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Increasing profitability and price effectiveness of reseller business in fresh vegetables marketing in Mataram City, Indonesia

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Abstract

The reseller business in online marketing has been widely discussed in international journals. In this article, the author measures retailers' performance and finds solutions to increase profits and assess the effectiveness of fresh vegetable prices at the consumer level. The research was carried out in Mataram City at all traditional markets using a descriptive-explanatory method. All resellers and non-reseller merchants were designated as respondents. Data were collected through observation, surveys, and in-depth interview techniques. The data were analyzed using mathematical equations and descriptive statistics. The results show that the reseller method can increase selling prices and profits. An increase in the selling price can enhance profitability. A price effectiveness of 0.6684 indicates that every one percent increase in price can raise profits by 0.6684 percent. The increase in vegetable prices is effective in boosting resellers' profits. An increase in the selling price of vegetables should be accompanied by an improvement in quality and services to the consumers.

Keywords: Consumer, Price effectiveness, Profitability, Selling price, Vegetables.

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1. Introduction

Everyone needs vegetables as food. Due to their high fiber content, vegetables have advantages over meat, fish, and eggs. The high fiber content can be beneficial for digestion. However, the quantity of vegetable consumption is still below the recommended levels, and vegetable production in some regions is below the required standard [1]. In addition to fiber, vegetables contain vitamins and antioxidants that are useful in supporting human health during growth. Vegetables are

essential for growth and health improvement, becoming increasingly important as we age. Therefore, it is suggested as a potential solution to strengthen prevention strategies and avoid the need for therapy to improve population health [2, 3].

Therefore, everyone is advised to consume vegetables daily to grow healthy and fit. Such conditions indicate that business opportunities can be used as jobs and sources of income now and in the future [4]. Demand for vegetables increases in line with the number of educated people [5, 6].

The vegetables consumed are produced by farmers [7]. Most farmers cannot sell directly to the market. Farmers need local collectors who bring their produce to the market [8]. Some local collector traders sell directly to consumers in the market, but some sell them to resellers. Resellers sell directly to consumers [9].

Most vegetables, including wholesalers, are sold through the supply chain, and certain parts are sold through resellers [4, 10, 11]. Wholesalers are more open to accepting shipments of supplies from outside members, while resellers are more likely to accept shipments from specific vendors [7].

Traders apply the reseller method by taking goods from collectors or directly from farmers, so without spending a lot of time and effort, resellers can quickly obtain goods and immediately sell them to consumers [9].

Among the problems resellers face is the limited quantity and quality of human resources, so the capacity to manage the business is limited. Resellers tend to work alone without employees or are limited to using labor in the family [12, 13]. Resellers cannot afford to pay for outside labor or professionals because the amount of capital is limited [14, 15]. And access to banking credit is also constrained by the absence of assets that can be used as collateral; their only mainstay capital is their labor and free time that can be used to carry out business activities.

The volume of goods traded becomes limited to the relatively small amount of capital controlled. Limited capital is due to low savings and income, while obtaining loan capital is hindered by many factors [16, 17].

Opportunities to get loans from financial institutions are available. However, they cannot access the loans because they do not have experience and are unwilling to accept the risk of loans because they must pay regularly for principal and loan services [18, 19]. The Indonesian government has provided a source of financing from the People's Business Credit Scheme without collateral if the loan is less than IDR 50,000,000 (fifty million rupiah). The problem is that they need to understand the requirements and procedures for obtaining the loan [20].

Everyone who does business certainly hopes to make a profit. The profit obtained is directly proportional to the sales volume and the price margin but is inversely proportional to the cost margin. Therefore, to increase profits, the solution is to increase the number of sales by expanding the types of vegetable products and shortening marketing channels.

So far, resellers' performance has been calculated from the selling price margin to the purchasing price, while the costs incurred, such as labor wages, transportation costs, and overhead costs were excluded. Therefore, a formula is needed to assess resellers' performance that can combine all the incurred costs. These formulas can be applied using a calculator or a calculator app found on a mobile phone so that everyone can access the practical benefits of using the formula.

