

# Analysing Producer's Managerial Skills in the Cattle Livestock: The study on the Northern Region of Malaysia

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## Abstract

The global cattle livestock business has experienced significant growth, driven by increasing purchasing power and technological advancements. The livestock industry's survival and progress rely on the industry chain's overall strength. Therefore, it is essential to study the managerial skills of cattle producers and their impact on the business performance of the livestock industry in the Northern Region of Malaysia. This study does not aim to analyse livestock development and trends in Malaysia comprehensively. The findings suggest that the Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) of Malaysia has the potential to play a crucial role in enhancing operations and marketing among cattle producers. This could be accomplished by implementing tailored training programs, workshops, or seminars that address specific marketing challenges and opportunities within the local context. By providing insights into market trends, consumer preferences, and effective promotional techniques, Veterinary Services can empower producers with the necessary tools and managerial skills to navigate the marketplace more effectively. The results of this study offer valuable insights that can benefit academics and industry practitioners.

**Keywords:** Managerial skills, cattle livestock, performance, promotional techniques, veterinary services

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## Introduction

Recognizing the significance of cattle livestock performance in Malaysia in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is crucial. The livestock industry is intertwined with several SDGs, including no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, climate action, and life on land. The demand for livestock products is projected to surge by over 70% from 2005 to 2030 (Tilman & Clark, 2014). However, the cattle livestock sector encounters intricate and distinctive challenges, underscoring producers' need for financial and managerial expertise to enhance their business performance.

In Malaysia, the livestock industry is a crucial component of the agriculture sector, providing the primary source of protein for the population and serving as a significant income generator for livestock producers. Despite this, the industry's standing

in Malaysia must catch up to neighbouring countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Efforts to enhance the industry's performance, including the National Agri-Food and the National Agricultural Policy, have been implemented, but the industry is still unable to meet domestic demand.

The demand for cattle livestock has been on the rise due to factors such as population growth, wedding ceremonies, festivals, and Qurban during Eid al-Adha. This increasing demand can have both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, it leads to higher income, increased customer satisfaction, and more significant opportunities for business growth. However, on the negative side, it can introduce risks in the supply chain, complexity, product recall, sizing, cost, quality, and diseases.

To effectively and efficiently manage this business, cattle producers must possess dynamic capabilities. The most crucial criteria in the cattle livestock business are the ability and managerial skills. These skills enable producers to make informed decisions regarding financial levels, workforce, operations, land resources, and risk mitigation. By honing these management skills, cattle producers can elevate their income levels by determining what to produce, where to produce it on the farm, the most effective methods, timing, and quantities, and making critical decisions (AL Rimawi *et al.* 2006 & 2004).

According to Maryam Soraya *et al.* (2014), production managers, essentially farmers, can only conduct successful economic activities by embracing new methods and adopting sound management practices. The traditional and non-commercial management of the production units often leads to inefficient utilization of various production factors throughout the livestock supply chain, creating significant challenges for these units.

The dynamic changes across agribusiness sectors underscore the need for cattle producers to develop strong farm management skills to ensure long-term sustainability (Rolls, 2001; AGSP, 2002). Effective management skills are crucial for cattle producers to navigate the challenges of the cattle supply chain. Various descriptions of management skills have formed the foundation for management studies and have been applied in diverse farm management research (Franks, 2006; Ondersteijn *et al.*, 2006). A skill can be defined as the ability to perform a task adeptly (Yaaghubi *et al.*, 2009). Despite existing studies in this field, more research still needs to be done on analysing managerial skills in cattle livestock, particularly in Malaysia. Therefore, it is essential to examine these skills and their extent of utilization by cattle producers.

## Research Objectives

This paper aims to discuss the current scenario in the livestock industry. Specifically, it discusses the managerial skills to improve cattle livestock performance. This paper hopes to provide some insights to meet knowledge and domestic demand.

