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Task 1: Problem Identification

Price Competition in an Online Traditional Clothing Business

From my friend's experience, I noticed a problem in the business is the rise in competition in pricing in the online traditional clothing business in Malaysia. My friend sells entirely online, on social media and on online selling platforms and doesn't have a storefront. The traditional clothes sold by this business are traditional clothes like [baju Melayu/baju kurung/traditional clothes] which is sold primarily to Malaysian people.

One of the major difficulties I noticed when doing my talk with my friend and observing online clothing sellers is the presence of many different sellers selling the same or similar items, and they have various prices. From platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Shopee, it is easy for customers to find authentic garments, and then compare prices before buying. There are some sellers that will sell at a reduced price, give you discounts, free delivery and bundle deals.

This problem is more profound because the business is not a brick and mortar business. No one is able to go to the shop to view the cloth, inspect the fabric or try on the clothes before buying. Consequently, when customers are shopping for similar products online, they might be more motivated to consider cost.

Price competition may have an impact on the profitability of the business owner because the more that he or she lowers the price, the less profit will be generated per sale. However, maintaining higher prices may result in fewer sales. The owner also has other costs, including purchasing stock, packaging, delivery and social-media advertising.

The problem also applies to the customer since they have numerous choices but might not know if a lower-priced product will be of similar quality. This is just one example of the opportunities that the online worlds provide for small businesses and the competition between sellers in Malaysia's online business landscape

Task 2: Using Generative Artificial Intelligence and Academic Literature

Prompts Used

Prompt 1:

“I am investigating a small Malaysian online traditional clothing business that has no physical store. The main problem identified from personal observation is strong price competition from other online sellers. Focus on online fashion retailing, price competition, consumer price sensitivity, online customer trust, social commerce and profitability. Do not invent academic sources and clearly distinguish between evidence and interpretation.”

Prompt 2:

“Based on the academic literature, provide a precise problem definition for a small online traditional clothing business in Malaysia that competes mainly through social media and faces pressure from competitors offering similar products at lower prices. Explain how price competition can affect profit margins, customer behaviour and business sustainability.”

Selected AI Output

*The problem can be understood as **competitive pricing pressure in online fashion retailing**. Online fashion businesses operate in an environment where customers can easily compare prices between sellers, increasing pressure on businesses to align their prices with competitors. Wood, Watson and Teller (2021) found that online fashion retailers commonly rely on competitor prices and cost-plus pricing when making pricing decisions.*

Price is important, but it is not the only factor influencing online purchasing decisions. Research indicates that consumer trust, product information, website quality and perceived value can influence online apparel purchasing behaviour. Jones and Kim (2010) found that brand trust and website quality significantly influence online apparel shopping intention.

For an online traditional clothing business without a physical store, the inability of customers to physically inspect or try products may increase the importance of trust, product information, reviews and perceived value. Therefore, competing only through lower prices may not provide a sustainable solution.

Selected Problem Definition

The problem is that a small online traditional clothing business is experiencing increasing competitive pressure from other online sellers offering similar products at lower or promotional prices. Because customers can easily compare prices online, the business faces pressure to maintain competitive prices while also covering product, delivery, marketing and operating costs. This creates a risk of reduced profit margins. The absence of a physical store may further increase the importance of customer trust, product information, reviews and

perceived value because customers cannot physically examine or try the clothing before purchasing.

Explanation and Justification

The AI results were not accepted as is but were compared with the academic articles. This was crucial as AI answers could lead to unsupported statements or incorrect references. The literature search was conducted with a special emphasis on the peer-reviewed literature on online fashion retailing, Malaysian online apparel businesses and social commerce.

The study by Wood, Watson and Teller (2021) directly supports the pricing problem since it is the online fashion retail sector that is analyzed in the study. They found that a lot of retailers take competitor prices into account, confirming that online businesses can have a lot of pricing pressure.

The Malaysian context was also taken into account. Studies conducted in Malaysia revealed that both during the purchasing process and after the purchase, e-service quality and post-sales service have a significant impact on customer satisfaction for online apparel retailers. Three other factors in online fashion purchases that are identified from the research conducted on Malaysian consumers are quality, delivery and price and after-sales service.

Academic evidence on the importance of trust was also examined. In the study of social commerce in Malaysia, trust was found to be one of the issues that can be faced by social commerce businesses, where as in the study of online product quality, it was found that the price, rating/reviews can affect consumer's trust and purchasing behavior. So the issue shouldn't be reduced to a rhombus of the form "customers only want cheap products.