Price margin can only be used on one type of product, and increasing the price of one product impacts decreasing consumer surplus and increasing customer disappointment. Therefore, it is necessary to provide several types of products that can counter customer disappointment. The role of resellers can extend marketing channels, which results in decreased marketing efficiency because it increases the percentage of marketing margins and decreases farmers' share. Therefore, the reseller function should sell directly to consumers so that the marketing channel becomes short and can achieve marketing efficiency. On this occasion, the author offers a formula to measure reseller performance, profitability, and price effectiveness as another alternative to marketing efficiency. Profitability is the ratio of profit to cost, while price effectiveness is the ratio of profit margin to price margin multiplied by the ratio of price to profit; each formula can be expressed in percent.

The study aims to increase profitability and price effectiveness in marketing fresh vegetables using the reseller method.

2. Research Method

This study used a descriptive-explanatory method, which aims to explain the actual condition of the research object [21, 22].

The research object is all fresh vegetable traders in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia, consisting of resellers and non-resellers of spinach, cabbage, and water spinach. A reseller is a merchant who buys from farmers or other traders and sells directly to consumers. In comparison, farmers and collector traders sell to consumers.

The study locations are all traditional wet markets in the Mataram City area, namely Mandalika, Sindu, Sayang-Sayang, Karang Jasi, Pagutan, Pagesangan, Muhajirin Dasan Agung, Tanjung Karang, and Kebon Roek. The research used the census method. There were 25 reseller respondents and 50 non-reseller respondents. The total number of vegetable traders surveyed was 75 people.

Data collection used three methods (triangulation): observation, structured, and in-depth interviews. Observations were carried out at transaction locations in the traditional markets and customers' places. Structured interviews using questionnaires were conducted. In-depth interviews were conducted to gather more detailed information about family background, household conditions, and capital [23, 24].

The final semester students of the Faculty of Agriculture, Mataram University, were selected as the surveyors for the study. Students were trained on research ethics, data collection procedures, question-and-answer materials, and exit permits for respondents. Data collection was carried out from May 2023 to April 2024.

The data was analyzed using mathematical equations and descriptive statistics, namely simple tables and cross tables. Then, discussions were conducted to determine the relationship and causality between variables [25].

The data was analyzed using the following mathematical equations:

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n} Ci = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} Xi}{n} + b\sum_{i=1}^{n} Qi \quad (1)$$

$$C = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} Ci}{n}$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n} Ri = \sum_{i=1}^{n} Pi * Qi \quad (2)$$

$$R = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} Ri}{n}$$

$$L = \sum_{i=1}^{n} Pi * Qi - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} Xi}{n} + b\sum_{i=1}^{n} Qi \quad (3)$$

$$L = PQ - (a + bQ) \quad (4)$$

$$PQ = L + (a + bQ) \quad (5)$$

$$P = \frac{L+a+bQ}{Q} \quad (6)$$

$$P = \frac{L+C}{Q}\ x\ Rp\ 1 \quad (7)$$

Information:
P = average price in the market (IDR/unit)
L = company profit or trader profit (IDR)
C = Total cost (IDR)
Q = sales volume

Equation 7 shows a positive relationship between price and profit and between price and cost. The higher the price, the higher the profit, assuming the cost and sales volume do not change. Likewise, the higher the cost, the higher the price, assuming the profit and sales volume do not change.

2.1. Equation

Price effectiveness is an analytical tool to measure the price effectiveness of a product or service [26, 27]. Price Effectiveness calculates the ratio between the percentage change in profit from the sale of a product or service to the percentage change in the price of that product or service.

$$Pe = \frac{L2-L1}{L} / \frac{P2-P1}{P} \quad (8)$$

$$Pe = \frac{\Delta L}{\Delta P} * \frac{P}{L} \quad (9)$$

Information:
Pe = Price Effectiveness
L1 = Profit when P1
L2 = Profit when P2
P1 = 1st price
P2 = 2nd price
L2-L1 = change in profit (ΔL)
P2-P1 = price change (ΔP)
P = average price
L = average profit

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Capital

For everyone to be able to carry out business activities, capital is needed, including material and human capital. Material capital is sourced from households, loans, and human capital through knowledge, expertise, and skills. Human capital in the form of skills consists of hard skills and soft skills, such as the ability to communicate, establish relationships, lobby, and promote [28, 29]. Soft skills are obtained from formal education and informal education. The human capital of vegetable resellers is described as follows:

Most of the resellers are women. The number of female respondents was 70 (93.33%), and the remaining five (6.67%) were men. Of these, most are married (76.67%), married (widow/widower) as much as 16%.

The respondents' formal education levels ranged from never attending school to graduating from undergraduate studies or S1 level.

