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Strategic Change and Organization Report
Apple's Expansion in Malaysia

Part B

Submitted by

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6. Strategic Generation on Market Expansion

SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Strong customer satisfaction and brand 2. Strong brand image, and is well-known in the industry for its prioritization of product design, innovation and user experience. 3. The IOS ecosystem draws consumers in to purchase a host of Apple products, forming “community” of devices designed to work together. 4. As a result of relatively inelastic demand for its product and a loyal customer base, Apple enjoys high profit margins. However, this also means that it has trouble reaching a lower-income demographic with its products, which means it is more challenging to tap into developing markets 5. Apple has cultivated an effective rapid innovation process, which allows it to come out with new products and earn more profits	1. Limited distribution network 2. High selling prices 3. Dependence of sales on high-end consumers 4. Over-reliance on Chinese manufacturing and supply chains 5. Supply chain partners’ employment practices may come under fire for ethical employment practices
Opportunities	Threats
1. Apple can expand its supply chain network by expanding into Southeast Asian countries with lower labour costs. 2. It can also achieve higher sales volumes with growing middle class with rising disposable income 3. Cloud adoption and digitization of economy increase demand for digital services and consumer electronics 4. Malaysia’s geographical location ideal for regional distribution covering the developed and emerging economies in Southeast Asia	1. Increasing competitiveness of foreign brands, for example, Huawei, a Chinese consumer electronics company, has been driving large investments in product developments with growing portfolio of higher end products 2. Fast turnover and innovation cycle 3. IP leaks by third-party manufacturers

SPACE Matrix

In order to best determine the strategy that Apple should undertake when seeking to expand its operations in Malaysia, we've enlisted the help of a Strategic Position & Action Evaluation (SPACE) Matrix to help us determine what type of strategy best suits Apple's competitive position. The SPACE Matrix analysis functions upon two internal and two external strategic dimensions in order to determine the organization's strategic posture in the industry. The SPACE matrix is based on four areas of analysis.

Internal strategic dimensions (plotted on X axis):

Financial strength (FS)

Competitive advantage (CA)

External strategic dimensions:

Environmental stability (ES)

Industry strength (IS)

Several key factors are determined for each of the four areas of analysis, as shown below in the table.

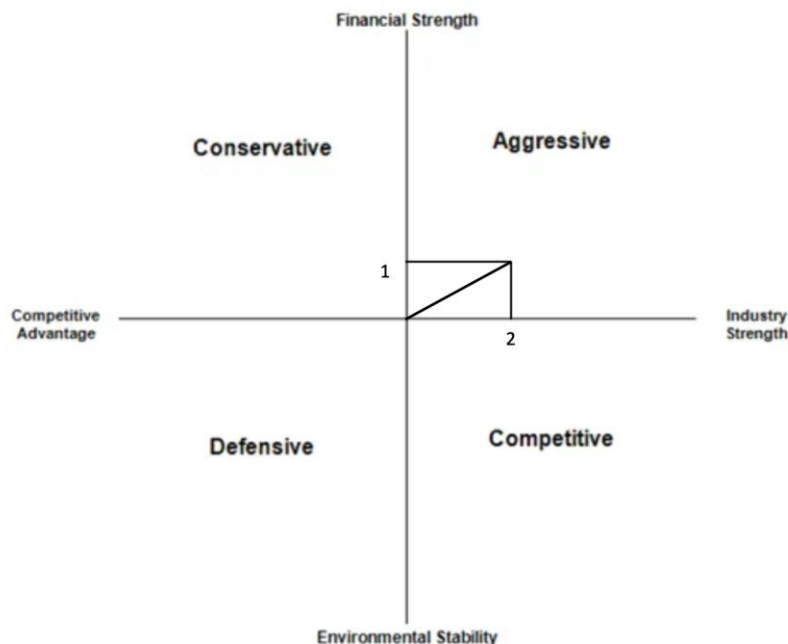
Figure 1 – SPACE Matrix

Internal Strategic Position		External Strategic Position	
Competitive (CA) (-6 worst, -1 best)		Industry (IS) (+1 worst, +6 best)	
-1	Product quality	+2	Barriers to entry
-3	Market share	+3	Growth potential
-1	Brand & image	+6	Access to financing
-4	Product life cycle	+2	Consolidation
Total X-axis score: +2			
Financial (FS)		Environmental (ES)	
-6	ROA	+4	Growth
-4	Leverage	+3	Inflation
-1	Liquidity	+3	Demand
-2	Cash flow	+4	Taxation
Total Y-axis score: +1			

