

THE PUTRA BRAND AWARDS 2012
24/04/2012

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh, A Very Good Evening and Salam Satu Malaysia

Mr. Tony Savarimuthu;
President of the 4As – the Association of Accredited Advertising Agents of Malaysia

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Johnny Mun;
Chairman of the Organising Committee of the 2012 Putra Brand Awards

Yang Berbahagia Datuk Vincent Lee;
Honorary Life President of the 4As

Members of Malaysia's Most Valuable Brands and the Putra Board of Governors,
4As Council Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests.

1. Let me first extend a very warm welcome to all of you at the Putra Brand Awards – I am proud to be here tonight and to have the opportunity to celebrate alongside this year's worthy winners.

2. I would like to thank the 4As, the Organising Committee of the Putra Brand Awards, the Branding Association of Malaysia, the Media Specialists Association and Matrade, not only for organising such a great event but for their faith in the potential of Malaysia's home-grown brands.

3. Tonight is about giving the best of those brands the recognition they deserve – and I certainly hope these awards will encourage more Malaysian companies to invest in building their brands, expanding their reach and engaging with their customers in new and exciting ways.

4. Because today, the simple truth is that there's no escaping the reach of the brand. Apple. Coca-Cola. McDonalds. Nike. These names are known and trusted by billions of consumers in countries and continents right across the world. Indeed, some brands have become so entwined with our day-to-day lives they have even entered our vocabulary as verbs. When was the last time you heard someone say "I'll just have a look on an internet search engine"? Yet I'm sure that almost every day you hear – or even say – "I'll Google it".

5. True, our love of brands and our desire to own the very latest products can sometimes verge on the fanatical. I'm thinking here of the two young men who started queuing outside the Apple store in London a week ahead of the latest iPad launch... as the anthropologist John Sherry put it, brands can sometimes be "a mental shortcut that discourages rational

thought”!

6. But whether the product is as simple as the Maggi instant noodles that grace most Malaysian kitchen shelves or our rather more complex, Islamic Finance System, the best-known names are all built on the same foundations: a strong brand essence, robust brand positioning and powerful brand insight that speaks to the hearts, minds and wallets of consumers.

7. The story of a small Canadian firm is something of a case in point. Having developed a revolutionary wireless email device, this rather technically-minded company gave it the descriptive name of PocketLink. A little underwhelmed by the response to their new gadget, they enlisted outside help to market it and convince consumers of the benefits they felt sure it had to offer. A number of proposals were put forward... eBox, eTop, Hula. Finally, after many long rounds of deliberations, they came to a decision... and the BlackBerry was born.

8. Here in Malaysia we have our own successes. AirAsia is of course one of our most impressive brands. Alongside Petronas, Maxis, Celcom, DiGi and others it has continued to expand its presence and increase its international recognition – and we should all be proud of this. But despite these triumphs, it is essential for us to develop our creative industries as we look to build more global brands. Roy Disney once remarked that “creativity is a funny thing – difficult to quantify, but obvious when it's missing” – and, with the creative industries currently contributing just 1.6 per cent to our country’s GDP I think it’s time to admit to ourselves that Disney’s x factor is missing in Malaysia.

9. This needs to change, and fast. So we must invest in local brands with a creative impetus. We must engage with our country’s hottest young talents in a bid to slow the brain drain. And we must create the opportunities and the environment that will put Malaysia’s creative industries in the strongest possible position on the global stage.

10. But Government cannot achieve this on our own: it will take the combined efforts of all of us, working together. For our part, the Government is investing in new, high growth industries as part of the Economic Transformation Programme and working to forge a bold new path. But we also need everyone in the industry to aspire to excellence, to seize the opportunities Malaysia’s development presents and to make the most of the rich resources you have at your disposal.

Ladies and gentlemen,

11. We tend to think of branding in relation to consumer products, but as a politician I am also acutely aware of its importance at a national and an international level – whether that’s promoting ‘Brand Malaysia’ overseas or communicating with the electorate here at home. In this 21st century media age no Government can afford to ignore the way that it presents itself, but the avenues available have changed dramatically in recent years.

12. The advent of social media has brought new opportunities, new audiences and new demands, and I welcome every chance I get to communicate with Malaysians – especially the younger generation – through different channels. I am proud to have more than half a million followers on Twitter – not that I’m counting of course, though if I were I might also be forced to admit that I’m still a little short of Lady Gaga!

13. As part of my drive to interact and engage with as many Malaysians as possible, I have also launched the 1Malaysia website – a free and open forum for people to share their thoughts and views about the things they care about. ‘1Malaysia’ is, of course, itself one of this Government’s flagship brands, expressing the unity in diversity our country’s progress has been built on at the same time as standing as a symbol of our shared hopes for the future.

14. Most of us can readily identify the American dream, French cinema, Italian fashion or Japanese electronics. And when people think about Malaysia, I want similarly strong and positive associations to spring to mind. I want people to conjure up images of a distinct country brand – a progressive, innovative nation whose tolerance and moderation is a beacon to the world. Because by defining our identity – clearly, proudly, unashamedly – everyone stands to gain.

15. Together, each and every one of us is building that Malaysian brand – but this evening, all of the glory must go to the winners of the 2012 Putra Brand Awards. So once again, my warmest congratulations to you all, and I hope that you enjoy your evening. You certainly deserve it.

16. Wabillahitaufik Walhidayah Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.