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Rebung Garden : Blooming Dreams

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Abstract

Rebung Garden, a family business established in 2019, has grown into a thriving enterprise dedicated to cultivating and selling rose plants. The garden's expertise lies in not only growing exquisite roses but also providing comprehensive plant care solutions using organic practices. In order to address the challenge of limited rose availability during the Covid-19 pandemic, Rebung Garden started cultivating their own-root roses, ensuring a steady supply and maintaining quality and variety. However, the garden faces additional challenges such as low brand awareness and operating within limited space.

Keywords: Rose Cultivation, Low Inventory, Brand Awareness, Limited Operational Space

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1. Introduction

Rebung Garden, a family business established in late 2019, is dedicated to the art of cultivating and selling rose plants. With a team of four passionate members, this garden has blossomed into a thriving business. Rebung Garden's expertise lies not only in the

cultivation of exquisite roses but also in providing comprehensive plant care solutions. The team prides themselves on their commitment to organic practices, as they self-manufacture all the fertilizers and pesticides they offer. By offering organic products, Rebung Garden ensures that their customers can maintain their plants' health and beauty while minimizing environmental impact.

At the heart of Rebung Garden is its founder (Arman) who serves as the anchor of the business. The main location of the business is his house, where the porch serves as the dedicated cultivation space for growing their beautiful roses. Spanning an area of 24 feet by 22 feet, the porch provides ample room for nurturing an array of vibrant rose plants. Additionally, the house doubles as a welcoming space for walk-in customers, offering a convenient and charming environment to explore and purchase the roses that are ready for sale. To expand their reach, Rebung Garden also embraces the digital landscape by selling their roses online across Malaysia, including Sabah and Sarawak. Marketing efforts primarily rely on popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Youtube and Whatsapp, where captivating visuals and engaging content captivate potential customers. Communication with customers is efficiently facilitated using WhatsApp, with a dedicated part-time staff member (Sarah) handling inquiries and interactions with the utmost care and attentiveness.

Rebung Garden understands the preferences of the public, who are more acquainted with roses typically grown in higher altitude regions like Cameron Highlands. Recognizing the challenges of cultivating such roses at lower ground levels, Rebung Garden focuses on heat-resistant rose varieties that thrive in lower ground environments. The garden boasts an impressive collection of roses, including hybrid tea, grandiflora, florist, floribunda, shrub and climber types. These roses can be distinguished by their plant size, flower fragrance and the abundance of blossoms they produce. Currently, Rebung Garden has 80 different roses ID available in their collection.

In the Malaysian market, rose plants are commonly sold as grafted roses, which are imported from Thailand. However, during the mid-year 2020, transportation restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic posed a significant hurdle for Rebung Garden. As a result, the garden faced limited availability of roses to sell. To overcome this

challenge, Rebung Garden embarked on the cultivation of their own roses, known as own-root roses. This strategic move allowed them to ensure a steady supply of roses and maintain the quality and variety desired by their customers.

The dedicated team at Rebung Garden engage in a range of routine activities to ensure the health and vitality of their roses. These activities form the backbone of their gardening practices, ensuring that each rose receives the care and attention it deserves. Watering the roses is a fundamental task that is diligently performed at Rebung Garden. Recognizing the importance of hydration, the gardeners ensure that the roses are adequately watered at least once a day. This regular watering regimen helps to maintain the plants' soil moisture levels, promoting healthy growth and vibrant blooms.

In addition to watering, the team understands the significance of proper nutrition for the roses. Thus, they diligently fertilize the plants twice a month. By providing the necessary nutrients, the roses are able to thrive and display their full beauty, boasting strong stems, lush foliage and abundant blossoms. To control the bloom season and promote optimal flower production, the gardeners engage in the practice of disbudding. By removing new flower buds selectively, the gardeners guide the roses towards a synchronized and controlled blooming period. This meticulous technique ensures that each bloom receives the attention it deserves, resulting in a more impressive display of colours and fragrances.

