

FACTORS INFLUENCING CUSTOMER PREFERENCE TOWARD E-
COMMERCE PLATFORMS' PRODUCT RETURN SERVICE.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents whom supports me from the very beginning. To my husband, thank you for your morale support and always by my side. Thank you all for believing in me. Adira Raisya, this is for you dear.

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My master degree is not the easy as many people think. I have been through a lot. There is been ups and downs to complete my study. But I'm very grateful that I manage to face all the things that I have been struggling.

ABSTRACT

As the global consumer becomes more and more reliable towards technology and digitalization. The amount of consumer that makes their purchases for their personal needs have increased exponentially as they don't have to go to the physical shops and their products will be sent via courier service right to their doorsteps. According to author (Gupta, 2014), more business community have become aware of the e-commerce potential and its benefits. This scenario has changed the market from the traditional that's more physical to an electronic marketplace that has seen the narrowing down of business capital size. As there's a rapid increase in e-commerce market, the competitiveness among business community have also becomes more vigorous as to capture a bigger market share. In this research studies will focus on product return service influence customer preference when choosing e-commerce platform. The factor that will influence customer preference is cost of return, flexibility in product return process, logistics provider and information system. The objective of this research is to identify factors influencing customer preference towards e-commerce product return service, identify the significant factors influencing customer preference towards e-commerce product return service and to purpose work flow for return service management. Researcher has been choosing the southern region of Malaysia as the study area. For this research study, researcher has been chosen student that studied in the southern region of Malaysia as respondent. 3 biggest University in Johor that represent overall student in Southern region Malaysia. University Technology Malaysia Skudai, University Technology Mara Pasir Gudang Campus, and University Kuala Lumpur Malaysian Institute of Industrial Technology Campus (UNIKL M|TEC). The finding of the research, researcher able to identify the factors influencing customer preference towards e-commerce product return service, the significant factors and also what is the improvement on the current workflow of the product return service.

ABSTRAK

Apabila pengguna global semakin mempercayai terhadap teknologi dan pendigitalan. Jumlah pengguna yang membuat pembelian untuk keperluan peribadi mereka telah meningkat dengan pesat kerana mereka tidak perlu pergi ke kedai fizikal dan produk mereka akan dihantar melalui perkhidmatan kurier terus ke depan pintu mereka. Menurut penulis (Gupta, 2014), lebih ramai komuniti perniagaan telah menyedari potensi e-dagang dan faedahnya. Senario ini telah mengubah pasaran daripada tradisional yang lebih fizikal kepada pasaran elektronik yang telah menyaksikan pengecilan saiz modal perniagaan. Memandangkan terdapat peningkatan pesat dalam pasaran e-dagang, daya saing dalam kalangan komuniti perniagaan juga menjadi lebih rancak untuk menguasai bahagian pasaran yang lebih besar. Dalam kajian ini kajian akan memberi tumpuan kepada perkhidmatan pemulangan produk mempengaruhi pilihan pelanggan apabila memilih platform e-dagang. Faktor yang akan mempengaruhi keutamaan pelanggan ialah kos pemulangan, fleksibiliti dalam proses pemulangan produk, pembekal logistik dan sistem maklumat. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi keutamaan pelanggan terhadap perkhidmatan pemulangan produk e-dagang, mengenal pasti faktor penting yang mempengaruhi keutamaan pelanggan terhadap perkhidmatan pemulangan produk e-dagang dan memberi contoh aliran kerja untuk pengurusan perkhidmatan pemulangan. Pengkaji telah memilih kawasan selatan Malaysia sebagai kawasan kajian. Bagi kajian penyelidikan ini, pengkaji telah memilih pelajar yang belajar di wilayah selatan Malaysia sebagai responden. 3 Universiti terbesar di Johor yang mewakili keseluruhan pelajar di wilayah Selatan Malaysia. Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Skudai, Universiti Teknologi Kampus Mara Pasir Gudang, dan Universiti Kuala Lumpur Kampus Institut Teknologi Perindustrian Malaysia (UNIKL M|TEC). Selepas mengumpul data, pengkaji akan menggunakan SPSS untuk menganalisis dapatan. Dapatan kajian adalah, penyelidik berjaya mengenalpasti factor yang mempengaruhi pemilihan pengguna, factor yang paling memberi kesan dan juga penambahbaikan terhadap aliran kerja pemulangan barang.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UTM	-	Univiersity Technology Malaysia
UiTM	-	University Technology Mara
UNIKL	-	University Kuala Lumpur
MITEC	-	Malaysian Institute of Industrial Technology Campus
MCMC	-	Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commision

LIST OF SYMBOLS

δ	-	Minimal error
D, d	-	Diameter
F	-	Force
v	-	Velocity
p	-	Pressure
I	-	Moment of Inertia
r	-	Radius
Re	-	Reynold Number

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

As the global consumer becomes more and more reliable towards technology and digitalization. The amount of consumer that makes their purchases for their personal needs have increased exponentially as they don't have to go to the physical shops and their products will be sent via courier service right to their doorsteps. According to author Gupta, (2014), more business community have become aware of the e-commerce potential and its benefits. This scenario has changed the market from the traditional that's more physical to an electronic marketplace that has seen the narrowing down of business capital size. As there's a rapid increase in e-commerce market, the competitiveness among business community have also becomes more vigorous as to capture a bigger market share.