## Literature Review

### Livestock Industry

The Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock (GASL) outlines sustainable livestock as follows: "Sustainable growth in the livestock sector must effectively tackle critical environmental, social, and economic challenges, including diminishing natural resources, climate change, pervasive poverty, food insecurity, as well as global risks to animal and human health, and animal welfare."

Livestock is typically divided into two categories: ruminant and non-ruminant. Ruminants include cattle, sheep, buffalo, goats, and deer, while non-ruminants consist of poultry, ducks, pigs, and eggs. The livestock industry in Malaysia is experiencing sustained growth in demand, primarily attributed to population growth, rising income, and urbanization. In 2021, the value added by the livestock industry to the gross domestic product (GDP) in Malaysia was estimated to reach 16.52 billion Malaysian ringgit, a slight increase from the previous year's 16 billion Malaysian ringgit (Statista Research Department, Oct 26, 2022). Livestock holds significant importance in human society, not only as a source of food and clothing but also as a provider of employment opportunities. The increasing demand for livestock products presents a promising opportunity to support cattle livestock producers in this industry.

### Managerial skills

The term "skill" has been widely defined as competencies in the workplace. Skills are a crucial component of any business and organization, as management skills contribute to performance in all industries across the globe (Sinaga *et al.*, 2019). According to Whetten and Cameron (2011), "Management skills are how managers translate their style, strategy, and preferred tools or techniques into practice" (p. 8). Managerial skills refer to the ability of top managers to manage people and

the firm's resources. Therefore, managerial skills encompass identifiable groups of individual actions, resulting in specific outcomes.

The management of cattle livestock is widely recognized as crucial for the efficiency and productivity of the business. Previous research has emphasized the significance of managers' capabilities and proficiency in driving the success of cattle operations (Amini et al., 2007). To capitalize on opportunities, cattle producers must demonstrate comprehensive management skills. These skills encompass making informed decisions, establishing goals, mobilizing and utilizing resources, and enhancing technical expertise (Egbe, 2005).

The role of management as a critical factor in production is often overlooked, but its impact is steadily growing. In addition to the traditional factors of labour, capital, and land, management is recognized as the fourth factor of production, which is crucial in optimizing the contributions of the other three factors (Allahyari et al., 2011). Despite this, it is essential to study managerial skills.

### Managerial skills and performance

Saliu and Taqi's (2022) study have demonstrated that managerial skills significantly positively impact a company's performance. Previous literature has also highlighted the crucial role of managerial skills in addressing organizational concerns related to performance and productivity (Murphy, 2020). Managerial skills encompass the abilities and competencies that managers possess and utilize to drive organizational success (Asamoah et al., 2021). Effective utilization of managerial skills can enable firms to progress toward and achieve their goals and objectives (Asghar et al., 2023). Strong organizational skills and qualities can influence both individual employee performance and team performance (Swanson et al., 2020).

Professionals with advanced managerial skills and approaches can motivate individuals, leading to improved organizational performance and output (Neamah et al., 2022). Vargas-Hernández and Vega (2017) studied the importance of managerial and leadership skills in inspiring teams and individuals to effectively and efficiently complete their work, significantly impacting productivity. Lee et al. (2018) emphasize that managerial skills and expertise are crucial in shaping organizational policies, such as technology adoption, product quality, and work efficiency. Enhancing managerial skills strengthens a manager's capacity and capability, inspiring organizational teams to execute tasks and deliver results more effectively (Asghar et al., 2023). Technical, interpersonal, and cognitive managerial skills significantly and positively impact organizational productivity (Domnich, 2022).

Recognizing the significance of managerial skills within an organizational framework is essential. This includes organizational culture, leadership, support, and teamwork, which profoundly inspire and motivate employees to improve their management skills to achieve company objectives. As highlighted by Asghar et al. (2023), managerial skills have a considerable influence on both employee performance and corporate productivity. Various measurement factors are available to analyse these organizational skills.