Pruning plays a vital role in maintaining the overall health and appearance of the roses. The team carefully inspect each plant, identifying and removing dead or diseased canes. Pruning not only improves the aesthetic appeal of the roses but also stimulates new shoot growth, leading to healthier and more abundant flowers.

Pest control is an ongoing concern in Rebung Garden. To combat common pests such as thrips, spider mites and whiteflies, the team diligently implement weekly pesticide controls. This proactive approach helps to safeguard the roses from potential damage caused by these pests, ensuring their continued health and vitality.

Finally, the gardeners recognize the importance of maintaining the quality of the soil. To this end, they undertake monthly soil treatments. These treatments replenish

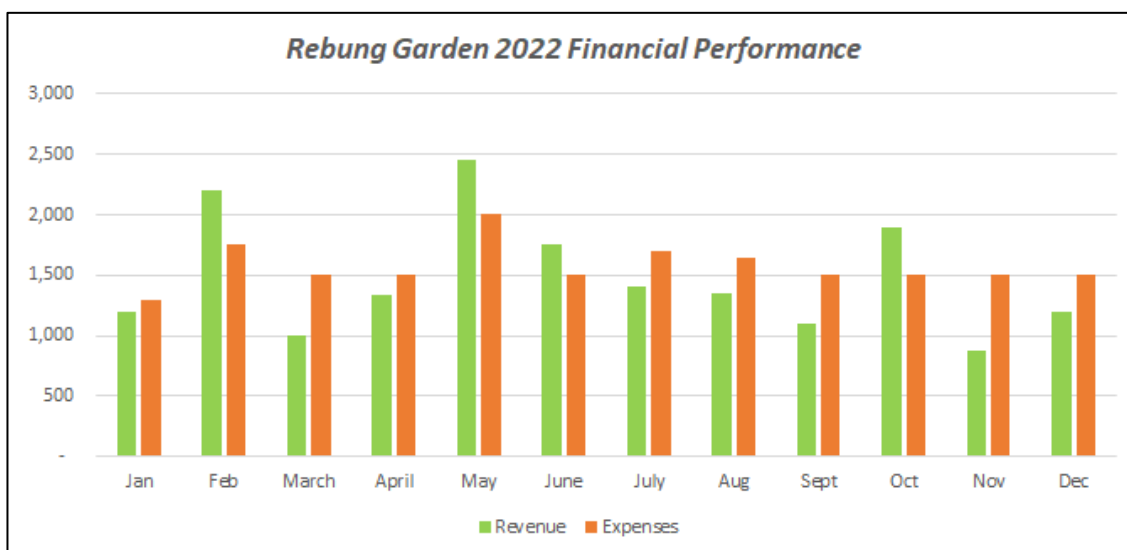
essential nutrients, promote proper drainage and optimize the soil's overall health. By caring for the soil, the team creates an ideal environment for the roses to thrive, ensuring their long-term well-being.

Incorporating these routine activities into their daily work, the team at Rebung Garden demonstrate their unwavering commitment to the roses under their care. Their meticulous attention to detail and dedication to each task ensure that the garden remains a haven of beauty and tranquillity, delighting visitors with a mesmerizing display of vibrant roses throughout the year.

2. Low Revenue – High Operating Expenses

One of the biggest challenges that Rebung Garden is currently facing is high operating expenses compared to the revenue collection. The team identified that the high operating expenses are mainly due to the maintenance and other overhead expenses.

Figure 1: Rebung Garden 2022 Financial Performance



Throughout the year the operating expenditure are in the range of RM1,300 to RM2,000. However, the revenue fluctuates with highest usually during festive seasons such as the Aidilfitri and Chinese New Year celebration. The demand for the roses and plant care increases since customers would like to display beautiful roses during their open houses.

Table 1: Percentage of the Operating Expenses

%	Operating Expenses
5	Water
5	Electricity
20	Manpower
70	Plant Maintenance (pesticide and fertilizer)

The biggest percentage of the operating expenses is mainly due to the plant maintenance. This usually involve activities relating to spraying pesticides and fertilizing all roses.

