



Era of Change or Change of an Era?

SCIENCE FACT

NOT SCIENCE FICTION

SEVILAY GÖKKAYA // General Manager Brand & Marketing Communication at Toyota Motor Europe

Sevilay is a close friend to ILI.DIGITAL since the beginning and long before that. She is a passionate, powerful, and driven woman with the ability to execute. With her high intelligence she is able to balance empathy and expertise in a perfect way. Like this she is very successful in the automotive industry. Her vast experience in the mobility industry makes her see the future of mobility with a great overview.

We met with Sevilay Gökkaya at the café of a local book store in Brussels to talk about Japanese philosophy, the future of mobility and preparing a very traditional industry for the real and sometimes even fictional obstacles of the future.

ILL.DIGITAL: Sevilay, thank you for the invitation to Brussels. And for choosing this beautiful book store for our interview!

Sevilay Gökkaya: Yes, this a very nice one, actually. I like it a lot.

Are you a bookish person?

I guess one could say that. Books are definitely a tool to relax for me, to update my knowledge, to feel and smell the paper, which gives me a good feeling. Somehow, I still prefer reading printed books to reading ebooks when something really interests me.

Since we are in Brussels, maybe you could tell us a bit about your journey to Belgium?

I was actually born in Germany. When I was 7, I moved to Turkey, went to primary school there and returned to Karlsruhe with my parents afterwards. Actually, when I came back to Germany, I had to learn German all over again. My parents are Turkish of course. I grew up in Germany and after working for two other car companies, I am here in Brussels now because I work at the European Headquarters of Toyota. I am responsible for brand and marketing communication for all business areas, from car advertising to the Toyota brand itself, to

the value chain, to „Future Mobility“ topics.

Could you tell us a little bit more about these responsibilities?

First of all, I work in the marketing field and generally this area is the one that drives change in a company, because we are very close to trends and of course we also try to set trends, which is the master discipline. Actually, Toyota is a very innovative car manufacturer. Our special discipline is of course the car itself and the engine and our engineers are doing great work. As this is part of the company culture in all areas, we are promoting innovative thinking, new thinking, new possibilities and new solutions. Even if there is not a real problem, we are „creating“ one just to be able to deal with the future in a better way.

You are creating problems on purpose?

You know, we have been investing in, for example, hybrid technology already 20 years ago. We have been dealing with fuel cell vehicles a long time ago, before, like in the current situation, the cities came up with CO₂ emission topics, with city bans and entry access bans. We were dealing with these topics at a time when they were not a problem yet. In the perfect case it is discovering what the future trends will be,

what will be happening in 10-20 years and then to be able to deal with it. This is the capability that I am talking about.

Or for example, we have a lot of people who are working in product planning. At the moment, one of our focuses is mobility service planning and we are of course looking to the future, trying to understand what will be the problems of 2040 and to develop possible solutions today. With our products this is much more difficult than it is for other branches, because the development of car technology takes 5 to 10 year cycles. This is a very long time, so you really have to understand the needs of the future.

The future of mobility is a big topic for every car manufacturer right now...

Yes! So innovation itself is still crucial to success, especially in these times, where we talk about transformations from an automotive company to a mobility company. „Mobility Company“ also is a buzzword at the moment. So we try to transform ourselves, our business case, our business model, to be able to deal with new mobility needs. We are getting a lot of innovative ideas in every area from our agencies, from our suppliers, from our partners that we appreciate a lot.



If you would have to evaluate the current state of innovation of the automotive industry, are you up to date or are you behind compared to other industries?

First of all, the automotive industry as such is in a transformation process at the moment. So it cannot be that they are up to date, because I am recently hearing from every big manufacturer that they are trying to turn from an automotive company to a mobility company to create new brands, to create alliances, to create solutions for future topics. So of course, we are not up to date.

The most important question right now is: Is it an era of change, that we are in at the moment, or is it the change of an era? I personally believe it is the change of an era, it is not like a lot of changes are happening and then we will fix them. Soon we will come to a new world, see new possibilities, new mobility needs, everything will get more and more digital. So I think, none of us and not even other businesses are there yet. So to come back to your question, the automotive industry is one of the most conservative ones compared to others, but I still believe that even the other areas are not very future proof.

