



# Assessing the Market Competitiveness of used Car Dealership Business through Porter's Five Forces Model: Basis for Action Plan

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**Abstract—** This study assessed the market competitiveness of used car dealership businesses in Nueva Ecija using Porter's Five Forces Model as the basis for an action plan. As a growing industry in the province, used car dealerships face several challenges brought by changing buyer behavior, increasing competition, and the rising popularity of online vehicle marketplaces. The study aimed to describe the profile of used car dealerships, determine their level of market competitiveness, and develop an action plan to help improve their business performance. The study used a quantitative descriptive research design and gathered data through a structured survey questionnaire administered to used car dealership owners and managers. The data were analyzed using weighted mean and descriptive statistics to interpret the level of competitiveness under the five forces. The findings showed that most dealerships are small, registered sole proprietorships with limited manpower and moderate sales volume. Results also revealed that competitive rivalry in the province is strong due to the presence of many dealerships, aggressive promotions, and price adjustments. Supplier power and buyer power were found to be moderate, showing that inventory sourcing and customer negotiation play important roles in business operations. The threat of substitutes was high, particularly due to online selling platforms, motorcycles, and brand-new cars. The threat of new entrants was moderate, influenced by manageable regulations and capital requirements. Based on the results, an action plan was proposed focusing on marketing improvements, supplier expansion, customer service enhancement, online visibility, and brand-building strategies to strengthen competitiveness and support long-term sustainability among used car dealerships in Nueva Ecija.

**Keywords—** used car dealership, market competitiveness, Porter's Five Forces, action plan, Nueva Ecija

## I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, the used car market has experienced remarkable growth over the past decade. According to Statista (2024), the global used car market was valued at approximately USD 1.5 trillion in 2023 and is projected to continue expanding steadily. This growth is attributed to multiple factors such as affordability, technological advancements in vehicle

inspection and sales platforms, and a broader acceptance of secondhand vehicles as reliable options (Bhasin, 2023). Furthermore, the rise of digital marketplaces has revolutionized the used car industry, enabling online showrooms, real-time vehicle histories, and online financing, which have made transactions faster and more transparent (Suri, 2024). These developments have intensified

competition worldwide, prompting dealerships to adopt more strategic approaches to maintain their edge.

The competitive environment of the automotive sector has also been analyzed through Porter's Five Forces Model in various global studies. For instance, Pivoda (2016) emphasized that understanding supplier power, buyer behavior, and threats of new entrants provides firms with better strategic insights. In emerging economies, these forces have become even more significant because of rapidly changing consumer behaviors and market liberalization. As such, assessing competitiveness is no longer confined to pricing strategies alone—it now involves innovation, technology adoption, and market adaptability.

In the Philippines, the used car market has similarly gained momentum. The automotive sector recorded a steady increase in the sale of pre-owned vehicles, driven by rising fuel costs, the growing middle class, and the desire for affordable mobility solutions (Ankit, 2024). Nueva Ecija, being a landlocked province with a mix of urban and rural communities, has become a fertile ground for small and medium-sized used car dealerships. These businesses play a crucial role in providing affordable transportation options to professionals, families, and entrepreneurs who may not have the means to purchase brand-new vehicles.

Moreover, the digital transformation of the Philippine used car industry mirrors global trends. Online platforms such as Automart.ph and Carmudi have made it easier for both buyers and sellers to connect, increasing transparency and competition (Millan et al., 2014). However, while opportunities abound, the local industry also faces challenges: fluctuating consumer demand, the presence of substitute transportation modes like motorcycles and public utility vehicles, and the entry of new competitors through online channels (Predic & Stosic, 2014). These realities highlight the need for dealership owners to better understand their competitive environment to sustain growth and profitability.

This research aligns with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure). By

examining the competitiveness of used car dealerships, this study contributes to fostering sustainable business strategies that support local economic development and innovation. It also touches on SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), as used car dealerships play a role in providing affordable mobility options that support economic participation. Through the use of Porter's Five Forces Model, the study helped identify strategic areas that business owners can focus on to enhance competitiveness while promoting inclusive growth.