### Managerial Skills Measurement

The model of Management Skills presented by Whetten and Cameron (2011, p. 19) classifies the crucial skills required for effective managerial performance. Surprisingly, the organizational skills identified by Whetten and Cameron (2011) are linked to a negative impact on innovation outcomes. These skills include a) personal skills (such as developing self-awareness, managing personal stress, and solving problems analytically and creatively), b) interpersonal skills (including communicating supportively, gaining power and influence, motivating others, and managing conflict), and c) group skills (such as empowering and delegating, building effective teams and teamwork, and leading positive change), which are the foundation of effective management practice. In essence, possessing these competencies is crucial for effective management (Pedraza-Rodríguez et al., 2023).

According to Arena (1998), farm managers must possess marketing, financing, and accounting skills to effectively determine the optimal timing for selling their products, keep accurate sales records, and estimate profits. Additionally, Onuka and Olaiton (2007) emphasized the importance of poultry producers having the skills to conduct daily farm inspections, maintain sanitary conditions, manage feeding and resources efficiently, and keep detailed records of farm activities. Furthermore, Egbe's (2015) study highlights the significance of decision-making and goal-setting skills, resource mobilization skills, technical management skills, risk management skills, and marketing and accounting skills for successful farm management.

Furthermore, based on Soraya et al. (2014), management skills are measured based on planning and goal setting, production skills, work skills, accountancy and financial skills, decision-making skills, marketing skills, resource mobility skills, information-seeking skills, sustainability skills, risk orientation skills, technical skills.

The primary objective of this study was to assess the managerial skills of cattle producers in the Northern Region of Malaysia. These skills include planning and goal setting, accountancy and financial management, marketing management, information-seeking, decision-making, resource mobilization, risk orientation, communication, and technical skills (Allahyari et al., 2011).

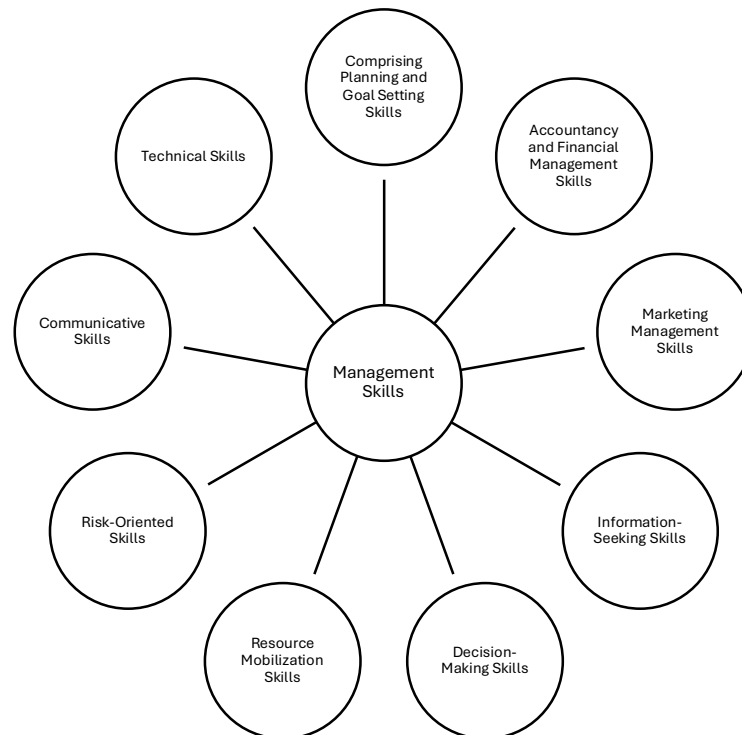


Figure 1: Management Skills Measurement Factors

Developing planning and goal-setting skills involves creating an action plan to motivate and guide individuals or groups toward a specific objective. Setting goals requires deliberate commitment of thought, emotion, and behavior. Accountancy and financial management skills encompass proficiency in using accounting software programs, financial reporting, planning, controls, and soft skills that enable effective communication with management, teammates, and clients. These skills also facilitate the development of leadership and strategic thinking abilities.