Even though the industry is so conservative Toyota has just announced its new mobility service KINTO, can you tell us about it?

I would love to. KINTO is a brand which will offer mobility services in Europe. There will be a four pillar strategy in addition to traditional vehicle sales. KINTO One combines a vehicle, service and insurance in one monthly payment. KINTO Share is a car sharing service based on a hybrid vehicle fleet without running costs. KINTO Join connects employees who wish to share their daily commute. And KINTO Flex offers a fully flexible leasing service with a premium experience. Generally all these services are eas-

ily accessible with mobile apps and online payments.

What are the advantages Toyota expects from this step?

We are using a new brand to enter the new category. Like this we can adapt to new customer needs in addition to our traditional business. Depending on each city and region we can add certain mobility services while always delivering an exceptional customer experience like people are used to from our well-established automotive brands. What additionally makes these services so fascinating is the power of data and vehicle connectivity, feeding topics like automated driving.

"...TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WILL BE THE PROBLEMS OF 2040 AND TO DEVELOP POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TODAY."

Do you feel confident about Toyota's part in the future of mobility?

You know, there is one quote that always impresses me a lot, that I use very often in a company like Toyota where we are driven by „Kaizen“, a Japanese philosophy, the attempt to continuously improve and involve all employees from the CEO to the assembly line workers. I am always starting the internal discussions with the line:

„THE LIGHT BULB WAS NOT INVENTED BY CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF A CANDLE“.

- Oren Harari

This is a good starting point to deal with change of an era and not to make one change after another to deal with the future. I believe we are not yet there, but we all understand properly, that this is a bigger thing than we all believed in the past.

Are there other Japanese philosophies or elements of Japanese culture that have an effect on Toyota as a business?

Of course! We as a company and the way the company is lead are deeply rooted in all forms of Japanese culture. There is even a book that details „The Toyota Way“, you should definitely read that one!

Are there other examples like „Kaizen“? Maybe you could teach us some vocabularies!

There are a lot of these! For example, we try to avoid „Muda“, which means something like „wastefulness“ in the process. One of our key principles is „Genchi Genbutsu“ which means „Go and See“, or don't try to solve problems from the distance, always get to the core of an obstacle and view it from each possible angle. Then we have „Nemawashi“ – „prepare the ground“. Always be the most prepared, for example for a meeting, predict possible reactions and prepare for them.

You have always been working in this industry. When did your passion for cars spark?

I think mobility is an expression of freedom and at the end of the day I am not just interested in selling cars or selling services. What really inspires me is to move people in a right way from one place

“WE WANT TO BE A MOBILITY PROVIDER”

to another: anyone, anywhere. Having a car crazy father was helpful, too, I guess.

What are you working on at the moment?

Right now, we are working on developing a global „mobility“ brand both for Toyota and Lexus, we are transforming our business cases, our business models. We want to be a mobility provider rather than a car manufacturer and that is the reason why we have several initiatives, several programs, several projects and I am working on the branding, which will be used globally for Toyota and Lexus.

What is the most crucial aspect of this process?

There is a lot of groundbreaking stuff going on at the moment. Very successful brands like Mercedes Benz (Moovel) and Volkswagen (MOIA) have taken first steps to launch a mobility brand. Sometimes even the biggest competitors, let's say Mercedes and BMW, have combined their strengths and they now have this new brand called „Jerby“. Which shows that if to survive in the „future mobility“ area and to really be able to compete with these digital base companies like Uber etc., we have to build alliances and it does not matter if it is your main competitor or not. You

have to partner with other companies, you have to do cooperations, you have to build ecosystems, you have to partner with cities and other mobility providers.

How is creating a whole new brand working out for you at a company with as much tradition as Toyota?

Toyota is the most valuable automotive brand in the world. It is very global and very well known. Still, I convinced the whole Toyota organization to go for a new brand and of course there's a lot of „why?“s“ in my own company. The thing is maybe we have to disconnect from the metal, we have to show that it is not about selling cars anymore, it is about providing services and to change even this strong name of Toyota to a different one, which will be announced soon, actually. This shows how seriously we are taking the new business and the new audiences, it is an issue of credibility.