The study addressed these SDGs by using data gathered from surveys among used car dealership owners in Nueva Ecija. The findings guided the formulation of an action plan that aims to improve business strategies, enhance operational efficiency, and create more sustainable market practices. These efforts ultimately contribute to the local economy while aligning with global sustainable development frameworks.

The researchers' personal interest in this topic stems not only from our academic pursuit as a Master in Business Administration student at the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology but also from our own experience. Managing institutional assets has made us more aware of the factors influencing vehicle procurement decisions, especially the preference for used cars due to their cost-efficiency and accessibility. Additionally, our interactions with local car dealers and users have given me firsthand insights into the challenges and opportunities within this market.

Conducting this study also allowed us to contribute meaningful knowledge to a field that has direct implications for local entrepreneurship. Used car dealerships are often operated by small and medium business owners who rely on practical strategies to survive in a competitive environment. By assessing the market through Porter's Five Forces Model, the researchers hope to provide them with actionable insights that can guide their decision-making and planning processes.

Despite the importance of this sector, there remains a research gap in the Philippine context, particularly in Nueva Ecija. Existing studies on the used car market in the Philippines often focus on consumer behavior or national-level industry trends, with limited attention given to local competitiveness using

structured strategic frameworks. There is also a lack of quantitative descriptive research employing Porter's Five Forces Model to assess the competitiveness of small and medium used car dealerships. Addressing this gap did not only contribute to the literature but also provide practical recommendations for local businesses seeking to strengthen their market position.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to assess the market competitiveness of used car dealership businesses in Nueva Ecija with the following objectives: To describe the profile of the respondents in terms of size of business, nature of business, and number of years in operation, to determine the competitiveness in the used car dealership in terms of: competitive rivalry, supplier power, buyer power, threat of substitution and threat of new entrants, and, to proposed an action plan to improve market competitiveness in used car dealership businesses in Nueva Ecija based on the findings of this study.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive quantitative research design. This method was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to gather numerical data from respondents and describe the current level of market competitiveness of used car dealerships based on Porter's Five Forces Model (Porter, 1979/2008). The study conducted in the province of Nueva Ecija, located in Central Luzon, Philippines. The respondents of the study consisted of owners, co-owners, or managers of small and medium-sized used car dealership businesses operating within the different districts of Nueva Ecija. A purposive sampling technique was used to identify qualified respondents. The primary data gathering tool was a structured survey questionnaire developed based on the five forces of Porter's model. The study strictly adhered to the provisions of the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) to ensure the ethical collection, processing, storage, and disposal of personal data gathered from the respondents.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Profile of the Used Car Dealership Business (n = 20)

| Profile Indicators         | Categories          | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. Size of Business        |                     |               |                |
| 1.1 Number of Employees    | 1-5                 | 11            | 55.0           |
|                            | 6-10                | 5             | 25.0           |
|                            | 11-20               | 2             | 10.0           |
|                            | 21 and above        | 2             | 10.0           |
| 1.2 Monthly Sales Volume   | 1-5 units           | 8             | 40.0           |
|                            | 6-10 units          | 9             | 45.0           |
|                            | 11-20 units         | 2             | 10.0           |
|                            | 21 units and above  | 1             | 5.0            |
| 2. Nature of Business      |                     |               |                |
| 2.1 Compliance             | Registered          | 12            | 60.0           |
|                            | Non-registered      | 8             | 40.0           |
| 2.2 Ownership Structure    | Sole Proprietorship | 13            | 65.0           |
|                            | Partnership         | 5             | 25.0           |
|                            | Corporation         | 2             | 10.0           |
| 2.3 Type of Used Cars Sold | Sedans              | 8             | 40.0           |

|                       |   |   |      |
|-----------------------|---|---|------|
| 3. Years in Operation | SUVs                                    | 4 | 20.0 |
|                       | Vans                                    | 2 | 10.0 |
|                       | Pick-up Trucks                          | 2 | 10.0 |
|                       | Others (e.g., hatchbacks, older models) | 4 | 20.0 |
|                       | Less than 1 year                        | 1 | 5.0  |
|                       | 1-3 years                               | 8 | 40.0 |
|                       | 4-6 years                               | 7 | 35.0 |
|                       | 7-10 years                              | 3 | 15.0 |
|                       | More than 10 years                      | 1 | 5.0  |

The study found that most used car dealerships in Nueva Ecija are small, owner-managed enterprises with 1-5 employees, modest monthly sales volumes, and short years of operation, indicating a young but growing industry. A majority of dealerships are registered and operate as sole proprietorships, selling mainly sedans, SUVs, vans, and pickup trucks. The

profile suggests that the market is composed of small and medium enterprises with limited manpower and resources, influenced by supplier availability, competitive pricing, and customer demand.

