

Selling Trust, Not Just Cars: The Perodua Nasrom Story

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Prologue

The Malaysian automotive industry has always been more than just the sale of vehicles. To Malaysians, cars carry a deeper meaning, they are symbols of freedom, progress, and a better life. For families in smaller towns, owning a car represents independence from unreliable public transport, while for young professionals, it is a sign of achievement and social mobility. Against this backdrop, the journey of Perodua Nasrom began in 1990, in Kampung Sireh, Kelantan.

At the heart of this story was Haji Ab Halim bin Haji Hassan, who started small by trading second-hand vehicles. His early philosophy was straightforward: "*buy one car, sell one car, and repeat.*" Yet beneath this simplicity was an ambitious dream, to create not just a business, but a trusted automotive brand that could serve generations of customers. By 1993, his determination paid off when Nasrom secured a Perodua dealership license, marking the start of its evolution from a modest kampung venture into a full-fledged automotive retailer.

What distinguished Nasrom early on was its belief that cars are not merely machines, but emotional milestones. Each purchase reflected a customer's financial journey, lifestyle, and aspirations. Instead of focusing solely on profit, Nasrom positioned itself as a dealership that built trust, loyalty, and long-term relationships. This philosophy would become the backbone of its growth for decades to come.

The Birth of a Legacy: Understanding Consumers

From its earliest days, Nasrom differentiated itself through its customer-

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first approach. While many dealerships employed aggressive selling tactics, Nasrom recognised that buying a car was often one of the most important financial decisions in a person's life. A misstep could lead to financial strain, while the right choice could bring years of satisfaction. This understanding pushed Nasrom to adopt a consultative approach, where sales advisors acted as guides rather than pushy sellers.

Customers were segmented based on their lifestyles and needs. For students and first-time buyers, affordability and fuel efficiency mattered most, so the Perodua Axia became the natural choice. For young professionals, style, modern design, and versatility were more appealing, making the Myvi the go-to recommendation. Meanwhile, for families, space, comfort, and safety were the top priorities, with the Alza and Aruz fitting the bill. By tailoring its recommendations, Nasrom made buyers feel understood and respected.

But the relationship didn't end after the car was driven off the lot. Nasrom built loyalty through structured post-sale engagement. Customers received service reminders, after-sales check-ins, and exclusive offers, which strengthened trust. These small touches transformed ordinary buyers into repeat customers and ambassadors of the brand. Word-of-mouth recommendations became one of Nasrom's most powerful marketing tools, allowing it to grow steadily even without extravagant advertising campaigns.

Retail Ecosystem: More Than a Dealership

As the business grew, Nasrom realised that its long-term success depended on being more than just a place to buy cars. Many dealerships struggled with customer retention because buyers often looked elsewhere for servicing, repairs, or insurance. This was a missed opportunity to build stronger bonds and create additional revenue streams. Nasrom saw this gap as an opportunity to build a complete automotive ecosystem.

In 2001, it opened its own Perodua Service Centre, giving customers confidence that their vehicles would be maintained by trained technicians using genuine parts. This step kept customers within the brand's ecosystem instead of losing them to independent workshops. In 2018, Nasrom went further by launching a Perodua-authorised Body & Paint Centre, enabling

customers to handle accident repairs, claims, and refinishing without leaving the dealership's network.

At the same time, Nasrom embraced digitalisation. Recognising the shift in consumer behaviour, the dealership created a strong presence on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, targeting younger, tech-savvy customers. When the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional showroom visits, Nasrom pivoted quickly. It introduced virtual car tours, live Q&A sessions, online financing consultations, and digital-only promotions. Far from shrinking, its sales grew by 30–50% during the pandemic, demonstrating how flexibility and innovation could turn a crisis into an opportunity.

Consumer Psychology and Decision-Making

Nasrom's edge came from its deep understanding of why customers buy cars. Every step of the sales process was designed with consumer psychology in mind.

i. Trust & Familiarity

Car purchases involve significant financial commitment, so customers looked for dealerships that felt reliable. Nasrom ensured transparency in pricing, paperwork, and communication to build long-term trust.

ii. Personalisation

Different customers had different needs. By offering tailored advice and avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach, Nasrom gave buyers confidence in their decisions.

iii. Perceived Value

Instead of focusing solely on the price of a vehicle, Nasrom bundled purchases with warranties, insurance, and service packages. Customers saw added value that competitors often overlooked.

iv. Scarcity & Urgency

Some models like the Myvi or Bezza often had long waiting lists. Rather than seeing this as a weakness, Nasrom used it to create desirability, positioning these cars as in-demand and worth waiting for.

v. Decision Confidence

By offering test drives, easy-to-understand financing options, and reliable after-sales service, Nasrom helped customers feel secure in their choice.

This psychological approach distinguished Nasrom as more than a sales-driven dealership; it was a customer-focused partner that understood both the rational and emotional sides of buying a car.

Turning Challenges into Opportunities

Like every growing company, Nasrom encountered hurdles. Economic volatility was one. Rising fuel prices and inflation made many customers delay purchases. Nasrom's solution was to introduce flexible financing packages and transparent pricing strategies, making cars more accessible without overwhelming buyers.

Another challenge was the rise of electric vehicles (EVs). Although Perodua has yet to release a fully electric model, consumer interest in sustainability is growing. Many dealerships chose to wait, but Nasrom took a proactive approach. It began training staff on EV technology, researching charging infrastructure, and preparing to introduce EV-related services, ensuring it would be ready to lead when the market shifted.

Operational costs also posed issues, particularly rising labour costs. To maintain efficiency, Nasrom streamlined operations, invested in automation where possible, and diversified its services, such as introducing driving academies. These steps helped offset costs while providing additional revenue streams.