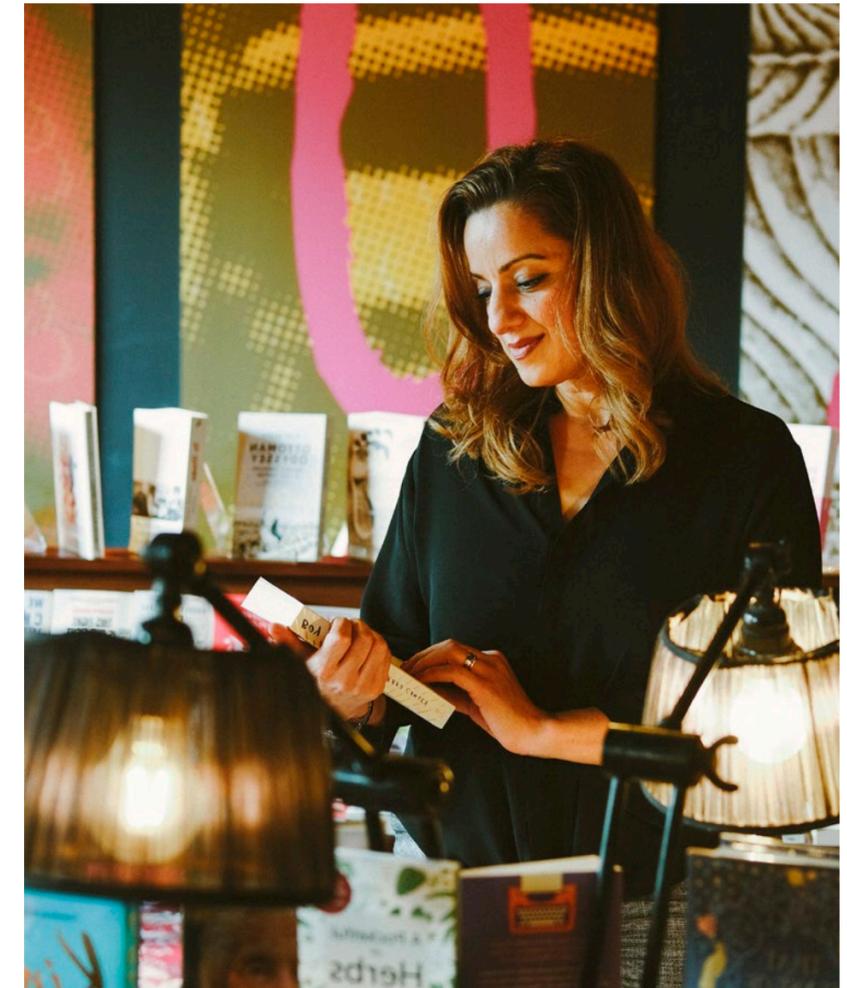
How does this affect you marketing-wise?

There are big differences in marketing these new brands. It already started with social media and digitalization in general, but now we are in an era where you really have to deal with efficiencies. You get a lot of information, you have a lot of data and you have a lot of digital machines, which can improve your investment and efficiency.

My biggest project in this area at the moment is marketing automation. So we are combining the marketing tech stack with the advertising tech stack, which means that we look at our systems and our main task at the moment is to connect our known customer systems, where we have customer data, with the unknown systems where we have cookies. So combining known IDs with anonymous IDs to make efficient marketing out of this – a very interesting topic.

Sevilay, thank you very much for your time! Since we are in a book store, maybe you could give our readers a little book recommendation?

I am reading Yuval Noah Harari's „Homo deus: A history of tomorrow.“ right now. Most of the people I know, who work in this very digital and innovative field with me, think that Harari is just a good marketer of future trends. I like about Harari that he explains the future very down to earth, very real and not like science fiction. Because, I believe the future is not science fiction, the future is „science fact“, it is happening and we have to deal with it and I like that a lot.



“I THINK MOBILITY IS AN EXPRESSION OF FREEDOM.”