#### **Market Competitiveness Based on Porter's Five Forces**

*Table 2. Competitive Rivalry*

| Statement  | Weighted Mean | Verbal Interpretation |
|--|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1. There are many used car dealers operating within my area.     | 3.31          | Strongly Agree        |
| 2. Competitors frequently adjust their pricing strategies.       | 3.00          | Agree                 |
| 3. Marketing and promotions among dealers are highly aggressive. | 3.46          | Strongly Agree        |
| 4. Competition strongly affects my sales performance.            | 3.46          | Strongly Agree        |
| Average Weighted Mean  | 3.31          | Strongly Agree        |

The results in Table 2 show that respondents perceive strong competitive rivalry in the used car dealership market, reflected in the overall weighted mean of 3.31 (Strongly Agree). This suggests that dealerships operate in an environment where competition is high, especially due to aggressive promotions, numerous competitors, and the effect of competition on sales performance.

The highest mean score (3.46) on items related to aggressive marketing and competition affecting sales indicates that rivalry among dealerships strongly influences their market performance. This aligns with global industry analyses showing that used car markets often experience intense rivalry due to similar product offerings and closely comparable pricing structures (Coppola, 2023).

Respondents also strongly agreed that there are many dealers operating in their area, further intensifying rivalry. This aligns with the findings of Klein and Smart (2017), who noted that markets with multiple dealerships tend to experience heightened competitive pressure, particularly when consumers can easily compare options through online listings and digital platforms.

Meanwhile, the item regarding frequent price adjustments received a slightly lower mean (3.00), suggesting that while pricing remains an important competitive tool, dealerships may rely more on non-price factors such as customer service, online visibility, warranties, and after-sales services. This observation is supported by King and Thomas (2020), who found that non-price differentiation can reduce

direct price wars and help businesses compete more effectively even in saturated markets.

*Table 3. Supplier Power*

| Statement   | Weighted Mean | Verbal Interpretation |
|---|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Suppliers (car owners, auctions, traders) have strong control over the pricing of used cars. | 3.15          | Agree                 |
| 2. The number of suppliers available affects my purchasing decisions                            | 3.31          | Strongly Agree        |
| 3. It is difficult to negotiate favorable prices with suppliers                                 | 2.69          | Agree                 |
| 4. Limited supplier options influence my inventory availability.                                | 3.00          | Agree                 |
| Average Weighted Mean   | 3.04          | Agree                 |

The overall weighted mean of 3.04 (Agree) indicates that respondents generally perceive suppliers as having a moderate level of power over their dealership operations. The highest rated item states that the number of suppliers affects purchasing decisions (3.31), suggesting that dealerships rely heavily on the availability of multiple suppliers to secure the best prices and unit options. When supplier options are few, dealerships have limited bargaining leverage and may end up accepting less favorable terms.

Respondents also agree that suppliers exercise control over pricing (3.15). This is common in used car markets because vehicle owners, traders, and auction houses set initial price expectations based on market demand, vehicle condition, and brand popularity. When suppliers set high baseline prices, dealerships have little room to adjust retail pricing without affecting their profit margins.

The statement regarding difficulty in negotiating favorable prices received the lowest mean (2.69), though still interpreted as "Agree."

*Table 4. Buyer Power*

| Statement  | Weighted Mean | Verbal Interpretation |
|--|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Buyers often negotiate for lower prices.              | 3.00          | Agree                 |
| 2. Customers compare multiple dealers before purchasing. | 3.23          | Agree                 |
| 3. Buyer preferences significantly influence pricing.    | 2.77          | Agree                 |
| 4. Buyers have many dealership options in the province.  | 3.00          | Agree                 |
| Average Weighted Mean                                    | 3.00          | Agree                 |

These findings are supported by studies showing that supplier concentration increases supplier leverage, thereby reducing the ability of small retailers to bargain effectively (Chung & Kim, 2020). Likewise, research on used vehicle wholesaling notes that supplier limits restrict inventory turnover and affect overall competitiveness (Coffey & Thornley, 2019). Another study found that when suppliers control price anchors or hold scarce inventory, dealerships must adjust their strategies or accept thinner margins (Levin & Milgrom, 2017).

