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CASE STUDIES AS A TEACHING-LEARNING TOOL IN ACCOUNTING AND MARKETING COURSES

An Instructor's' Perspective

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Retail Management

Osman M. Zain

Introduction

Cases are the descriptions of real environment of business entities. What students learn in classrooms maybe different from the real world of retailing; knowledge acquired from lectures may not be directly applied to the business environment. Textbooks cannot cover all aspects of retail management; they only lay down some theories for students or readers as guidelines to be used in managing the business.

Objectives of using cases

The objectives of using case study in retail management course are as follows:

- 1. To expose students to the real problems that most retailers face.
- 2. To encourage critical thinking amongst students through ease discussions.
- 3. To show students on how to apply and integrate theoretical concepts in helpful manner in managing retail business.

Relevance of the cases with theory and practice

In every attempt of enhancing knowledge through case study, carefully selected cases for class discussions are important. This is to ensure that the selected cases are able to demonstrate examples of either the mismanagement or the blind spots in managing retail businesses. When we talk about good management, we should include good strategic planning exercise and its implementation. Take for example a company, Newton. Newton was the first direct selling company that emerged at the time of the entrance of AMWAY into Malaysian retail environment. It was very successful in its early years. The management developed a five-year strategic plan that focused on sales revenues. It targeted that on the third year, it sales should be three million Ringgit Malaysia; fourth year sales five million Ringgit Malaysia; and fifth year was targeted six million Ringgit Malaysia. As tactical strategies to achieve this strategic plan, the management decided to (i) increase its product offerings and (ii) increase dealerships or distributors. As a result of these implementations, the company managed to achieve the targeted RM 3 million sales in its third year, RM5 million sales on the fourth year, but went bankrupt on the fifth year. This case study explicitly demonstrates the importance of strategic planning for a retail business, and the examples of tactical, and implementation towards achieving the targeted plan. Even with a careful planning and implementations, the company still failed to survive in its fifth year. Why? 1. It overlooked that inventory management is important. 2. Cash flow management is equally important. 3. The importance of product cycle. 4. The importance of retail pricing strategy ... intial pricing, maintained markup, and markdown.)