According to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission on the e-commerce Survey in year 2018 as shown in the figure 1.1, approximately 16.6 million or 51.2% Malaysian are active e-Commerce users. With Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya topping the highest percentage with 70.5% and the lowest percentage according to state is Kelantan and Perak with 22%. In this survey, the motivation factor for online shopping includes convenience, better price offered, ease of payments, variety of products, customer review, shipping free delivery options, and clear return policy.

From the findings by Muller, (2022), more than 60% of the respondents from age group 24 to 54 years old chose that they purchased more via online when the COVID-19 pandemic hits Malaysia. This shows the importance of studying the behavior of the consumer in e-commerce scenario as it correlates with the current

events that occurring simultaneously around the world. A better insight from these studies will bring forth benefits for all parties involves in the e-commerce platform.

As mentioned by Shengyu Gu, (2021), online sales have increased significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic as consumer are restricted to purchase the goods through the physical shops. As the volume of parcels have kept on growing whether forward or backward logistics process, have raises numerous issues that need to be addressed. With a better assessment of purchasing behavior of online consumers, an effective logistics activity can be achieved.

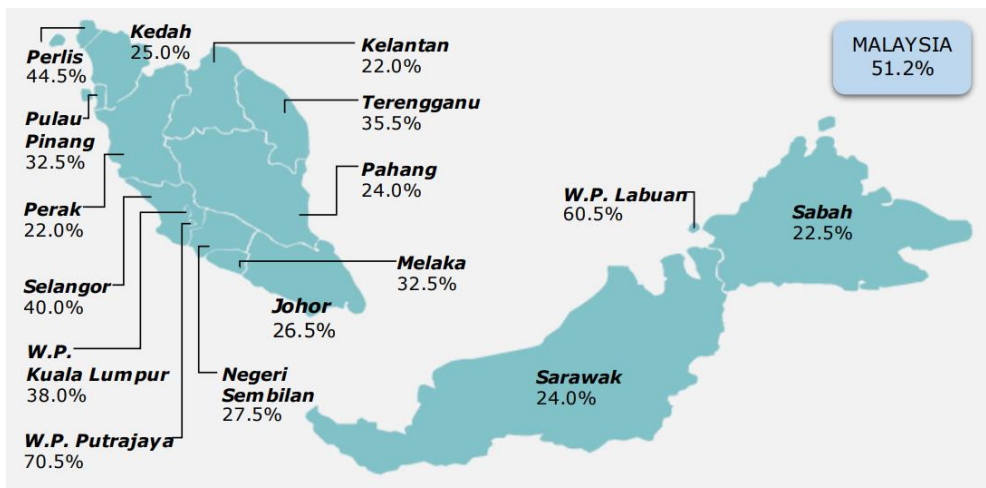


Figure 1.1: Active E-Commerce Users in Malaysia

In this research studies will focus on product return service influence customer preference when choosing e-commerce platform. The factor that will influence customer preference is cost of return, flexibility in product return process, logistics provider and information system. The reason for returning products includes that the product is damaged or defect, wrong item being delivered, not as advertised, does not fit, missing parts, change of mind, expired, may not be authentic, and has signs of usage. If the product return process is very convenient and flexible, it will make customer comfortable to spend more in the same e-commerce platform. In a research study conducted by Colburn, (2013), the service quality of doing reverse product return

service in the e-commerce it can significantly improve customer satisfaction through providing a replacement unit or a full refund without giving the customer a negative experience.

As the figure of active user in e-commerce have been increase rapidly, the customer purchasing behavior can play a vital role in ensuring the profitability of the business. According to Samar K. Mukhopadhyay, (2007) when customers have the confidence to buy a product from the e-commerce platform because of the company have a very good return policy, it will influence the customer to return and buy things from the same platform. One of the benefits of having a good return service process in e-commerce it can increase the loyalty and trustworthiness of customers through company policy that enable customer to exchange or return their goods hassle-free.

1.2 Problem Statement

As the e-commerce market kept on growing and the volume of parcels have increase exponentially, this have also cause higher rates of return products. Return of products will surely incur additional cost and will avertedly have a consequence on customer preference towards e-commerce as a whole by Danping Lin C. K., (2020). Different country has their own major concern regarding returns in e-commerce, UK and USA major concern is the return procedure management whilst in China about only a portion of the goods being returned.

