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Introduction

Since long ago, getting from one place to another has been an essential for many industries around the world. From transportation of goods to a simple process of getting to work has been an important factor for the breakthrough of all industry. In Malaysia according to road transport department (JPJ) data, there are now 31.2 million units of motor vehicles registered in Malaysia as of December 31st, 2019 (Lim, 2020). The estimation of population in Malaysia is roughly 32.6million which brings to the estimated calculation of nearly one person has at least one vehicle. However, the assumption is not accurate as some households fall under the category B40 who may be not able to afford a car and some high-income groups may own more than 1 vehicle per person. However, the traffic congestions are increasing day by day in major cities within the country as the number of vehicles increases more than demolished. The inefficiency in public transport services has added to the troubling issue of traffic congestion and parking issues in Kuala Lumpur (Gautam, 2020). This proves that a large group of population are pressured to own their own vehicle to get to work due to inefficient public transports. The current and only pillars of nation automotive are Proton and Perodua which offers 4-wheeled vehicles for citizens as well as tourists which allows more people could travel from a place to another. However in terms of technology of vehicles around the world, Malaysia automotive had not yet met certain requirements for self-driving cars which may be due to funding, research or technical knowledge to build a truly smart vehicle. Hence, this report will include the technological aspects and the financial aspects of the longest standing nation automotive company, Proton.

Background of Proton

Proton – the pioneer of local automotive industry in Malaysia, which was introduced in 1970 by former prime minister, Dr. Mahathir. After due consultation, the National Car Project was approved and the Heavy Industries Corporation of Malaysia Holdings Berhad (HICOM) signed a joint venture agreement with the Mitsubishi Corporation in December 1982 (Ahmed and Humphreys, 2007). This marks as the starting point of Proton automotive which is based in Shah Alam, located at a suburb of Kuala Lumpur. Proton’s slogan is “Inspiring Connections is about reconnecting to the humanity within us to create real connections. It was a giant leap for the Malaysian automobile industry to manufacture the first Malaysian car, the Saga (Simpson, Sykes and Abdullah, 1998). By pushing the boundaries of technology, we believe we can build stronger relationships, bridging distances between people, relationships, innovation, and create stronger bonds to a better future for mobility.” (PROTON - Brand Story, 2020).

Over the years of the operation, Proton has made great achievements for its creations and employee managements. Below are some of the achievements that Proton had achieved over the years.

Date	Achievement
June 1987	PROTON Cars (UK) Ltd awarded distributorship for UK and the Republic of Ireland.
October 1988	Proton Saga made its public debut at the British International Motorshow. PROTON won three Prestigious awards (two golds and one silver) for quality coachwork and ergonomics.
September 1991	Proton Saga won two gold awards at the British International Motorshow for the second time.
June 1993	PROTON awarded Asian Management Award in Operations Management by The Asian Institute of Management.
August 1995	PROTON awarded Most Outstanding Corporation in R&D investment by the Minister of Human Resources.
March 1996	PROTON selected amongst top 10 Malaysian companies.