The highest level of education is the completion of nine years of primary education, namely elementary school graduation and junior high school graduation. The education level of women is higher than that of men. The highest level of education for male respondents is graduating from junior high school, while the highest level for female respondents is graduating from higher education.

Respondents with primary education are still open to continuing their education by taking the informal education package for Elementary School and Junior High School, and those who have graduated from junior high school can continue to the informal education level of High School.

Table 1.
Respondents' education levels by gender.

Nu	Education Level	Woman		Man		Amount	
		(Person)	(%)	(Person)	(%)	(Person)	(%)
1	Never went to school	11	14.67	0	0	11	14.67
2	Not completing primary school	6	8.00	0	0	6	8.00
3	Primary school completion.	30	40.00	3	4.00	33	44.00
4	Junior High School completion	15	20.00	2	2.67	17	22.67
5	High school graduation	7	9.33	0	0	7	9.33
6	Bachelor's degree completion	1	1.33	0	0	1	1.33
	Total	70	93.33	5	6.67	75	100.00

Female respondents ranged from 21 to 75 years old, while male respondents ranged from 31 to 70 years. Most respondents, 71 in total (94.67%), are under 65, and only 4 (four) respondents are over 64 years old.

The vegetable traders have experience varying between 3 to 17 years. The average experience working as a reseller is 7.2 years. Although they have enough experience, the accumulation of material capital is relatively small. The amount of material capital ranges from IDR 1,490,000 to IDR 27,500,000, with an average of IDR 2,185,000. Because of this limited capital, vegetable product resellers are categorized as micro and small businesses. The micro-business group constitutes 93.33%, while the small business group makes up 6.67%.

Vegetable traders are informal businesses, with no legal entities, and do not have a business license or a Taxpayer Identification Number. As an informal business, employees of the Mataram Regional Revenue and Assets Office collect a market levy daily to be deposited into the city government's treasury. The levy amount ranges from IDR 2,000 to IDR 10,000 per day, depending on the quantity of goods brought to the market.

3.2. Sales Volume

Sales volume is closely related to the quantity and quality of capital. Resellers with a larger capital capacity also show a larger sales volume, but because most resellers have a low capital capacity, the sales volume is relatively low [30, 31].

The average sales volume is 100 bundles per day. The sales volume of reseller merchants varies from 15 bundles to 500 bundles per day. Sales volume directly affects revenue; that is, the greater the quantity of sales volume, the greater the receipt (Table 3). Because the sales volume is relatively low, the total revenue and total cost are also low; in the end, the total revenue and total cost remain low. According to Gutiérrez [32], total revenue and total cost are functions of sales quantity, and therefore the quantity of sales is positively related to revenue and total cost, as well as determining the value of contribution margin and profit.

3.3. Contribution Margin and Break-Even Point

The contribution margin is the difference between the revenue and the costs sacrificed. Contribution margin is the benefit of a business activity that can be used to measure performance. Refer to the results of the study Augsburg et al. [28] and Wang and Wang [33] that the application of the proper reseller management techniques allows one to overcome competition and success in competing for reseller preferences, as well as allow the exchange of information between resellers and managers. It is said that those who apply the proper reseller management techniques, Gupta [34], and concepts such as marketing relationships allow success in competing by influencing resellers' preferences. The exchange of information allows the realization of cost reductions and increased benefits [35, 36].

Table 2 shows that the cost in the reseller group is higher than that of the non-reseller group and correlates with the contribution margin, meaning that a more significant contribution margin follows the higher variable cost. The results of this study are different from the study conducted by Chow, et al. [37] where they found that high-volume of the medical services correlate positively with the contribution margins, but correlate negatively with direct variable costs, while hospital costs and doctor payments increase; on the other hand, hospital direct costs decrease with experience. It is, therefore, reasonable to suspect that the decrease in direct costs outside of physician payments leads to an increase in contribution margins.

The results of the study by Chow et al. [37] certainly cannot be equated with the condition of resellers, who are household-scale businesses compared to well-organized hospitals with significant social and material capital. It is, therefore, natural for an increase in variable costs to be positively correlated with contribution margins (Table 2).

Table 2.
Variable costs, contribution margins, and break-even points of vegetable marketing.

