neither consumers nor the public in general will be aware of the presence of a brand in the market [4]. Marketing communications also sucks a substantial amount of budget, requiring marketers to be careful and calculative in developing a marketing communications plan. Whom the communication will be addressed to will be highly determinant to the success of the communication. Appropriate addressing will make the communication process effective and efficient.

III. METHODS

This research is narrative research, which seeks to tell and interpret an existing condition or relationship, a developing opinion, an ongoing process, a consequence or a progressing trend.

Narative research explains and interprets an event of the past or the future through a story. The narration structuring and wording when one interacts and tells a story about an

event in a detailed and significant fashion will provide information on social and cultural position. In this sense, story is not merely a story. It also serves as part of research to help understand what has been performed based on the existing condition.

A qualitative approach is the appropriate approach to be used in this research on the strategy to build brand equity. In this research, the authors observed phenomena occurring in the field, then interpreted and gave meaning to them as they were based on their characteristics and the objective of this reseach, which was to figure out Toyota's marketing communications strategy to reach brand sustainability.

The use of narrative method in this research was intended to observe the reality or events happening in the field to understand them deeper and eventually obtain the data required to meet the research objective. The data obtained provides description on the implementation of Toyota's marketing communications strategy and brand sustainability.

IV. RESULT

Ever since its emergence in 1971, Toyota has been maintaining its position in the largest automotive industry in Asia, notably Indonesia. Toyota has indubitably faced numerous challenges and obstacles to lead and survive in the Indonesian market. The challenges range from the ongoing competition, to the change in consumer behaviour in that consumers tend to be more emotional in their decision to purchase a vehicle, to consumers' desire to appear stylish with the vehicles they have. For this reason, Toyota continuously makes innovations in the products offered to its customers.

Currently, Toyota is consolidating its marketing communications strategy by using the tagline "Let's Go Beyond", which means go beyond people, beyond service, beyond product and beyond technology. This is meant to encourage the public or customers to think ahead about what is to come in the future. This campaign has been run since 2015 and will be continuously waged through Toyota's activities or major events, such as GIAS and IIMS regular automotive exhibitions and motor shows in different regions in Indonesia.

Toyota Astra Motor Indonesia has fully understood the character and local cultures prevailing in Indonesia. For instance, the people of Indonesia tend to develop collectivism, in that living in group is more favoured than living in seclusion. Local issues developing in Indonesia are raised and involved in Toyota's communications strategy. For example, the involvement of the theme of family in the communications has a considerable impact and well represents the humanistic side of Indonesian customers.

Cultural concepts have become a mainstream in anthropology since the beginning and has received great attention in the early development of organisational behaviour studies. Geert Hofstede proposed the cultural concept in the organisational theory as one of the dimensions in understanding organisational behaviour. This concept assumes importance in the economic and management theories in today's globalization era when a great number of multinational companies operating in different corners of the world and encountering different cultures emerge.

For a big player that looks to continuously grow, service for each customer becomes the primary component it must take into account in its implementation in order to survive. In this case, Toyota Astra Motor Indonesia is present and approaches consumers, even to remote areas in Indonesia. In the same manner, showroom is present not only to sell vehicles but also to serve and apply the 3S Toyota usually mentions in each showroom, namely sales, service and spare part to help with customers' needs. Instead of looking to be the leader in the global stage, Toyota takes this approach to be the primary reference and to enhance its reputation in every city. In principle, Toyota Astra Motor Indonesia must be close to the people of Indonesia and fully understand the needs of every customer, especially in terms of mobility, which in this case is non other than vehicle.

In today's time, Indonesian people have diverse characteristics with respect to ownership of motor vehicles, especially cars. Cars do not only serve its basic function, which is to be a means of transport, but also to be items to show off to friends and family. Toyota makes use this to present products representing the characteristics of its users and each target market in Indonesia. All of the vehicle types are diversified according to the market, for example, sport utility vehicles of low, medium to high types such as Toyota Rush, Toyota Fortuner, Toyota Cruiser and Toyota All New C-HR. Among multi-purpose vehicles of low, medium to high types are Toyota Calya, Toyota Avanza, Toyota Kijang Innova, Toyota Sienta, Toyota All New Voxy and Toyota Alphard. Meanwhile, sedans are presented in medium and high types, including Toyota Vios, Toyota Corolla Altis and Toyota Camry.

Toyota's success is not exclusively a result of the diversification of the products offered to its customers. Various activities performed with the purpose of being closer to its consumers, both offline and online, are also responsible for this success. Toyota does not only offer a wide range of products but also approaches its customers through communication and messages that are consistently delivered to the public in the form of stories about friendship, family and Indonesia's local cultures.

Take Toyota Cinema as an example of how stories are presented by Toyota Astra Motor Indonesia. Toyota Cinema is the product of the collaboration between Toyota Indonesia and domestic filmmakers in the form of interesting and meaningful short films. The titles also varies, starting from "Arti Sahabat", to "Ibu", to "Mengakhiri Cinta", to "Jalanin Aja." The last tells about an ordinary trip turning extraordinary. This story tells about four friends keeping their promise to come back amidst their activities to see a family who helped them when they was poisoned in a forest.