December 2002	<p>-PROTON won Best Landscape Competition (Second Place Factory Category).</p> <p>-PROTON received Appreciation Award for Contribution to the Development of Malaysian Sports 2002.</p> <p>-PROTON awarded Sectoral Winner for the Industrial Market at KPMG/The Edge Shareholder Value Award 2002</p> <p>-PROTON awarded Motor Vehicles and Transport Equipment Sector Leader Award among the top 1,000 Malaysian Companies.</p> <p>-PROTON received Highest Increase in Net Profit Award among companies listed on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange for financial year 2002-2003.</p>
December 2004	<p>-Proton Waja named The Greenest Car by Australian Automotive Institution.</p> <p>-PROTON awarded Malaysia's Best Brand Award.</p> <p>-PROTON awarded National Creativity & Innovation Award 2004.</p> <p>-Proton Waja awarded 4.5 stars out of a 5-star rating for being the Most Economical and Greenest Sedan in Australia.</p>
May to December 2006	<p>-PROTON awarded Readers Digest Most Trusted Brand Gold award 2006 (car category).</p> <p>-Satria Neo's 2,000km Drive Challenge KL - Phuket – KL participated by 20 analysts, fund managers and media (motoring editors and journalists).</p> <p>-Proton Savvy awarded Savvy The Most Fuel Efficient Drive Around Peninsular Malaysia by The Malaysian Book of Records for having completed 1,608 km around Peninsular Malaysia with 1¾ tanks of fuel.</p> <p>-Proton Savvy Fuel Efficient Drive:1,608km around Peninsular Malaysia completed with 1¾ tanks of fuel, finding a place in the Malaysian Book of Records.</p> <p>-Proton Savvy awarded Best Car in the Supermini Category at NST CarsBikes & Trucks Car of The Year Award 2006.</p>
2009	Proton received Asia Pacific Innovation Award 2009 from MSC Software Corporation.

	<p>Proton Computer Aided Engineering (CAE), Durability & Reliability Group won Best Technical Paper at South East Asia ABAQUS Users' Conference 2009.</p> <p>Proton CAE, Crash & Safety Group won 1st prize (poster category) at 5th India/ASEAN HyperWorks Technology Conference 2009.</p>
March 2010	<p>PROTON awarded Readers Digest Most Trusted Brand Gold Award 2010 (car category) for the 7th consecutive year since 2004.</p> <p>PROTON received Competitive Employer Award (Big Corporations) Labour Day Achievement Award in conjunction with 2010 Workers' Day Celebration.</p> <p>Proton Saga awarded Best Passenger Car Model of the Year at Frost & Sullivan Malaysia Excellence Award 2010 (fifth award).</p> <p>Proton Exora awarded Best Automotive Debut Model of the Year at Frost & Sullivan Malaysia Excellence Award 2010.</p>
February 2011	<p>Proton Inspira awarded Best Compact Passenger Car at Shell V-Power Autoworld Car of The Year Awards 2011.</p> <p>Proton Inspira 1.8 M received 3rd place for most fuel efficient car (luxury family car category) at Asian Auto AmBank Fuel Efficiency Awards 2011.</p> <p>Proton Saga 1.3 M announced as the Most fuel efficient car (small family car category) during Asian Auto AmBank Fuel Efficiency Awards 2011.</p>
January 2020	<p>PROTON X70 – Overall Car of the Year, Midsize Crossover & SUVs 5 Seaters category</p> <p>Proton Saga – Entry Level Sedan of the Year category</p>

*Awards are officially extracted from <https://www.proton.com/en/corporate/about-us/awards-recognition>(PROTON - Awards, 2020).

The most outstanding vehicle that Proton ever produced with most technological advancement is the X70 SUV where the features of the car are more futuristic as compared to previous models as well as other models released that year. The technological advancement and researches that had been made by Proton had allowed them to produce the overall car of the year in Malaysia that excels in terms of user-friendly and extreme safety of passenger and

driver. On 26 February 2019, nine units of Malaysia's first intelligent SUV, the Proton X70, departed from PROTON's Centre of Excellence (COE) on an overland journey to China which covered more than 13,000 km in 33 days (PROTON - PROTON X70 COMPLETES MALAYSIA-CHINA AMAZING TRIP 2019, 2020).

Importance of protecting intellectual property

Being the nation's pioneer automotive within Malaysia, innovative ideas for the vehicles for improvements in terms of energy efficiency and creative design which allows passengers and driver to have a pleasant experience driving is important especially for the competitive automotive industry where foreign competitors such as Toyota, Honda, Renault and so on currently claim the top sellers for middle-ranged vehicles. However, Proton made its comeback to the list with the latest innovative x-series vehicles that made its breakthrough compared to the previous models with much more convenience as well as technology embedded factors that makes the vehicle being a great vehicle for the price range of RM80k to RM120k. With that being said, it is important for Proton to preserve their original idea from the competitors while satisfying the needs of consumers for transportation purposes.