Nu	Parameters	Reseller	Non Reseller	Aggregate
1	Selling price (IDR/kg)	13,668.52	6,268.35	8,703.00
2	Average Variable Cost (IDR/kg)	5,874.60	3,802.02	4,483.90
3.	Fixed Cost (*IDR1,000/mount)	572.50	414.74	493.62
4.	Contribution Margin (IDR/kg)	7,793.91	2,466.33	4,219.10
3	Break Even Point (kg/mount)	73.46	168.16	110.60
4	Break Even Point (*IDR1,000/mount)	1,004.03	1,054.08	962.567

The selling price is also related to the contribution margin. Higher prices result in higher contributions compared to low prices. Thus, there is a positive correlation between price and contribution margin. A more significant contribution to the marketing margin can be made by increasing the selling price, while the price is closely related to the quality of the goods. Usually, price is positively correlated with quality. Sun et al. [38] suggested that they provide adequate market information support for companies so that it is possible for managers to better formulate joint pricing, quality, and production decisions.

The statement shows a correlation between the number of exports and growth, which accounts for around 70%, while improving quality is a big challenge for the government [30, 39]. In reality, getting a contribution margin seems profitable, but deducting it from fixed costs does not make a profit [32]. The reseller business does not require high fixed costs because it has little expense and no significant investment costs. Therefore, the overhead costs are relatively small compared to sales turnover, and the reseller business sells various vegetables to reduce the risk of loss due to unsold goods. In Table 3, the significant profit obtained by the vegetable marketing business using the reseller method shows that the resellers do not suffer losses; they still profit.

3.4. Profit and Profitability

The price of vegetables has an impact on the number of sales; namely, a high selling price results in a lower sales volume compared to a low selling price [40-42]. This statement aligns with the data in Table 3, which shows that for IDR 6,268.35/kg, the sales volume is 741.54 kg; at a higher price (IDR 13,668.52/kg), the quantity sold is 243.94 kg/month. This data follows the law of demand, which states that as the price increases, the quantity of goods demanded will decrease; conversely, if the price decreases, the demand will increase [39].

In the variable costing method, profit can be calculated from the difference between the contribution margin and the fixed cost or between the revenue and the total cost (Table 3). The value of profit is related to the price. If the selling price increases, the profit will increase and vice versa. The profit-to-cost ratio (profitability) increases due to the selling price [39].

Table 3.
Average profit of vegetable resellers in Mataram City.

No.	Parameters	Reseller	Non Reseller	Aggregate
1	Quantity Sales (kg/mount)	243.94	741.54	618.37
2	Selling price (P) (IDR/kg)	13,668.52	6,268.35	8,100.14
3	Revenue (*IDR1,000/mount)	3,334,30	4,648.23	5,008.88
4	Total Cost (*IDR1,000/mount)	1,886.86	3,273.13	3,122.10
5	Profit (IDR1,000/mount)	1,447.44	375.10	1,886.78
6	Profitability	0.7671	0.1146	0.6063

The phenomenon of the relationship between volume, revenue, costs, and profit is explained in the management accounting lesson that volume, revenue, and profit have a positive relationship and can be described on the break-even point curve, assuming there is a linear relationship between volume, revenue, cost, and profit [43]. In reality, profit is more determined by price than sales volume; that is, the higher the price of a product, the greater the profit; on the contrary, the lower the price, the smaller the profit, but this is not the case with sales volume. Large volumes are not followed by increased profits (Table 3). The profit received by resellers is more significant than that of non-resellers.

Profitability is the ratio of profit to cost or, according to Hossain et al. [39], the profit-expense ratio. This study shows a positive relationship between price and profitability; more expensive prices result in higher profitability [38, 44]. Revenue data only generates high profits if the total cost is lower, or significant revenues only sometimes provide high profits if cost efficiency. The weakness of this study is that it does not pay attention to the relationship between price and vegetable quality, because high prices are possible because of the high quality of the product. This weakness must be corrected by including product quality variables with price and profitability. Resellers are more selective in choosing quality products than farmers who sell their products to the market or retailers who open resellers.

3.5. Price Effectiveness of Vegetable Products

Table 4 shows that if the price is increased from IDR 6,268.35/kg to IDR 13,668.51/kg, it will result in an increase in profit from IDR 375.10 million to IDR 1,447.44 million, with a price effectiveness of 0.6063. This means that every price increase of one percent can increase profit by 0.6063 percent (Table 4). Increasing the selling price of vegetables will be effective if it increases profits to a specific price limit. Selling price optimization needs further research using the optimization model [39]. Increasing the price of vegetables and improving services increases profits. Improving quality and service is an alternative suggested to vegetable traders to achieve a higher price. This recommendation does not apply to increasing demand because high prices impact decreasing demand. The market segment of resellers is the upper middle class, which lives in residential complexes, while the lower middle class of consumers tends to buy cheaper vegetables in traditional markets. This argument is reinforced by the statement of Kilian and Zhou [45] that sellers should avoid offering products with high prices to low-income consumer groups so that they can meet their vegetable needs close to the recommendation.