3. Low Rose Inventory

Cultivating own-root roses can be a labour-intensive, requiring time and patience. It is a process that demands careful attention and dedication from the gardener. From the initial stages of selecting a suitable rose variety to nurturing it through growth, the journey can span approximately four months before the plant becomes fully grown and ready to be sold. Rebung Garden employ two methods of cultivating roses with different percentages of success rate.

Table 2: Cultivation Techniques for 200 roses

Techniques	% of success	Preparation	Ready to Sell
Rose Cuttings	30	3 days	120 days
Air-Layering	80	21 days	90 days

Last Friday, while Arman was cleaning his workstation after completing air-layering of 40 rose stalks, he was sharing his concerns on the slow replenish of the roses inventory with his wife.

Arman : Okay, the first 40 is done. I will need to take a rest. Tomorrow I will continue more. Phew!! 4 more days to go and I shall complete with our plan to prepare 200 new own-root.

Anis : Good! Hopefully we will get more roses in this batch.

Arman : I need to improve our air-layering technique so that our success rate will improve to at least 90%. I am thinking of changing from honey to rooting powder to improve the rooting of the rose stalks. I have read somewhere; it works better than honey.

Anis : Well, let's check the costing first.

Arman : I am more concerned on the effectiveness of the rooting powder than the costing because I don't think it will cost that much. At the moment we only have less than 30 pots of roses. We will not have any stocks left to sell for the next 4 months.

Anis : Hmmmm

Arman : We need to find a new strategy to ensure we will not be out of roses. Else, we will have to boost sales of our plan care solution – which is quite tough looking at our past sales on these items.

4. Low Brand Awareness

As Rebung Garden is a new player in the market, and being a very young company, every aspect of the business rests on the shoulders of the founder. In such circumstances, Arman must wear multiple hats, from sales and marketing to customer service and

product development. Even though currently there is no direct competitor that sells own-root roses, the biggest challenge that Arman is facing is educating the market about the benefits of own-root roses compared to grafted ones.

These are the snippets of some conversation with Rebung Garden's potential customers:

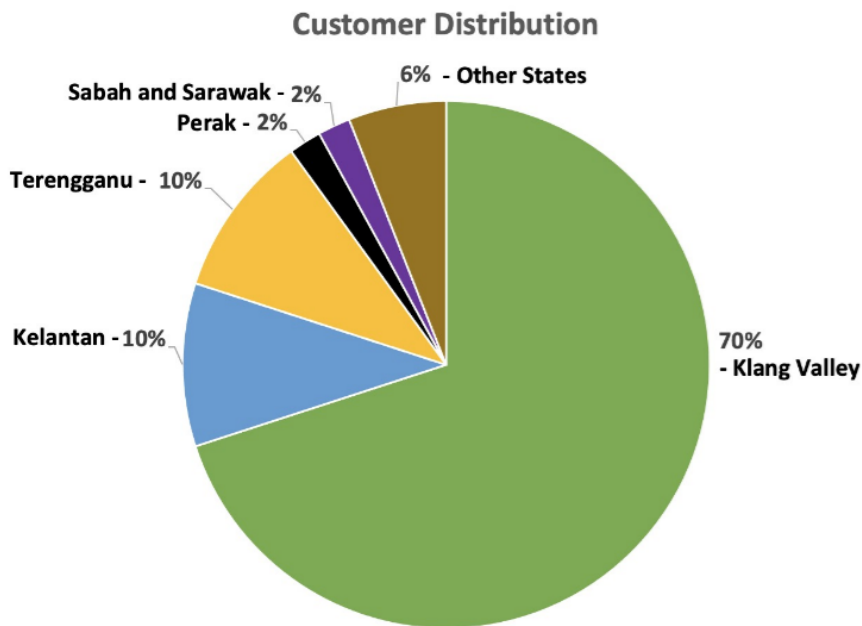
Customer 1	:	I saw your advertisement on the Facebook. I would like to know the price of the roses.
Sarah	:	Our own-root roses are priced at RM55. It comes with a 16-inches flowerpot and you don't have to transfer to a new pot for at least 4 months.
Customer 1	:	What is own-root rose?
Sarah	:	These are roses that are grown from rose cuttings or air-layering technique.