Although the justifications for our rankings for the strategic dimensions have already been enumerated in the above paragraphs, we feel there is a need to explain our rankings for the financial strategic dimension and justify them with specific figures. Apple's annualized ROA % for the quarter that ended in Dec. 2019 was 26.19%. During the past 13 years, Apple's highest ROA % was 28.54% (Gurufocus, 2019). In the same quarter of 2019, Apple had a leverage ratio of 2.8, making it slightly risky, and on the higher spectrum debt-to-equity ratios in the technology industry (CSI Market, 2019). However, Apple has an outstanding liquidity ratio of

1.50, indicating that Apple has more than a sufficient amount of current assets to cover its short-term debt obligations. Apple's cash ratio last quarter was 1.0x (Finbox, 2019).

Therefore, the completed SPACE matrix for Apple looks like:



As such, with the internal and external audit conducted on both Apple and the environmental scan of Malaysia, I believe that Apple should take an aggressive approach to increase market share by expanding its products and services into Malaysia, as well as shift its supply chain and manufacturing operations into Malaysia.

6a. Product and services strategy

Product branding and marketing

First, Apple should pursue an aggressive branding and marketing strategy tailored to the specific culture and preferences of the Malaysian consumer. Research by Santander Trade, an online portal providing global market knowledge for businesses looking to export their products and connect with local suppliers and importers, Malaysians are experiencing a growing preference for global brands over domestic brands, especially for luxury goods such as smartphones and brands. This change in consumer lifestyle is a result of rising affluence and educational levels in the country, causing Malaysians to become more westernised, sophisticated and cosmopolitan. Consumers, though highly price sensitive, are also brand-

conscious and increasingly concerned about quality. The study showed that prices have less influence on consumer spending than promotional campaigns and goods quality.

Product diversification and pricing strategy

The diversification of iPhone with lower price points, namely the iPhone SE, which was discontinued in 2018 and making a comeback in 2020, will be a key strategy for Apple to take advantage of the Malaysian market's both lower income demographic as well as growing middle class customer base. The lower price point iPhone retaining the design aesthetics and functionalities of Apple's flagship device is a potential key growth driver, while the more premium devices and store experience continue to cultivate and maintain Apple's perceived high market positioning.

Physical retail location

Apple should open a physical retail location in Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur. This is critically important for increasing the sales of Apple Products, because Apple's past expansion efforts have illustrated the importance of having a physical retail space not just as a way to distribute and sell its products, but also as physical landmark marking Apple's outreach and foothold in the Malaysian markets. Despite the proliferation in online marketing and retail, a physical retail location is an effective form of advertising, as customers and Apple fans can go inside the store and experience Apple's products, immersing themselves in the physical, tangible experience. An effective market strategy in Malaysia should tap into Apple's strengths not just as a product company, but also its innovations as a retailer.

In the experience economy of electronics, seamless and enjoyable purchase experience and post purchase servicing experience are essential to attracting consumers. Thus, Apple's investment in a premium physical retail experience, the one stop purchase and servicing Apple Store, can give them a leg up over competitors.

The Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) on retail strategy

STRATEGIC ALTERNATIVES							
			1 Open Physical Retail Location		2 Partnership with authorized retailers		
Key Factors			Weight	AS	TAS	AS	TAS
Opportunities							
1	Growing middle class population	0.12	3	0.36	3	0.36	
2	Rising disposable income	0.18	4	0.72	4	0.72	
3	Smartphone sale growth	0.15	2	0.3	2	0.3	
4	Desire for global consumer electronic brands with an increasing trend for digital adoption in the region	0.1	2	0.2	1	0.1	
Threats							
1	Increasing competitive rivals segmenting the market	0.15	2	0.3	1	0.15	
2	Continue pressure on profit margin due to rising costs	0.15	2	0.3	2	0.3	
3	Competitive price market	0.15	1	0.15	1	0.15	
Total		1.00					
Strengths							
1	Innovative shopping experience	0.2	4	0.8	-	-	
2	High value and strong brand image	0.15	3	0.45	2	0.3	
3	Loyal customer base	0.15	2	0.3	1	0.15	
4	Effective innovation process with fast inventory turnover	0.12	-	-	-	-	
Weakness							
1	Dependency of sales on high-end consumers	0.15	2	0.3	2	0.3	
2	Limited advertisement and promotions	0.1	1	0.1	1	0.1	
3	Closed ecosystem with low compatibility with other devices, restricting of multiple purchases to own portfolio of limited offerings	0.13	1	0.13	1	0.13	
Total		1.00		4.41		3.06	

Corporate social responsibility initiatives

Third, corporate social responsibility should be critical to Apple's marketing efforts in Malaysia. Apple should partner with local government and non-profit organizations to provide educational resources to the local community. A solid corporate social responsibility strategy is integral to Apple's success, because it allows the company to satisfy various stakeholder groups that impose demands which translate into corporate social responsibility, which influence firm performance. In Apple's case, considering the high value of its brand, corporate social responsibility initiatives can be extremely effective in improving Apple's company's brand image in the host country, which will boost firm performance in terms of customer perception and sales revenues, as strong brand image remains to be a key competitive advantage hold over rival companies.

