

Adapt or Die: The Warisan Daily Mart Journey Through Malaysia's Retail

Authors: Norfazlirda Hairani, Nadia Hanum Amiruddin and Nik Syuhailah Nik Hussin

Prologue

The streets of Wakaf Bharu, Kelantan, buzzed with life as the sun dipped below the horizon. Vendors called out their final offers, the scent of grilled satay mingling with the cool evening air. Among the tightly packed shop lots stood Warisan Daily Mart, its bright signage casting a warm glow onto the pavement. For many locals, it was more than a convenience store; it was a symbol of perseverance, an anchor for the community amidst waves of economic change. Inside, Miss Tan sat behind the counter, observing the steady rhythm of her store. Every shelf told a story of survival and adaptation. Having weathered hypermarket competition, digital transformation, and economic uncertainty, Warisan Daily Mart remained unbroken. Across the counter sat Ammar, a university student eager to uncover the secret to her success. *"How did Warisan Daily Mart become what it is today?"* he asked. Miss Tan smiled, her gaze distant. *"It wasn't luck,"* she began. *"It was resilience."* And so began a story of ambition, endurance, and the unyielding spirit of retail survival in Kelantan's evolving marketplace.

A Dream Rooted in Community

Retail had been a part of Miss Tan's life since childhood. Growing up in Wakaf Bharu, she learned the intricacies of small-scale retail from her parents, who operated modest grocery stores in the area. It was there she absorbed the fundamentals of business, inventory control, supplier management, customer engagement, and, above all, persistence. In 2015, after years of learning and observing, she decided to carve her own path by establishing Warisan Daily Mart. The venture began with a single outlet, a small, neatly organised store catering to local households. She

THE AUTHORS

Norfazlirda Hairani¹, Nadia Hanum Amiruddin¹, Nik Syuhailah Nik Hussin¹

¹ Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Business, University Malaysia Kelantan, Malaysia.

KEYWORDS

Supplier Management, Inventory, Customer Management, Technology, Resilience

Disclaimer

This case is written solely for educational purposes and is not intended to represent successful or unsuccessful managerial decision-making. The authors may have disguised names; financial and other recognisable information to protect confidentiality.

was joined by Mr Lim, her business partner, whose background in construction brought valuable insight into the importance of structure and planning. Together, they built the business on principles of discipline, community understanding, and operational resilience.

The early days were marked by hardship. Rising costs, unpredictable market conditions, and fierce competition from hypermarkets tested their resolve. There were times when financial pressure forced them to downsize operations, but neither allowed failure to define their journey. Each challenge, they believed, was an opportunity to adapt.

Weathering the Storms of Retail

The retail environment in Malaysia was undergoing rapid evolution. The emergence of hypermarkets and online platforms, such as Lazada and Shopee, has altered consumer preferences and purchasing habits. For small and medium-sized enterprises, survival depended on agility. Miss Tan's approach was simple yet effective: stay close to the market, suppliers, and customers. She emphasised anticipating disruptions such as supply chain interruptions during monsoon seasons and preparing well in advance. This proactive mindset became central to the company's operations. Mr Lim's philosophy, influenced by his construction background, shaped their business model. He often compared retail to building design; if the foundation was weak, the entire structure would collapse. Translating that metaphor into practice, they strengthened supplier networks, implemented precise inventory management, and prioritised supply chain reliability to ensure consistency in operations.

Navigating Economic Challenges

Over the years, Warisan Daily Mart encountered a series of economic obstacles, from fuel price hikes to fluctuating consumer demand. Inflation placed constant pressure on margins, and the owners had to strike a delicate balance between maintaining profitability and keeping prices fair for loyal customers. Their most severe trial came with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As lockdowns halted movement, many small retailers struggled to sustain operations. Yet, Warisan Daily Mart turned a crisis into opportunity. When customers could not leave their homes, the store launched its own in-house delivery service, ensuring households continued to receive essential goods. At that time, major delivery platforms such as FoodPanda and Grab were not widely

available in Kelantan. Miss Tan and her small team took on the responsibility themselves by packing, organizing, and delivering goods across the town. It was a gesture that extended beyond commerce; it reinforced their role as a community lifeline. The trust and goodwill earned during those months cemented Warisan Daily Mart's place in the hearts of residents.

Embracing Technology and Transformation

As the business stabilized post-pandemic, Miss Tan recognised that technology would be crucial to the next stage of growth. Warisan Daily Mart began integrating point-of-sale (POS) systems and digital inventory tracking to improve efficiency and reduce losses. Although still in transition, these digital tools allowed the team to monitor stock levels accurately and make data-informed decisions about product assortment and demand forecasting. However, Miss Tan remained cautious about overreliance on technology. She believed that while systems could enhance efficiency, human relationships remained the soul of retail. Her staff were trained not just to process transactions, but to engage customers personally, remembering familiar faces, preferences, and stories. This emotional connection distinguished Warisan from its larger, impersonal competitors.

Building Partnerships and Product Integrity

Product selection at Warisan Daily Mart guided by both data and intuition. The team continuously assessed customer demand and purchasing patterns, adjusting inventory accordingly. Beyond commercial considerations, Miss Tan placed strong emphasis on supporting local suppliers and small producers, creating a retail ecosystem rooted in mutual benefit. Equally important was maintaining ethical relationships with vendors. Reliability and accountability were non-negotiable traits. Suppliers were expected to take responsibility for defective or expired goods, and only those demonstrating integrity remained part of Warisan's supply chain network. Such practices not only protected the brand's reputation but also fostered long-term partnerships built on trust.

A Future Shaped by Sustainable Growth

Today, Warisan Daily Mart stands as one of the region's most enduring independent retailers. Its steady expansion reflects not only business acumen but also a commitment to sustainable growth. Miss Tan envisions a future where Warisan continues to grow through digital integration,

improved logistics, and stronger community engagement without compromising the values that built it. Her guiding principle remains unchanged to evolve with the market, but never lose sight of the people you serve. For her, success is not measured by the number of outlets, but by the relationships maintained, the trust earned, and the community strengthened.

Epilogue

As Ammar stepped out into the quiet night, he glanced back at the glowing sign above the store. It struck him that Warisan Daily Mart's success wasn't built on luck or grand strategy; it was built on resilience, adaptability, and heart. For every student of business and every aspiring retailer, the lesson was clear that in a world where trends change overnight, the fundamentals remain timeless. Trust, strategy, and persistence will always outlast shortcuts. And as the lights dimmed and the shutters came down, Warisan Daily Mart stood tall as a living story of how a small-town dream could thrive against all odds in Malaysia's fast-changing retail landscape.

Acknowledgement

The research is funded by the Global Entrepreneurship Research and Innovation Centre (GERIC), Universiti Malaysia Kelantan.