Customer 2	:	Is there any difference between grafted and own-root roses?
Sarah	:	The biggest difference between these two is their root system. Grafted rose is grafted onto a rootstock of a different rose, so you will have 2 different types of roses in one plant. Own-root rose's roots are original to the desired rose.
Customer 2	:	I see. Which one will last longer?
Sarah	:	With the same care and maintenance, own-root roses should last longer than grafted.

Many potential customers are unaware on the advantages of own root roses, compared to grafted roses. Own root roses are well-known for their disease resistance and stronger root systems, which eventually would allow the rose plant to survive longer. Every time Sarah receives enquiries, she will have to educate the customers on these differences. Rebung Garden has been continuously educating the public by leveraging social media platforms, which can be a game changer in getting more customers. This is a very slow process since the market is more familiar with grafted roses.

5. Customer Distribution

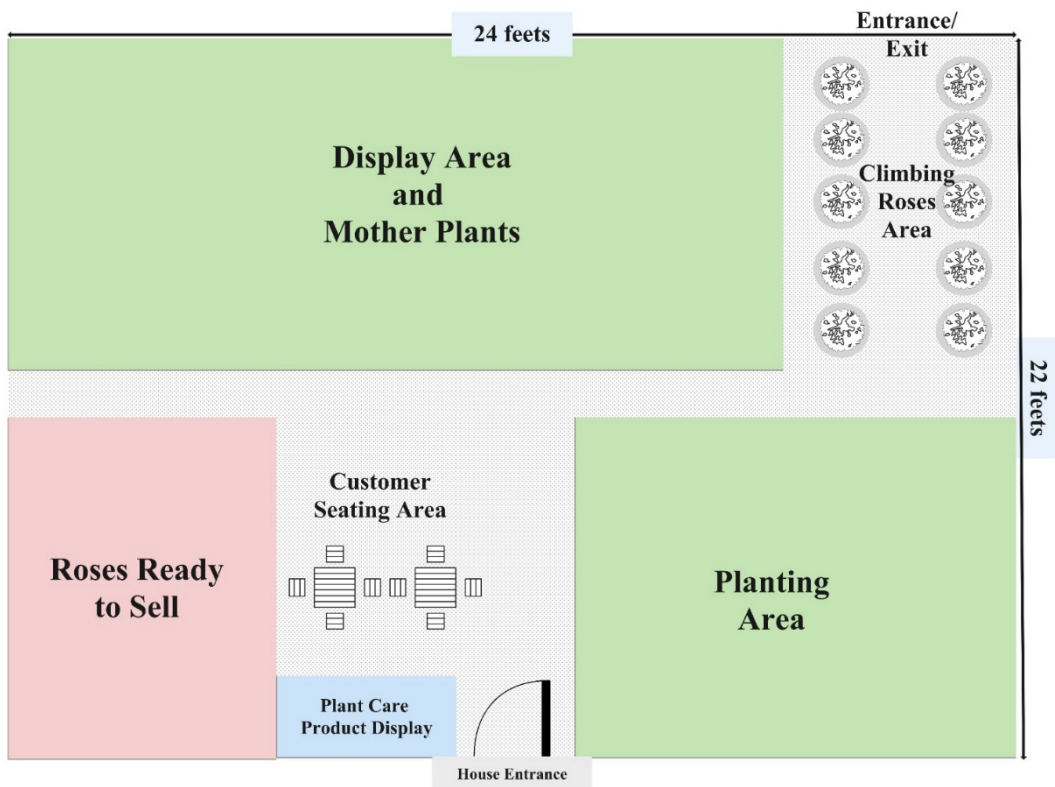
Currently, majority of the customers in Rebung Garden are from Klang Valley. This is mainly due to their higher buying power compared to customers from other states. In addition, as these customers are reachable within driving range (as far as 70 km from the nursery), it is easier to attract and convince them to purchase roses from Rebung Garden. The biggest concern of customers outside the Klang Valley is on the delivery of the roses, which could take 1 to 5 days. They are worried the roses will not survive the long journey. Rebung Garden perceived that the revenue will increase by expanding the customer base outside of Klang Valley.