In order to have a successful launch in Malaysia, Apple must consider the interests and concerns of a number of key stakeholders in its policies and programs for corporate social responsibility. In Apple's case, the following stakeholders are the most significant:

1. Customers/consumers
2. Employees
3. Investors
4. Employees of Suppliers and Distributors

Customers/consumers: As the people spending money on its products, customers are prioritized by Apple as its top stakeholders in devising corporate responsibility strategies. The main interest of customers is to have effective and efficient, high-quality projects that are reasonably priced. However, recent studies have also shown that consumers are paying more attention the social and environmental impact of their favourite brands. Although Apple's products are on the higher-end price point, its premium pricing strategy can become more acceptable because it matches not only its high quality and aesthetics, but also the company's environmental programs to ensure a responsible sourcing and recycling, addressing customer's demands for business sustainability. Thus, Apple's corporate social responsibility initiatives satisfy the interests of its consumers.

Employee and investors: As the people who keep the business running, Apple's employees are the second priority stakeholders, and its approach to corporate social responsibility is also integral to the interest of its employees. Although the main interests of the employee are compensation and career development, employees also care about working a company that is a force for sustainable good in its community. Through its corporate social responsibility initiatives, Apple will be better able to attract the most talented workforce, thus enhancing its

human capital resources to innovate and develop profitable products. Similarly, Apple's investors primary interests are maximizing returns on their investments. Apple must satisfy these interests by generating excellent financial performance, which can be achieved partially through maintaining high profit margins. As mentioned above, this can be justified through corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Employees of suppliers and distributors: The recent trend towards socially sustainable and responsible business, particularly with regards to multinational companies with supply chains located in developing countries. The primary interests of workers are similar to Apple's own employees, such as compensation and job security. However, workers are also interested in ethical employment practices. Thus, to a higher degree than perhaps the other stakeholders, Apple's corporate social responsibility efforts satisfy the interests of the stakeholder group of supplier's workers.

Apple's past corporate social responsibility initiatives led by its Vice President of Environmental Initiatives, Lisa Jackson, have already been met with some success. In China, for example, Apple powers all of its offices and retail through solar panels (Apple Inc, 2018, pp.18). Apple has also provided education programs to more than 3.6 million supplier employees since 2008, which includes free attendance in Apple Development and Swift courses for employees with no coding experience. Apple should expand such educational programs to its employees, as well as the employees of suppliers and distributors, in Malaysia.

6b. Supply chain and manufacturing relocation strategy

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	SO: When it comes to manufacturing relocation, Apple's strengths continue to be its patents and technological know-how. Coupled with the loose regulatory environment, the avoidance of trade barriers with China and the United States, and the relatively educated and low-cost workforce of Malaysia, manufacturing in this region seems to be a perfect match for continued profit growths. Furthermore, just as Dyson has moved its headquarters to Singapore to gain access to the vast workforce of the neighboring countries, Apple's relocation of its manufacturing facilities will enjoy	WO: Similar to China and other developing countries, the lack of sophisticated legal structures and patent protection may remain a risk at Malaysia as well. However, unlike the Chinese system, Malaysia enjoys a unique common law system that ensures that some similarities between the US and Malaysian legal systems exist. As such, the company can continue to employ its traditional patent protection methodologies as enjoyed in the US in this part of the world as well.

