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Lexus to make presence felt

UMW division plans to make marque a top brand

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PETALING JAYA: Since starting operations in January 2007, Lexus Malaysia president Kuah Kock Heng has been on a mission to let everyone know that there is a new player within the

UMW Toyota Motor Sdn Bhd. Kuah said the company would not have any cross promotional events or activities with Toyota to promote Lexus.

"Lexus is different from Toyota when it comes to business. The product philosophy for both brands is different. The expectations of

"The RX 350 will have an all-new design. We are already receiving orders for it," he said.

Citing Budget 2009 as one of the reasons, Kuah said the company did not have plans to introduce the Lexus Hybrid, which is already available in Singapore.

The Government announced at the budget that franchise holders importing new hybrid, completely built-up cars with an engine capacity below 2,000 cc would be given 100% exemption on import duty and 50% exemption on excise duty.

"The smallest engine within the Lexus range is 2,500 cc," he said, adding that the company might introduce another new model (other than the RX 350) if conditions were right.

"We may launch another model later in the year but we will study the market and see if it would be right to launch."

On the outlook of the automotive industry, Kuah said the luxury car segment would be better positioned for growth during tough economic conditions.

"We forecast that overall the car market will soften this year but the impact would be more on the volume-based segment.

"Price is not an issue for the luxury segment and the customers that the premium segment serves will not have any problems buying cars.

"The Lexus brand serves a very niche market and we feel that our sales will increase (despite the slowdown). Our prices are also competitive compared to the other (luxury) brands," he said.

The price of its vehicles ranges from RM270,000 (IS 250) to RM790,000 (LS 460L).

Currently, the company only has one service centre/showroom in the country and that is its RM35mil 3S (sales, service and spare-parts) Lexus Centre in Mutiara Damansara.

Kuah said there were plans to set up more outlets to be able to serve its customers more efficiently. The company is looking to set up an outlet in Penang and Johor each by year-end.

"We are still studying the possibilities of setting up 3S centres in those locations and hope to do it by year-end."

The company is also temporarily using one of its Toyota outlets in Penang to service Lexus customers.

Kuah said Lexus Malaysia had customers all over the country. It even sends its people to east Malaysia for service-related purposes.

"We will also continue to invest in our people to make sure that we can serve our customers better," he said.

Lexus Malaysia yakin capai unjuran jualan kenderaan

Kelembapan ekonomi tidak jejas permintaan segmen mewah

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LEXUS Malaysia, bahagian kereta mewah UMW Toyota Motor Sdn Bhd, yakin mencapai sasarannya untuk menjual 250 unit kereta tahun ini berbanding 210 unit tahun lalu, walaupun suasana ekonomi tidak begitu memberangsangkan ketika ini.

Presiden dan Pengarah Urusan UMW Toyota, Kuah Kock Heng, berkata bagi mencapai sasaran itu, Lexus Malaysia berusaha meningkatkan perkhidmatannya termasuk selepas jualan dengan memberi latihan khusus kepada kakitangan.

Langkah berkenaan, katanya, bertujuan memastikan kakitangan mereka benar-benar mahir mengenai kenderaan mewah dari Jepun itu serta memahami konsep dan falsafah perniagaan Lexus.

Beliau berkata, kelembapan ekonomi tidak begitu menjejaskan jualan kereta mewah seperti Lexus yang mana ia dijangka hanya menerima kesan minimum kerana pelanggannya adalah daripada golongan berada serta membeli kereta atas dasar minat dan kepuasan.

"Jenama Lexus di Malaysia belum begitu terkenal seperti di Singapura, Taiwan, Korea dan Amerika Syarikat (AS). Justeru, penting bagi kami mewujudkan kesedaran terhadap jenama Lexus sebagai antara kereta mewah terbaik di pasaran tempatan," katanya dalam temubual di Petaling Jaya, Selangor baru-baru ini.

Lexus iaitu bahagian kereta mewah Toyota, dilancarkan pada 1989 di AS, bertujuan menyaingi jenama mewah lain seperti BMW dan Mercedes-Benz.

Lexus Malaysia yang ditubuhkan pada 2007 hanya mempunyai cawangan tunggal di Mutiara Damansara, Petaling Jaya, selain sebuah pusat servis di Pulau Pinang yang berkongsi premis dengan UMW Toyota.

Syarikat itu setakat ini menawarkan empat model Lexus iaitu LS460 dan IS250 yang masing-masing ditawarkan dalam dua varian, GS300 dan RX350.

Model Lexus paling murah ditawarkan ialah IS250 yang berharga kira-kira RM270,000 seunit, manakala paling mahal LS460L yang berharga kira-kira RM790,000 seunit.

Kuah menambah, buat masa ini, Lexus Malaysia tidak mensasarkan angka jualan yang tinggi, sebaliknya untuk tempoh tiga hingga lima tahun pertama penubuhannya, usaha lebih ditumpukan ke arah mewujudkan kesedaran terhadap jenama Lexus di pasaran tempatan.

Katanya, syarikat itu akan melancarkan model baru sepenuhnya untuk RX350 pertengahan bulan depan yang dijangka mengukuhkan lagi kedudukannya dalam pasaran kereta mewah tempatan.

"Kami yakin, dengan pelancaran beberapa model baru yang yang menepati kehendak pengguna di negara ini, jenama Lexus akan semakin dikenali," katanya.

Beliau menambah, sejajar usaha mengukuhkan jenama Lexus di negara ini, syarikat merancang menambah cawangannya di Lembah Klang, di samping membuka cawangan pertama di luar Lembah Klang.

"Johor dan Pulau Pinang dikenal pasti sebagai lokasi utama untuk pembukaan cawangan pertamanya di luar Lembah Klang," katanya.

"Mengikut perancangan asal, kami ingin menubuhkan cawangan terbabit tahun ini, tetapi berikutan kelembapan ekonomi sekarang, kami perlu mengkajinya dengan lebih mendalam terlebih dulu," katanya.

> *"Penting bagi kami mewujudkan kesedaran terhadap jenama Lexus sebagai antara kereta mewah terbaik di pasaran tempatan"*
>
> **Kuah Kock Heng**
> *Presiden dan Pengarah Urusan UMW Toyota*