Table 4.
Price Effectiveness of Fresh Vegetables in Mataram City.

Nu	Parameters	Reseller	Non Reseller	Margin (Δ)	Aggregate
1	Profit (*IDR1,000/ mount)	1,447.44	375.10	1,072.34	1,886.78
2	Selling Price (IDR/kg)	13,668.52	6,268.35	7,400.17	8,703.00
3	Ratio	-	-	144.9704427	0.00461278
4	Price effectiveness	-	-	-	0.6684

Table 4 shows that each price increase is one percent, increasing profit by 0.6684 percent. Because the price effectiveness value is positive, increasing prices effectively increases profits. Lowering prices can reduce profits, and increasing sales volume will increase revenue. For marketing cases in specific market segments, lowering prices does not impact a significant increase in sales volume because vegetables are included in the food type group. Hence, price reductions only slightly change the purchase volume, except for the lower middle-income consumer group.

Consumers with limited incomes can meet the recommended quantity of vegetables consumed. Thus, households will be moved to consume more vegetables to reach the recommended quantity. This argument does not correspond to the statement Kilian and Zhou [45], which states that consumers respond to price changes but must be more sensitive to the magnitude of price changes. This shows that setting the right price is less important than making consumers pay attention to product quality and convenience in service.

The selection of demand forecasting models at the retailer level based on performance is more accurate in predicting inventory reserves [29, 33]. Another model option is to use the marketing margin as a performance indicator. However, the disadvantage is that the marketing margin does not reflect the actual outcome, so it needs to be discussed further [46]. The right one to use as a performance measure is profit because profit is the goal of all institutions that formulate business functions and research results on price effectiveness on vegetable sales in traditional markets in Mataram City.

Vegetables are claimed to contain vitamins, minerals, and water. Vegetables are increasingly in demand in household food consumption, so it is the concern of researchers to analyze the demand for attributes of trust in food. This trend will be even more critical because of an increasingly trusted verification system [47, 48]. Vegetables are in great demand by consumers in Indonesia and Asian countries such as Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, India, and Japan [49, 50]. In the last two years, vegetable seeds have been exported to these Asian countries.

Retail traders in traditional markets need to create customer trust. Customer trust is created by adopting food safety and quality standards and improving the quality attributes of fresh products. For modern retailers, it would be good to maintain customer trust and improve product lines by adopting premium standards. Policies and programs that encourage income growth and community nutrition counseling can be carried out better to spur an increase in vegetable demand. Better quality food is directed at food diversification. The government must encourage the development of food diversification and the implementation of credible standards and product and process certification schemes. Healthy food counseling to educate consumers about food safety and quality will expand market coverage for fresh vegetables and benefit farmers [51, 52].

Rationality positively affects pricing strategies; institutional pricing plays a role in high-quality products but does not work on low-quality products [53]. Vegetables sold in traditional markets are medium and low-quality products, so pricing using intuition will get many obstacles due to the many choices of other types of vegetables as substitutes, while Frache, et al. [54] state that managers in the modern market are free to use intuition in rational pricing and provide opportunities to use intuition in rational pricing on new products. Zakaria et al. [55] show that pricing using external references benefits the seller as the price increases, but the seller should also avoid offering products with high value. Suppose vegetables sold in traditional markets are classified as medium to low-quality vegetables. In that case, the price setting should be chosen at a lower price so that it can be reached by consumers with limited incomes.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Reseller marketing is a method of marketing fresh vegetables to increase the profits of vegetable traders. Marketing fresh vegetables through resellers can increase profitability. The value of reseller profitability ranges from 0.1146 in non-resellers to 0.7671 in resellers. In resellers with a price effectiveness of 0.6684 percent, every increase in vegetable prices by one percent can increase profits by 0.6684 percent. The reseller marketing method has a positive impact on increasing profits, making it profitable for everyone who works on it. For the jobless, they should take advantage of job opportunities as resellers because it can be done by everyone and requires a little initial capital to start a business.

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