	similar benefits. By attracting local talents with enticing packages and benefits, Apple will enjoy a unique position in the Southeast Asian sphere. Additionally, this will also increase Apple's bargaining power with existing suppliers.	
Threats	ST: Changes in supply chain will cause significant disruptions, as seen by the shocks created by both the coronavirus outbreak and the US-China trade war. Furthermore, China's unique position and its long traditions in manufacturing ensures efficient supply chains to exist in the first place. Whether this can be replicated in Malaysia will depend entirely on the country's industrial strategies. With relatively quick access to raw materials, and its close proximity to the technological hubs of South Korea, China, and Japan, this could prove to be a unique opportunity. Furthermore, Apple's current relationships with suppliers across the region remain a strength that can continue to prove important in the new location. It is not difficult to envision these relationships can continue to exist despite the relocation. As such, Apple must continue to ensure that its contractual relationships with its suppliers continue to act as win-win situations for all parties involved.	WT: The greatest danger that may come from the relocation is the escalation of US protectionism. As the trade war with China boosts the Trump Administration's electability within his base, the same strategies may be used against other manufacturing and low-cost countries as well. There are already signs that such initiatives are being planned against Vietnam, the biggest benefactor of the US-China trade war. With an escalation of such trade barriers imposed on more nations, it will prove costly and detrimental to the relocation plans. As such, the danger does not come with the relocation per se, but more within the domestic situation back in the United States. To tackle this, Apple must continue to work with the Trump Administration, the Treasury, and the State Department to ensure that the Federal Government understands that Apple's continued growth is in the interest of America.

As further remarks, and a reemphasis of the importance of this relocation strategy, we recommend that Apple immediately start shifting part of its supply chain operations from China to Malaysia. There are several advantages to this. First, from a negative standpoint, the business environment in China is becoming increasingly hostile due to rising labor costs, import and export tariffs, and unstable geopolitical relationship between China and the United States. From a positive standpoint, shifting part of the supply chain to Malaysia allows Apple to take advantage of unique business environment in Malaysia.

Good location and infrastructure: Unlike other developing countries, Malaysia's business infrastructure is one of the best in Southeast Asia, with pre-existing trade and shipping routes as well as financial and operational infrastructure already set up. International trade is facilitated by Malaysia's proximity to the Strait of Malacca, where there are seven international ports delivering products around the world (Xu, 2019). This also significantly lowers the shipping fee of exports.

Friendly policy and foreign relations: Malaysia has cracked down on corruption in recent years, thus ensuring a healthy conducive environment for multinational companies to do business in the region. Also, Malaysia's foreign policy position remains neutral, does limiting any potential negative impact from the US-China trade war. However, this remains to be a risk as the trade war's escalation may involve more nations as well.

Lower taxes: The corporate tax rate in Malaysia has been reduced to 24%, and Malaysia has recently canceled import duties on various machinery and parts (Xu, 2019).

Natural resources: Malaysia is rich in natural resources, including petroleum, tin, rubber and palm oil. Malaysia also had lower electricity prices (\$0.05 USC per kWh), which is almost half of China's price. Thus, moving manufacturing to Malaysia will significantly reduce the cost of inputs to Apple's products.

7. Detailed implementation plan

Introduction

As mentioned thus far, the goal of this report is to address the primary concern: Apple's dependency on regional supply chains. Earlier, I have already suggested several strategies to counteract this over-dependence. Primarily, Apple should target the Malaysian market and achieve increased market share in the following ways: by developing a product marketing strategy to increase consumer brand awareness, initiating a physical presence in Malaysia, and engaging in corporate social responsibility. The implementation plan will outline each strategy in more detail.

Developing a Product Marketing Strategy

This strategy rests on the underlying assumption that Malaysians are increasingly preferring global brands to domestic brands. Due to the rise in the middle class, Malaysians are becoming more affluent and are increasing demand of luxury goods. To affirm this assumption, Apple

should engage in various customer research strategies, such as conducting focus groups with Apple products to gather information on customer sentiment. Additionally, Apple should also conduct customer interviews and release quantitative surveys to gather information about the Malaysian population on a larger scale. This is key as consumer behaviour can be drastically unlike in different markets. Expanding to a new location thus requires deeper understanding and knowledge of the new, local culture and creating a new strategy, instead of approaching it with the same strategy as used in the home market.

Opening a Physical Retail Location

Apple was one of the first brands that “productized” its retail stores. Rather than positioning their stores as merely another distribution channel, Apple constructs its retail stores as an extension of its products – neat, minimalistic, classy, and designs the store as an experience. Customers can walk into the store and experience the products in a more tangible way. This strategy has worked in various other markets as well and is definitely a core tactic for Apple in expanding into a new geographic location. In addition, Apple can continue to collect real-time customer data using sensors and other internet-of-things solutions in its retail stores, to further understand its customers and the popularity of its products.

Corporate Social Responsibility

As consumers become more interested in brands with strong corporate social responsibility, it has become important for every company to develop a CSR strategy. Apple could partner with local non-profit or governmental organizations, and ensure various stakeholders are knowledgeable and aligned in Apple’s mission as well.