Other than that, according to Kiew Chee Ching, (2021) Shopee struggles to compete with Lazada in all aspects related to monthly visit rates and the type of business model used to achieve good operations. In addition, according to the Shopee Malaysia Complaints Board, this online platform needs to address common issues such as refund issues, product defects, and poor customer service. It is important to look at consumer perceptions of Shopee and understand why they choose these online shopping platforms. From a scientific point of view, intensive research on the attitudes and behaviors of online shopping has been conducted in recent years.

When purchasing item through online, the lack of physical inspection may cause negative implications which can cause customer dissatisfaction and influence customer preference. Contrasting to a brick-and-mortar retailers, customer had their chance to make a physical inspection before proceeding with the payment Zhi Pei, (2014). However, with flexible return policy for a product defect, it may be an added advantages for e-commerce to capture a much larger share of consumer market.

Based on research findings by Diane, customer is more likely to be loyal to a business if they're willing to make return policy much easier, simple, and provided guarantee for the service or product. As the e-commerce market kept on growing and the competition are high, more and more businesses begin to implements such approaches to retain their customer for repeated purchases.

According to Prasad, (2017), due to the uncertainty of online purchases via e-commerce such as damaged, lost, or wrong parcels. The post-sales logistics services

such as tracking, shipping, and collection of the returned products need to be done in a most efficient and cost-effective ways so that customer satisfaction and preference will be positive and minimize the loss of profit due to the unexpected incidents towards their products.

Guled Aden Farah, (2018) stated that although university student doesn't have enough funds for shopping, the findings is that internet usage and online shopping are frequently use by students in the age group of 18-30 years old. In this present time, the number of e-commerce have grown exponentially. Thus, the factor that influence students' behaviour and preference are varied from experience, cost, and logistics process. The researcher chooses to conduct research for university student because university student usually in the age 18 years old until 30 years old.

1.3 Research Aim

The aim of this research is to obtain the findings of product return service that influence customer preference when choosing the e-commerce platform.

1.4 Research Question

- i. What are the factors influencing customer preference towards e-commerce product return service?
- ii. What are the significant factors that influencing customer preference towards e-commerce product return service?
- iii. What is the improvement that can be implement in the current work flow for the return service process?

1.5 Research Objectives

- (a) To identify factors influencing customer preference towards e-commerce product return service.
- (b) To identify the significant factors influencing customer preference towards e-commerce product return service.
- (c) To purpose work flow for return service management.

1.6 Hypothesis of Research:

Cost of Return

H0: Cost of return will not influence customer preference when choosing e-commerce platform

H1: Cost of return will influence customer preference when choosing e-commerce platform.

Flexibility in Return Service Process

H0: Flexibility in return service process will not influence customer preference when choosing e-commerce platform.

H1: Flexibility in return service process will influence customer preference when choosing e-commerce platform.

Logistics Provider

H0: Logistics provider will not influence customer preference when choosing e-commerce platform.

H1: Logistics provider will influence customer preference when choosing e-commerce platform.

Information System

H0: Information system will not influence customer preference when choosing e-commerce platform.

H1: Information system will influence customer preference when choosing e-commerce platform.

1.7 Research Gap

Past studies conducted on return service only focuses on the beneficial aspects such as ways to enhance sales, the driving factor for incremental revenue, and creating or developing attractive return policy to become one of the most important tools to attract customer. This study will assist to analyze the return service process will influence customer preference when choosing e-commerce platform. The significance of this research studies is to identify the factor that will influence customer preference, to identify the significant factors of customer preference when choosing the e-commerce platform and to propose the improvement workflow of return process that easy and convenient. This research will be able to conclude whether the return product service in e-commerce needs any improvement in order for making the process much more effective and at the same time create customer loyalty. This research also will be able to be use as a tool to analyze the impact of return product service towards customer preference.

1.8 Research Contribution

The contribution of this study is, a lot of researchers just focus on how to make a profit towards e-commerce platform without knowing that the logistics provider is actually is a very important aspect that they need to looked into. By having a good logistics provider, it is not only making the forward business are smooth and efficient, it is also would make the backward which is return process easily. It turns out will make the customer happy. This research is important in order to identify the important of product return process towards customer preference when choosing the e-commerce

platform. e-commerce business should not focus on the profit but they have to keep in mind that reverse logistics place an integral part in improving customer preference, retaining existing customer and at the same time shows that the business is responsible in post-sales logistics activities. By knowing the significant of the factor of the customer preference, it could help e-commerce platform to improve their product return service that will satisfy the customer. Customer satisfaction will make them to be loyal and confident to spend more in the same e-commerce platform. Thus, it will help the platform to earn more profit.

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