Verified Academic Bibliography

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Task 3: Research Question and Research Approach

Prompts Used

Prompt 1:

“Based on this problem: a small Malaysian online traditional clothing business with no physical store is facing strong price competition from other online sellers offering similar products. Generate several possible research questions suitable for a final-year undergraduate research project.”

Prompt 2:

“Evaluate the suggested research questions and recommend the most suitable one. The researcher should realistically be able to collect data from online clothing consumers using a questionnaire. Avoid questions requiring confidential business financial information or a large sample of businesses.”

Selected AI Output

The most suitable research question is: “How does price competition influence consumers’ purchase decisions towards online traditional clothing businesses in Malaysia?” The recommended approach is a quantitative, cross-sectional survey using an online questionnaire distributed to Malaysian consumers with online clothing purchasing

experience. The questionnaire can measure price competition, price sensitivity, perceived value and purchase intention. Purposive sampling can be used to reach relevant respondents.

Explanation and Justification of the Research Question

The problem is about the traditional small online clothing retailer that experiences high levels of competition. If a research question is about business profitability, then confidential information will be needed, this could be challenging. Hence, the chosen question emphasizes on consumers' buying decisions. This would be good for them since customers can easily compare the prices among the sellers who are selling online. The impact of price competition on consumers' buying decisions can be beneficial in determining the amount of competitive pressure that online clothing retailers encounter.

Explanation and Justification of the Research Approach

The quantitative research method can be used because the attitudes of customers and choices they make can be quantified. A cross sectional survey will provide data only at one point in time, which is ideal for a final year project. The target group are Malaysian consumers who have purchased online clothes. Purposive sampling may ensure the relevance of experience of the respondents. Demographic, price competition, price sensitivity, perceived value and purchase intent may all be included in the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis (regression analysis if suitable) can be used for data analysis. Overall, this way of working is realistic, manageable and directly related to the research problem.

Task 4: Summary Research Proposal

Research Question

How does perceived price competitiveness influence consumers' purchase decisions towards online traditional clothing businesses in Malaysia?

Definition of Key Terms

The first key term is perceived price competitiveness. It is the perception of the price by the consumers which is in relation to the prices offered by other companies. When buying online, it is easy to compare prices amongst sellers. According to Wood, Watson and Teller (2021), importance of pricing decisions in online fashion retail in relation to competitive prices is very high.

Purchase decision is the second key term. This is when a consumer decides or decides to buy a product or service because they have carefully thought about the price, quality and the perceived value of the product. According to Lee and Chen-Yu (2018) price discounts can affect consumers' perception of savings, quality and value when buying apparel.

The last key word is Online traditional clothing businesses. These are businesses that sell traditional clothes via online platforms like sites, social media or online marketplaces. The study is conducted based on Malaysian consumers as the initial business problem was found in the Malaysian online clothing market .

Explanation and Justification of the Research Question

The problem identified in Task 1 was that a small online traditional clothing business is being competed by sellers who sell traditional clothing that is similar. The research question was developed as a result of this problem. With a quick comparison on the web, consumers are likely to have pressure on business to offer competitive prices while still meeting operating expenses.

Perceived price competitiveness was used rather than price competition, because the consumer can't directly determine the level of competition among businesses. But they can refer to their knowledge of how competitive a seller's prices may be. This is a concept that would be appropriate to measure with a questionnaire.

The research question is not related to business profitability but to purchase decision. Learning about profitability would involve use of confidential financial information from the business. Instead of relying on secondary survey data, consumer purchase decisions can be analyzed based on their primary survey data. In Malaysia, Nawi and Al-Mamun (2017) discovered that various factors in the online apparel shopping process can impact customer satisfaction.

Proposed Research Design

The study will employ a quantitative research design as it involves measuring the relationship between the two variables: perceived price competitiveness and customer buying decisions. A positivist approach is suitable because the study is based on quantifiable variables and numbers.

The study is of a cross sectional type of survey because data will be obtained from the respondents at one point in time. This is appropriate for an undergraduate project as it is inexpensive and can be accomplished within a reasonable time frame and resources.

The independent variable is consumer purchase decision: Perceived price competitiveness, and the dependent variable is: consumer purchase decision:

Perceived Price Competitiveness → Consumer Purchase Decision

Reliability and Validity

Reliability means that the questionnaire gives the same results. There are several questions that can be used to measure each variable, and a five-point Likert scale can be consistently

used. A pilot test can help determine the clarity of questions prior to the actual survey. Cronbach's alpha can then be used to evaluate the internal consistency.