Implementation Schedule

Understanding the current Malaysian customer demographic is key, especially their opinions and awareness of Apple as a brand and the desirability of its products. It is also important to distinguish whether any particular demography plays a role in influencing the demand of its products, for example whether age, class, or gender are important factors. Thus, I recommend conducting customer research first in the timeline of the implementation schedule, as this information is difficult to find through secondary research.

Month 0: Before implementing the plan, Apple needs to create a suitable implementation team, and ensure that the members in the Malaysia market launch have adequate local knowledge as well as functional expertise to carry this project forward. It is also important to create a shared vision in this team, and ensure that everyone is aligned on the common purpose and goal of expansion, as well as the problem it is aiming to mitigate.

Month 1: Find users to conduct a focus group for Apple's best-selling product: the iPhone. This is important to gauge how well-known the brand's product is in Malaysia, or if it is not well-known, whether the product is attractive to this customer group.

Month 2-3: Release a 1500-person survey to collect customer's sentiment regarding Apple as a brand. It is important to understand the customer's points of parity and points of differentiation towards the brand. What do they perceive as substitutes or complements in the Malaysian market, and what emotions are evoked when thinking about Apple? If the majority seems to be negative emotions, Apple may need to consider launching advertising campaigns or modifying its strategy to develop a more favourable image for the customer.

Month 3-5: Scout location for the first retail store and begin to construct and design the store. Work out the logistics.

Month 3-5: Scout for various non-profit or governmental organizations to partner with. Ensure it fits Apple's mission and goal. Start developing the project, whether it is an advertising campaign, co-sponsored event, or another idea.

Month 5 and on: Continue to monitor the success of these strategies by looking at metrics and ensuring that the campaigns are successful. If not, evaluation is necessary to tweak the strategies and develop a new implementation strategy.

Risks and Considerations

Outlining of major risks

Tackling a new market will always lead to a certain degree of risk. I will outline a few risks that Apple may encounter in expanding to Malaysia. These risks will manifest in internal and external factors. Internal includes poor internal governance and alignment of the Malaysia

office with the rest of the company's branch and headquarters, whilst external risks include an uncertain economy, poor corporate governance, political risk, and foreign exchange rate risk. Below, I will address these risks in more detail.

1. **Internal:** Poor internal governance and alignment: This is common in any organization and only increases when a company decides to expand to a new geographic market. There becomes more potential for loopholes in communication, especially across different regions, cultures and time differences. As a result, it is important to ensure that all key stakeholders are aligned in the common goal and purpose before embarking on the project. Establishing ground rules and standardized processes, communication channels, and standards is important for a successful execution.
2. **External:** Even if the internal risks are solved, there still exists myriad of external risks involving expansion to a new geographic market. For example, large economic swings, currency exchange fluctuations, changes in the local political climate are all factors that are difficult to prepare for, as they are often difficult to predict. Additionally, cultural insensitivity is another issue that arises.

Mitigation strategy

There are many ways Apple could mitigate these problems. One strategy is to test run a pilot project in the new market. This is a quick and easy way to test and understand whether there is significant demand or feedback from the market for this brand or product. The size of the project should be large enough to give us enough information, but small enough in size and capital to run quickly and easily. If there indicates evidence that there is sufficient customer demand and an expansion may be worth it, Apple can pursue its strategy.

Another risk mitigation strategy is to prepare an exit strategy as a geographic expansion can often result in failure. Even with adequate market research or evidence of demand, the launch of the store or the product could still go amiss. Thus, it is important to first clearly define measures of success, then to develop an exit strategy, taking into consideration the financial and operational resources, as well as the human capital involved in the project. Employees are

the most crucial part of a business – ensuring they are valued and treated fairly in the case the project fails, is important to retaining morale and positivity within the company.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, through the internal and external audit, I have given a good background and industry overview of Malaysia's business environment. I have addressed Apple's main concerns and the reasons an expansion to Malaysia makes economic sense, as well as a detailed implementation plan and an analysis of the strategy's potential risks.

Overall, as demonstrated through this report, I believe that although there exists various barriers and risks, an expansion to Malaysia provides many opportunities for growth and improvement. Expanding into new markets not only alleviates in this situation, Apple's dependency on regional supply chain, but also allows Apple to take a stronger foothold in developing markets keeping out competitors and looking into new areas and channels for growth. I believe it may very well be necessary for Apple to take this risk and head in this direction, especially if it hopes to keep its sustainable competitive advantage and stand its position as one of the top innovative technology companies in the world.

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