Marketing management requires a strong analytical mindset to interpret data and derive meaningful insights. This skill is essential for making data-driven decisions, optimizing marketing strategies, and measuring the effectiveness of campaigns. According to Yaaghubi et al. (2009), successful farmers in the present and future must also handle marketing and financial affairs, not just production. Marketing skills are crucial for building deep, meaningful customer relationships and fostering long-term brand affinity and loyalty rather than focusing solely on short-term results. Information-seeking skills encompass recognizing, retrieving, evaluating, and utilizing information effectively. As Yaaghubi et al. (2009) suggest, information management is crucial for survival. As highlighted by Pezeshki Rad and Zamani (2005), information searching is a well-defined and vital skill in the information age. Information skills involve finding, evaluating, and using the most relevant and reliable information for business purposes.

The ability to make effective decisions is a crucial skill for management, involving analysing situations, evaluating options, and making thoughtful choices. Decision-making also encompasses critical thinking, problem-solving, risk assessment, and consideration of multiple factors to achieve the best possible outcome. These skills are valuable in personal and professional settings. Resource mobilization skills involve the effective acquisition, management, and utilization of

resources by management to attain specific objectives. These skills are vital for individuals, organizations, and communities to optimize resource utilization and maximize their impact. Resource mobilization encompasses fundraising, budgeting, networking, negotiation, and strategic planning.

Risk-oriented skills encompass the capacity of management to effectively assess, manage, and navigate risks across diverse contexts. These skills are essential in both personal and professional domains, as they empower individuals and organizations to make well-informed decisions, anticipate potential challenges, and mitigate unfavourable outcomes. Communicative skills, also referred to as communication skills, entail the ability to convey information, ideas, thoughts, and emotions to others through verbal, nonverbal, and written communication. These skills form the bedrock of successful communication and interpersonal interactions, allowing individuals to articulate their thoughts and ideas, foster relationships, and attain their objectives.

Technical skills are specific abilities and knowledge required to perform tasks related to a particular profession, industry, or field. Technical skills are practical and typically acquired through education, training, or hands-on experience. Technical skills can vary widely depending on the profession or industry.

### Research Methodology and Data Analysis

The participants in this study are experienced and successful cattle business producers. Purposive sampling was used to select participants willing to share information with the researcher (Bernard, 2002). The study will utilize a quantitative approach, employing a survey questionnaire to gather data based on the participants' experiences to achieve the research objectives. The collected data will be transcribed and analysed to gain insights into the perceptions of cattle livestock producers.

This approach was utilized to gain insight into their perspectives on the factors influencing their business performance. Researchers employed simple random sampling techniques (Salkind, 2003) to ensure that the sample selected was free from bias and shared similar characteristics with the population (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The sample selection process involved randomly distributing 100 questionnaires to select producers in Kedah, using methods such as email, WhatsApp, and in-person visits to the nearest respondent's outlet and seminars organized by the Kedah Veterinary Department. The questionnaires were directed to business owners or managers. Although only 39 questionnaires were collected from the respondents, primary data were gathered from structured questionnaires distributed through the mentioned channels. Emory and Cooper (1991) emphasized that a sample size ranging from 25 to 100 subjects was adequate to demonstrate the reliability and validity of the instrument. The questionnaires were distributed directly to respondents who were cattle producers in the northern region of Malaysia.

The research aimed to gain insight into the activities of cattle producers, particularly their performance in management skills. Out of all the questionnaires received, only 39 were deemed usable after the data-cleaning process. It was found that 14 questionnaires were rejected due to incomplete answers from the respondents, and one questionnaire was submitted twice by the same company.