Figure 2: Rebung Garden Customer Distribution

6. Limited Space

When it comes to cultivating roses, it is important to provide them with the space and conditions they need to thrive. Each adult rose plant typically requires a minimum of 4 square feet of planting area to accommodate its growth. Additionally, roses are sun-loving plants and require a minimum of 6 hours of direct sunlight each day to flourish. The attention to space, sunlight, and watering needs will help create an optimal environment for roses to display their vibrant colours and blooms.

Currently, Rebung Garden operates within a limited area, specifically confined to the front porch of the house. At present, the garden boasts an impressive collection of 80 roses with unique identification (ID), elegantly displayed in large pots, which serve as 'Mother Plants' for the air-layering technique. However, due to the space constraints of the garden, it is not possible to expand the variety of roses available for purchase. This limitation hinders the garden's ability to increase the number of ID options for the nursery.

Figure 3 : Rebung Garden Floor Plan Layout

To ensure successful air-layering, roses must reach a specific height and size before they can be utilised in the cultivation technique. Consequently, the limited number of roses available for air-layering directly affects the garden's inventory. The growth and expansion of the rose inventory are intricately tied to the successful cultivation of roses through air-layering.

The limited space in which Rebung Garden operates adds an additional layer of complexity to the task of maintaining a consistent inventory of own-root roses for sale. This constraint makes it increasingly challenging to accommodate a continuous supply of roses, hindering the garden's ability to meet the demand for their exquisite blooms. Consequently, there have been instances when the revenue collected from rose sales has been sluggish, directly stemming from the depletion of stock in their inventory.

7. Conclusion

Rebung Garden recognizes the pressing need for innovative approaches and strategic initiatives to overcome the challenges it faces, including the persistent issue of low rose inventory, limited brand awareness and the constraints of operating in a confined space for rose cultivation. In order to establish long-term sustainability, the nursery must proactively address these challenges by exploring new strategies and implementing effective solutions. By seeking out opportunities to enhance the rose inventory, increase brand visibility and maximize the potential of limited space, Rebung Garden can position itself for growth and success in the future. It is through these proactive measures that the nursery can ensure its longevity and continue to provide customers with the beauty and joy of exquisite roses for years to come.

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APPENDIX 1

List of some roses ID available at Rebung Garden

- Abraham Darby
- Aube
- Augusta Louise
- Belle Story
- Beverly
- Bishops Castle
- Calcutta 300
- Camelot
- Capability
- Capri
- Charlotte
- Claude Brasseur
- Coffee Break
- Constance
- Crown Princess Margareta
- Docteurs Massad
- Don Juan
- Effie
- Emilien Guillot
- Eustacia Vye
- Eve Wine Cellar
- Gabriel Oak
- Geoff Hamilton
- Getrude Jekyll
- Guardian Angel
- Good as Gold
- Gold Medal
- Grace
- Graham Thomas
- Grande Dame
- Herzogin Christiana
- Huddersfield Choral Society
- Huntington Rose
- James Galway
- Jerri Jennings
- Juicy Terraza
- Juliet
- Keira
- Kizuna
- Kordes Jubilee
- L.D Braithwaite
- La Rose de Molinard
- Lady of Shallot
- London Eye
- Manas
- Masora
- Memorial Day
- Miranda
- Mon Coeur
- Monica Belluci
- Moulin dela Galette
- Munstead Wood
- Neil Diamon
- Nexus

APPENDIX 2

Sample pictures of roses available at Rebung Garden