An intellectual property of a large company is the whole identity of not only the logo, but also the whole image of the employees, history as well as the past achievements along with the potential achievements in the future. Within a competitive industry such as the automotive, companies do their best to focus their cluster of customers to retain their trust and credibility for the company's sustainability. Proton's fame within the country is well-known among the citizens for the affordability and durability of vehicle that could be afforded by low to mid income groups as compared to the other nation automotive competitor, Perodua. However, the cheapest vehicle of both nation automotive companies is different in terms of type of vehicle as well as the size of it. Since Proton first started, the body style of vehicles is either sedans or longer hatchbacks which receives the most attentions and support from locals back in the 1990's. In January 1991, the Proton Saga 1.5E Aeroback is voted as the "Best Value for Money" by British Motoring Magazine "What Car?" (PROTON - Awards, 2020).

Intellectual property also forms the essential part of the branding especially requesting loans from banks for customers as well as developments for new models. In any automotive industry within Malaysia, loans are an essential option for customers which allows them to have instalment payment available for them to own their preferred vehicle. In order for Proton to gain full credibility of their partners, Proton has maintained a good credit profile over the years of operation which allows Proton to have bank partnership that offers good interest loan rates for car purchases. This proves that the branding "Proton" has gained enough credibility and fame that stands as the intellectual property of the company that allows Proton to get to

where it is now and further ahead than certain automotive industry. Andrey (2008) found that Malaysia's cars are currently exported to over 50 countries in Europe, Asia and South America including Australia, Turkey, Russia, India, Laos, Egypt, and Argentina (Hadadi and Almsafir, 2014).

However, the only limitation on Proton's intellectual property that could further disrupt the automotive industry is the technology invention and integration into the cars that is produced. Even though the latest car that is produced by Proton, X70 is considered a well-made vehicle, in terms of technological limitation of the car, it is considered far away to be considered an autonomous car as it only assisting the driver with artificial intelligence to entertain and assist the driver.

Evaluation of financial options

Over the years of operation, Proton has gained more than just the trust of its customers, but also the support from partners from different sectors. However, for a business operation to be fully backed up even during any economical crashes, financial partners are needed to overcome difficult situations. Up till now, Proton is offering to 13 financial partners where mostly are from the bank sectors such as Ambank, Affin Bank, Maybank and many other local and overseas banks that had decided to become their partnership bank that provides financial options such as bank loans, financial packages, novated leases and many more that helps customers to get their easier mode of transportation. Certain financial options are provided for overseas customers which could be found on online portals. Based on the findings on an Australian portal, Proton vehicles could be exported to Australia and the financial options available there are Secured car loan, unsecured car loan, dealer finance, chattel mortgage, commercial hire and novated lease. With these financial options available for customers, it also allows Proton to have more funding to continue with development.

In order for Proton to embrace future obstacles, besides innovation, Proton does need to get much more technical and financial supports. Proton Holdings Berhad reported a net sales revenue drop of 18.67% in 2018 with a further negative growth of 8.64% in total assets (Proton Holdings Berhad Company Profile - Malaysia | Financials & Key Executives | EMIS, 2020). With the negative impact on the company, it is difficult to invest directly to autonomous vehicle immediately which costs billions of dollars. Furthermore in year 2020, the pandemic coronavirus further declines the market share of Proton as Malaysia implemented Movement Control Order (MCO) which restricts sales and manufacturing within the country. Hence, pushing back and delaying every project where autonomous vehicle might need another 5 to 10 years. The estimation might be off as Proton has already succeeded using artificial intelligence for the latest vehicle but has not yet reached the standard of self-driving vehicle.

However, for the emergent technology, Proton needs to ensure it has enough funds that enables it to further research and hire millennials for fresh ideas and technological assistance that helps to further create a true autonomous car that surely delivers safer, much convenient, affordable and futuristic functionality car.

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