### Demography Analysis

The questionnaires were distributed directly to cattle producers in the northern region of Malaysia. The data gathered from the survey revealed that all respondents were involved in the cattle production business. The respondents were registered under the Department of Veterinary as cattle producers. A majority (64.1%) of the respondents had started their business in the last five years, while the remaining 35.9% had been in business for over five years. All respondents confirmed that their business operations were limited to the local market.

The survey revealed that 94.9% of the respondents were male, while only 5.1% were female growers. Most participants (56.4%) were aged between 40 and 49, with 45.9% falling in the 18 to 39 age group. There were very few growers over 50 years old. Additionally, 74.4% of the respondents were identified as top management/owners of their firms, while 25.6% were representatives entrusted by their companies to report on company performance. The data also indicated that 56.4% of respondents held only Malaysian Education Certificates (SPM), 35.9% had pursued diploma certificates, and 7.7% admitted no academic qualifications.

Table 1: Demography Analysis

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	37	94.9
Female	2	5.1
<b>Age</b>		
18 - 29 years old	5	12.8
30 - 39 years old	9	23.1
40 - 49 years old	22	56.4
Over 50 years old	3	7.7
<b>Position</b>		
Top Management	29	74.4
Manager	5	12.8
Operation	5	12.8
<b>Education</b>		
SPM	22	56.4
Diploma	14	35.9
Non	3	7.7
<b>Time Serving</b>		
Less than one year	2	5.1
1 to 5 years	16	41.0
5 to 10 years	6	15.4
More than ten years	15	38.5

### Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the items was confirmed by Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.604 to 0.890, all of which were deemed acceptable. The data indicates that the lowest acceptable rates, between 0.604 and 0.693, were associated with marketing, resource mobilization, accountancy, and financial management skills. Risk-oriented, planning, and goal-setting skills demonstrated average acceptable values, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.709 to 0.764. Other variables displayed even higher acceptable values, with communication skills achieving the highest score at 0.918, decision-making skills at 0.890, information-seeking skills at 0.887, and technical skills at 0.870. These results indicate an acceptable reliability rate for all variable items examined in this study.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Variables	No. Of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Planning and Goal Setting Skills	6	.764
Accountancy and Financial Management Skills	7	.693
Marketing Management Skills	6	.604
Information Seeking Skills	4	.887
Decision-Making Skills	6	.890
Resource Mobilization Skills	3	.632
Risk Oriented Skills	5	.709
Communicative Skills	11	.918
Technical Skills	9	.870

## Descriptive Analysis

The hypothetical managerial skills will thoroughly explore the nature and relationship of the variables being studied. This will be done using a mean value that aligns with the study's purpose to assess the correlation between each variable and a firm's managerial skills. Therefore, explanatory research is considered an appropriate method for elucidating the current literature findings about the studies.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Planning and Goal Setting Skills	4.1282	.46115
Accountancy and Financial Management Skills	4.1575	.35267
Marketing Management Skills	3.9145	.43908
Information Seeking Skills	4.1624	.39642
Decision-Making Skills	4.1880	.51750
Resource Mobilization Skills	4.0923	.41000
Risk Oriented Skills	4.1652	.42185
Communicative Skills	4.1282	.46115
Technical Skills	4.1575	.35267

The table data shows that the mean scores for the nine variables range from 3.9145 to 4.1880. Respondents collectively agreed that the firms displayed above-average mean values in Likert-scale scores. Marketing Management Skills received the lowest mean score at 3.9145, with a standard deviation of 0.43908. Resource mobilization skills followed this with a mean score of 4.0923 (s.d =0.41000). Planning, goal-setting, and communication skills received equal mean scores of 4.1282 (s.d=0.42185). The accountancy, financial management, and technical skills results also reflect similar mean scores of 4.1575 (sd=0.35267). Information-seeking skills are selected by respondents at a mean score of 4.1624 (sd=0.39642), followed by risk-oriented skills at a mean score of 4.1652 (sd=0.42185). The highest mean score was presented by decision-making skills, with a mean score of 4.1880 (sd=0.51750). In this case, the scores of each item by respondents collectively are believed to represent the reality of managerial skills implemented in each firm studied.