Validity is an assurance that the questionnaire reflects the concepts that it is supposed to measure. In order to support content validity, questions based on existing academic literature can be developed. The face validity can be improved if the research supervisor or a person who is knowledgeable about the research checks the questionnaire. Questions should be formulated in a clear manner and should not guide the respondent.

Research Methods and Data Collection

Primary data will be gathered by using a questionnaire online, for example Google Forms. The target group for the study will be Malaysian consumers who had prior experiences in online clothing shopping. This way you'll make sure that your respondents have experience in comparing and selecting between online sellers.

Purposive sampling will be adopted to assure that respondents have the necessary qualifications. A reasonable sample for an undergraduate project would be about 100–150 valid responses, depending on the requirements of the supervisor.

The questionnaire can have four parts. The demographic information will be gathered in section A. Section B will measure perceived price competitiveness. Measures of perceived value will be taken in Section C (where applicable) and measures of purchase decisions will be taken in Section D.

Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages and mean scores can be used for the analysis of data. Correlation analysis can be used to investigate the association between the perceptions of price competitiveness and actual purchase behavior. If appropriate, the final sample and research design can be analyzed with regression analysis

Data Access and Permissions

Data can be gathered from the university network, through social media, WhatsApp groups and personal contacts. Consent must be obtained before respondents engage in the study, explaining the purpose of the study.

Permission of the clothing business owner would be necessary only if the private sales records, financial data or interviews were to be utilized. The proposed consumer survey does not call for confidential business information, thus making the research practical and manageable on an ethical basis.

In general, the proposed research design is feasible to address the research questions of whether perceived price competitiveness has an impact on consumers' purchase intentions for online traditional clothing businesses in Malaysia.

Task 5: Video Presentation

<https://youtu.be/m3HrYxxLDZk>

Task 6: Reflection Using Gibbs Reflective Cycle

1. Description

In Tasks 1 to 5, I explored a true business issue for my friend's traditional clothing online business in Malaysia. The business is not located in a store, and there are a lot of similar businesses that sell online at comparable prices. Price competition was the primary issue as customers can easily compare products and prices online. I used academic literature to gain insight into the problem.

2. Feelings

I was initially uncertain whether I should be able to shift the basic business challenge into a research topic. I looked at price competition in the framework of the business owner. As I advanced, I understood that I ought to take into account the customer's point of view as well. It was difficult to pinpoint the proper academic sources and determine which information was pertinent to Malaysia. Gained confidence in relating academic concepts to a real business situation.

3. Evaluation

There were a few positive points: One was getting to know how academic research can be linked to real-life business problems. Before this I did not see research as much as finding information and writing about it. I discovered, in this portfolio, that research entails the process of coming up with a specific problem, a research question, and a suitable research method. I also gained insights into the potential of generative AI to assist in research by proposing research questions and directions. AI-generated content is not necessarily accurate, though. Academic sources need to be verified with the reality.

4. Analysis

I learned that a business problem can be related to other dimensions. Initially, I believed that the issue was the competitors were offering traditional clothing for less. Later I came to know that price competitiveness is related to price sensitivity, perceived value, and trust and purchasing decisions. Online platforms offer opportunities and create competition as customers are able to compare sellers easily. An accounting student, I knew that there was something in financial knowledge that could help in analysing these problems. Lower prices can lead to a higher number of sales, but at a cost of lower profit margins, so companies should think of both the cost and the customer behaviour along with the profitability.

5. Conclusion

In Tasks 1-5, I learned about how to approach a business problem in a systematic way. I learned how to go from personally observing to the academic literature, and then to a research question and a research design. If I was to do it again, I would think ahead to possible cause of the phenomenon and relate more with international studies. I'll be flying the questionnaire earlier. I got to know that a good research question should be specific and feasible, given the time and resources available.

6. Action Plan

This experience has had a impact on my future career. As an accounting student, I will expect to find businesses where financial data will be used to make decisions. I will apply the skills gained from this portfolio in my career, such as research, data collection and problem solving. In the future, I will gather evidence from business and consumer, rather than assuming. I will cite reputable academic and industry sources prior to making recommendations for solutions. I will also develop my data analysis skills to make inferences and recommendations based on data.