Toyota also raises the theme of Indonesia's local cultures through "Salam Indonesia - Bersama Avanza," which tells about the travel across the country by Avanza to explore Indonesian cultures. The beauty of Indonesia is brought to the audience through Salam Indonesia – Bersama Avanza Trips. As of the time at which this research was conducted, there have been 21 episodes showed, one of which is "Legenda Pulau Komodo & Suku Modo." This episode features teacher Zius, a tribal chief living around Lake Kalimutu, who was telling about the history of Komodo Island and the tribe

inhabiting this island, namely Modo, also known as people of Komodo. Another episode, "Musik Mistis dari Desa Telaga Waru, Kebangkruan," tells about the mystical music of Telaga Waru Village played during adat rituals like khitanan (circumcision), wedding and haircut. Telaga Murni music is played as accompaniment.

Through these stories, Toyota is trying to exhibit the cultures existing in Indonesia from the humanistic perspective, namely a philosophical thinking that stresses the importance of human values and position, and makes them the criteria of everything. These stories feature the themes of friendship, family and culture. In other words, Toyota intends to come closer to its customers and present stories to which they can relate, involving the merit of the cultures developing in their surroundings.

Stories about friendship, family and cultures are not the only thing Toyota is trying to present. It collaborates with a youtuber from Semarang, Mas Wahid, to present documentation relating to driving under the theme "Be a Good Driver with Mas Wahid," in which tips for safe and comfortable driving are shared.

In the effort to plan and envision future car presence, Toyota held an event that involved children aged 5 to 8 years to create future car designs. At the Toyota Dream Art Contest themed "your future dream cars" in Tokyo on 29 August 2018 with 650,000 children from 76 countries participating in, children created designs of future vehicles. Xylone Margareth Andariska, 7, from Bendul Merisi Surabaya, became the pride of Indonesia. She won the #goldmedal at this contest. The painting entitled "Mobil Alphabet" she made represents the idea of future cars shaped like alphabetical letters that are so designed to help alleviate illiteracy. This idea was inspired by Xylone's younger sibling's difficulty to read. Her work was chosen because it inspired Toyota engineers to create works that are relevant and valuable to the people.

The following are the other stories presented by Toyota Astra Motor Indonesia to nurture its intimacy with its customers Salam Indonesia Bersama Avanza, A journey across Indonesia to explore its cultural assets, witnessing the beauty of Indonesia through exciting Salam Indonesia - Bersama Avanza trips. Toyota Cinema, A collaboration between Toyota Indonesia and domestic filmmakers in interesting and meaningful film works. Be A Good Driver with Mas Wahid, Safe and comfortable driving by following the tips by Mas Wahid. Toyota Beyond Technology, Toyota is looking to build a better future. Find various Toyota car concepts featuring the latest technology and futuristic designs which bring you a step closer to the future. Toyota Collabs, A collaboration with Indonesian youths to spread to Let's Go Beyond spirit. Beyond Product, Knowledge on new cars launched by Toyota Indonesia. Toyota Motorsport, The powerfulness of Toyota cars is proven in national- and international-scale racing events.

V. CONCLUSION

Toyota's communications strategy is based on the collectivist culture developing in Indonesia. This culture puts a heavy emphasis on the values of togetherness, including cooperation and group responsibility. This has been implemented through advertisements and campaigns that

feature the themes of friendship, family and collectiveness as media of message delivery. We believe that a brand must be sustainable as it possesses something that will fascinate consumers and remind them of it. Creating and building a brand is one thing, but enabling it to grow, develop and stay in the minds of its consumers is simply as important. The brands existing today must compete and fight for their place in consumers' minds to become consumers' priority when fulfilling their needs. Sustainable brands are those that are aware of environmental and social issues. These brands are unique in the eyes and minds of their consumers.

Sustainability assumes importance as it can maintain a business's harmony with the social environment it is established in. This is the greatest support for a business to run well. Having a core value is just as important. Brand is neither an image of identity management nor that of reputation management of a business. It covers all matters regarding a business strategy, from the reason why a business is present, to what is sold, to, most importantly, the business's relationship with its customers. Sustainability offers a more intriguing story, and it makes it easy for a brand to embrace its consumers. Consumers find storytelling as more fascinating. Various stories bring a brand closer to its consumers.

The advantage of the products of a brand with high brand equity is its ability to survive the competition in the market. In this case, Toyota has been able to survive in the automobile market. Today, especially in Indonesia, aggressive strategies applied by competitors such as presenting vehicles with more complete and cutting-edge features at competitive prices do not necessarily usher consumers to them due to the stigma developing in Indonesia.

In addition, Toyota's sales margin will increase with the introduction of vehicles needed and wanted by customers.

Indonesian customers choose Toyota as they believe in the quality and security offered by its products. For example, to improve and maintain its brand, Toyota Astra Motor Indonesia implements various strategies, including staying in touch with its customers, presenting varied products that represent the characters and desires of its customers and conducting other exciting activities, both offline and online, through humanistic messages.

Aside from consolidating its communications strategies and maintaining its brand sustainability, it can be concluded that the key to Toyota Astra Motor Indonesia's survivability amidst the intense competition to date is their eagerness to be present all the way to remote areas in Indonesia to nurture its intimacy with its customers not only through selling but also through servicing and provision of spare parts. It is true that not all vehicles are manufactured in Indonesia, but with careful calculation, Toyota is wholly committed to developing vehicle manufacturing in Indonesia. It is committed to being close with the people of Indonesia and makes vehicles based on the Indonesian consumers' class and market to present vehicles fitting Indonesian consumers' unique character.

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