## Findings and Interpretation

The paper Marketing skills may not be considered essential for cattle producers in Malaysia, as the local market dynamics may not necessitate extensive marketing efforts. Cattle production in Malaysia is often characterized by a more traditional approach, with well-established distribution channels and a consistent demand, reducing the need for sophisticated marketing strategies. The focus is usually on delivering high-quality livestock rather than aggressively promoting them. However, as markets evolve, understanding basic marketing principles could prove beneficial for producers in optimizing sales and reaching new customers.

The Veterinary Services sector in Malaysia has the potential to significantly contribute to the development of marketing skills among cattle producers. This could be accomplished through customized training programs, workshops, or seminars that address the specific marketing challenges and opportunities within the local context. By providing producers with the essential tools, Veterinary Services can empower them to navigate the marketplace more effectively.

Moreover, they can help facilitate networking opportunities between producers and potential buyers or distributors, thereby aiding cattle producers in building valuable connections and expanding their market reach. By providing marketing education services, Veterinary Services can empower cattle producers to promote their products and improve their competitiveness within the market. Marketing expertise may not be as crucial for cattle producers in Malaysia as it is for other industries or regions for various reasons:

- i. Limited Market Dynamics: The cattle market in Malaysia may exhibit a relatively stable nature with established channels for selling livestock, thereby diminishing the necessity for elaborate marketing strategies.
- ii. Traditional Sales Channels: Many cattle producers in Malaysia may predominantly rely on traditional sales avenues, such as local markets or direct sales to wholesalers. Personal relationships and reputation often carry more weight

- than sophisticated marketing tactics in these contexts.
- iii. Government Support: Government subsidies or programs could help cattle producers, lessening the imperative for extensive marketing to attract customers.
  - iv. Niche Market: The demand for beef products in Malaysia might remain relatively consistent, catering to a niche consumer base that does not necessitate aggressive marketing efforts to sustain sales.
  - v. Focus on Production: Cattle producers may prioritize enhancing breeding, feeding, and healthcare practices over developing marketing skills. This focus stems from the understanding that these practices directly influence the quality and quantity of their livestock, which are pivotal factors for success in the industry.

## Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

In Malaysia, marketing skills may not be considered essential for cattle producers due to the stable and traditional nature of the local market. The focus is typically on delivering high-quality livestock rather than extensive marketing endeavours. However, as markets progress, grasping fundamental marketing principles could provide an advantage in enhancing marketing skills among cattle producers. This can be accomplished through customized training programs, workshops, and seminars that address specific marketing challenges within the local context. Furthermore, they can facilitate networking opportunities between producers and potential buyers or distributors, fostering valuable connections and market expansion.

There are various reasons why marketing skills should be more emphasized for cattle producers in Malaysia. These reasons include stable market conditions with well-established sales channels, reliance on traditional sales methods, government support in subsidies, a niche market with consistent demand, and a strong focus on production practices such as breeding and healthcare. Enhancing farmers' management skills through training is a crucial responsibility for public extension services (Mattila et al., 2007). Cattle producers must improve their management skills to enhance the cattle business.

In upcoming research proposals, there will be a focus on large-scale research centered around peninsular Malaysia. Building upon previous studies, it is understood that management skills are dynamic capabilities within an organization. In today's modern era, the cattle livestock industry encounters numerous risks and challenges within its complex supply chains. As there is a need for sufficient research in this area, future research needs to be conducted empirically. Therefore, future research must examine the role of management skills as a moderating factor in the relationship between supply chain risk and cattle business performance. This analysis will evaluate the various roles of management skills beyond direct relationships.

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