The overall weighted mean of 3.00 (Agree) indicates that buyers in the used car market hold a moderate level of power that meaningfully influences dealership operations. The highest-rated indicator shows that customers compare multiple dealers before deciding to buy (3.23). This reflects a more informed consumer base where buyers use online listings, social media, and referrals to compare prices, vehicle condition, and dealer credibility before making a purchase.



The results also show that buyers often negotiate for lower prices (3.00). Negotiation is a typical behavior in the used car market since prices are not fixed and depend on factors such as mileage, condition, model age, and available alternatives. When customers have more options, dealerships may need to adjust pricing strategies to remain competitive.

Respondents agreed that buyer preferences influence pricing, but this item had the lowest mean (2.77). This suggests that although customer preferences matter – such as choosing fuel-efficient cars, newer models, or specific brands – dealership pricing is also shaped by supplier costs and the availability of inventory. The agreement rating for buyers having many dealership options (3.00) further reinforces the idea that

customers can easily switch to competing dealers, giving them more leverage during negotiations.

Similar patterns have been found in global studies. Consumer decision-making in used car markets is strongly shaped by comparison behavior and perceived value, especially when multiple dealers offer similar vehicle types (Kwak et al., 2015). Buyers also tend to negotiate more when information is widely available, reducing information gaps between dealers and customers (Houde, 2012). Additionally, research shows that customers in competitive markets use online tools and dealer networks to expand their choices, increasing buyer power overall (Anderson & Magruder, 2012).

Table 5. Threat of Substitution

| Statement  | Weighted Mean | Verbal Interpretation |
|--|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Customers consider brand-new cars as an alternative to used cars.                 | 3.31          | Strongly Agree        |
| 2. Motorcycle sales or other vehicle types affect used car sales.                    | 3.31          | Strongly Agree        |
| 3. Online car selling platforms serve as substitutes to dealership visits.           | 3.38          | Strongly Agree        |
| 4. Availability of other transportation options influences customer decision-making. | 3.15          | Agree                 |
| Average Weighted Mean  | 3.29          | Strongly Agree        |

The average weighted mean of 3.29 (Strongly Agree) shows that the threat of substitution is high among used car dealerships in Nueva Ecija. Respondents perceive that customers have many alternative options, and these alternatives significantly influence their purchasing decisions.

The highest weighted mean (3.38) shows that online car selling platforms – such as Facebook Marketplace, Automart.ph, and other digital platforms – serve as direct substitutes to physical dealership visits. This means many buyers browse, compare, and even negotiate online instead of going to the dealership, reducing walk-in traffic and giving customers more control in choosing where and from whom to buy.

Both indicators related to brand-new cars and motorcycles or other vehicle types received strong agreement (3.31). This suggests that buyers may shift to brand-new vehicles when financing options are favorable or when promotions such as low-down

payments and extended warranties are available. Likewise, motorcycles, tricycles, and other smaller vehicles serve as convenient and cheaper alternatives for families and individual commuters, which can reduce the demand for secondhand cars.

Respondents also agreed (3.15) that the availability of other transportation options – including ride-hailing services, jeepneys, buses, and car rentals – affects customer decision-making. When transportation is accessible and affordable, some buyers may delay or avoid purchasing a used car.

These findings are supported by research showing that substitute transportation options, including motorcycles and public transit, significantly reduce car ownership intentions in emerging markets (Dissanayake & Morikawa, 2010). Additionally, studies show that digital marketplaces increasingly act as substitutes for traditional dealership interactions, shifting buyer preference toward online

channels (Janssen et al., 2014). Another study found that buyers consider long-term costs, mobility alternatives, and financing availability when choosing

between new and used vehicles, showing a clear substitution effect (Grigolon, 2018).