The global supply chain crisis, especially the semiconductor shortage, created another challenge by extending waiting times for vehicles, sometimes up to 12 months. Customers often grew

frustrated, which could have damaged trust. Nasrom's solution was proactive and transparent communication. Regular updates, alternative model suggestions, and direct engagement via phone calls, emails, and social media helped retain customer confidence.

Finally, not all customers were ready to embrace digital buying. To address this, Nasrom used a hybrid retail model, blending the convenience of online engagement with the reassurance of in-person showroom experiences. This flexibility appealed to both traditional and modern buyers.

The Future Ahead

As Malaysia's automotive industry evolves, Perodua Nasrom is determined not just to keep pace but to stay ahead of the curve. The company recognises that the future of mobility will be shaped by three powerful forces, electrification, digitalisation, and sustainability. To prepare, it is already investing in EV-readiness, ensuring that both its infrastructure and staff are equipped for the eventual transition to electric vehicles. Workshops are being upgraded, training programmes are in place, and conversations with partners about charging infrastructure are ongoing. By taking these steps now, Nasrom positions itself to be an early leader when EV adoption accelerates in Malaysia.

At the same time, the dealership continues to expand its digital footprint. It is not enough to rely solely on showroom traffic. Customers today want information at their fingertips, personalised interactions, and convenience in their buying journey. Nasrom embraces this by using social media, virtual product showcases, live Q&A sessions, and online financing tools to reach younger, tech-savvy buyers. Yet, it balances this modern approach with the warm, personalised service that older customers value. This ability to blend technology with human touch ensures that no customer is left behind.

Sustainability also plays an increasingly central role in Nasrom's strategy. By promoting fuel-efficient models and preparing for electric alternatives, the dealership aligns itself with both consumer expectations and government policies pushing for greener mobility. Nasrom sees this not just as compliance, but as an opportunity to become a leader in sustainable automotive

retailing. Its vision is to offer customers vehicles and services that reduce environmental impact while maintaining affordability and reliability.

Looking forward, Nasrom imagines itself not only as a car dealership but as a mobility partner for Malaysians. Whether through traditional vehicles, electric cars, or even new forms of shared mobility, its goal is to remain relevant and reliable in a market where change is constant. By blending tradition with innovation, and by holding fast to its values while embracing the future, Perodua Nasrom ensures that it will continue driving success — not just today, but for generations to come.

Inspiring Local Entrepreneurship

Beyond its business achievements, Perodua Nasrom embodies the true spirit of local entrepreneurship in Malaysia. Its story began in the quiet town of Kampung Sireh, Kelantan, where resources were limited and opportunities often concentrated in bigger cities. Yet from this modest setting, Nasrom grew steadily into a nationally recognised automotive hub, proving that great businesses do not have to begin in metropolitan centres. What makes its journey remarkable is that even as it expanded, Nasrom never abandoned its roots or the values that shaped its foundation.

Over the years, Nasrom has created meaningful employment opportunities, empowering local youth and families with stable jobs and professional growth. Many employees have built lifelong careers with the company, rising alongside the dealership as it diversified and modernised. In this way, Nasrom has not only grown its own business but has also contributed to the economic and social fabric of Kelantan, demonstrating how entrepreneurship can uplift entire communities.

The dealership's growth also challenges the common perception that rural-based businesses face major obstacles. By staying committed to quality, transparency, and innovation, Nasrom has shown that location does not limit potential. Instead, it is determination, adaptability, and integrity that define long-term success. Its resilience during economic downturns, its pivot during the COVID-19 pandemic, and its forward-looking preparation for electric vehicles all highlight the entrepreneurial mindset of turning obstacles into opportunities.

For many, Nasrom has become more than a dealership; it is a source of pride and a living example of how local businesses can thrive nationally while staying grounded in their communities. Its journey inspires future entrepreneurs to believe that no starting point is too small, and no dream is too distant. With vision, resilience, and the courage to adapt, what begins as a humble venture can grow into a legacy that inspires generations.

Epilogue

The journey of Perodua Nasrom is far greater than a story of selling vehicles. It is a testament to resilience, innovation, and the unshakable value of trust. From its humble beginnings trading second-hand cars in Kampung Sireh to becoming one of Malaysia's most respected Perodua dealerships, Nasrom has faced economic downturns, supply chain disruptions, and industry transformations. Yet, at every turn, it chose adaptation over fear, innovation over stagnation, and people over profits.

Every vehicle delivered by Nasrom represents more than just keys and machinery. It carries with it dreams of students taking their first step toward independence, families upgrading to safety and comfort, and professionals rewarding themselves after years of hard work. Each sale is, in truth, a story of aspiration, achievement, and trust. This deep emotional connection is what makes customers return again and again, not only because of the cars, but because they know they are valued, respected, and understood.

This philosophy has elevated Nasrom into something far more profound than a business. It has become a trusted companion in the lives of thousands of Malaysians, a dealership that doesn't just provide cars but also delivers confidence, loyalty, and care. In the eyes of many, Nasrom is not only a place to buy vehicles, but a place where journeys begin and dreams find their road.

As the automotive world races toward electrification, digitalisation, and sustainability, Perodua Nasrom is prepared to lead boldly into the future. But while technology will change, one truth remains unshaken: the heart of Nasrom lies in its people, the employees who serve with dedication, the customers who trust with loyalty, and the community that believes in its vision.

Its legacy reminds us that true greatness in business is never defined by size, location, or resources, but by the courage to innovate and the strength to place people at the centre of every decision. In this, Perodua Nasrom proves itself not just as a dealership, but as a beacon of Malaysian entrepreneurship, a story of how determination can turn a small kampung dream into a national symbol of trust, pride, and progress.

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