*Table 6. Threat of New Entrants*

| Statement   | Weighted Mean | Verbal Interpretation |
|---|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1. It is easy for new used car dealerships to enter the market.     | 2.92          | Agree                 |
| 2. New competitors pose a potential threat to existing dealerships. | 3.69          | Strongly Agree        |
| 3. Capital requirements to start a dealership are relatively low.   | 2.62          | Agree                 |
| 4. Government regulations make market entry easy.                   | 2.92          | Agree                 |
| Average Weighted Mean   | 3.04          | Agree                 |

The overall weighted mean of 3.04 (Agree) indicates that respondents perceive a moderate level of threat from new entrants in the used car dealership market. The highest-rated item shows a strong agreement (3.69) that new competitors pose a real threat to existing dealerships. This suggests that the presence of additional market players can easily affect sales performance and customer reach, especially when new entrants adopt aggressive pricing and marketing strategies.

Respondents also agreed (2.92) that it is fairly easy for new dealerships to enter the market, which may be influenced by the growing popularity of online marketplaces where sellers can operate even without a large physical dealership. Digital platforms reduce the need for traditional showrooms, allowing small entrepreneurs to start with limited resources.

Regarding capital requirements, the weighted mean of 2.62 indicates that while some respondents believe the capital needed to start a dealership is manageable, others may still view it as a significant investment. This mixed perception is expected, as capital needs

vary depending on the number of units, storage space, and procurement channels.

Respondents also agreed (2.92) that government regulations make market entry easy. This suggests that the process of securing business permits, complying with local requirements, and operating legally is generally accessible for small entrepreneurs in Nueva Ecija. However, while regulations may be manageable, surviving the competitive landscape remains the larger challenge.

These findings reflect global trends showing that online platforms and low entry barriers enable more small-scale ventures to enter the used car market (Eckert & West, 2020). Studies also show that industries with moderate regulations and accessible capital requirements tend to attract more entrants, thereby increasing competition (Liu et al., 2021). Furthermore, research indicates that new entrants often disrupt markets by introducing competitive pricing or improved services, strengthening the perceived threat among existing businesses (Spulber, 2019).

*Table 7. Proposed Action Plan Based on the Findings*

| Findings Based on the Results  | Objectives   | Proposed Actions   | Responsible Person/Unit            | Time Frame |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------|------------|
| Strong rivalry due to aggressive promotions and competition affects sales. | To strengthen market positioning and customer reach. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop consistent online marketing content (Facebook, TikTok).</li> <li>Offer bundled services (free detailing, free change</li> </ul> | Business Owner/<br>Marketing Staff | 3-6 months |

|   |  |  |                           |             |
|---|--|--|---------------------------|-------------|
|   |  | oil).  |                           |             |
|   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve showroom customer experience.</li> </ul>  |                           |             |
| Supplier power affects inventory and pricing; limited supplier options.                 | To diversify sourcing channels and improve negotiation outcomes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build partnerships with additional traders and auction houses.</li> <li>• Attend regional auto auctions regularly.</li> <li>• Implement negotiation strategies based on vehicle condition reports.</li> </ul> | Owner/Procurement Officer | 3-12 months |
| Buyers compare multiple dealers and negotiate aggressively.                             | To increase buyer trust and provide better value.                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide transparent vehicle history and inspection reports.</li> <li>• Offer flexible pricing or installment plans.</li> <li>• Improve after-sales follow-up and customer service.</li> </ul>                 | Sales Team/Owner          | 2-4 months  |
| High threat of substitutes including motorcycles, brand-new cars, and online platforms. | To strengthen dealership advantage over substitutes.             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight unique value of used cars (affordability, reliability).</li> <li>• Offer warranties and after-sales support.</li> <li>• Improve digital listings with clear photos and full details.</li> </ul>     | Owner/Marketing Staff     | 2-6 months  |
| Threat of new entrants due to low barriers to entry.                                    | To create competitive barriers and retain customer loyalty.      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen branding and reputation-building online.</li> <li>• Launch referral incentives for previous buyers.</li> <li>• Standardize dealership processes to improve consistency.</li> </ul>                 | Owner/HR/Marketing        | 4-8 months  |

The proposed action plan responds directly to the issues highlighted from the analysis of the five

competitive forces. Since competitive rivalry in the province is high, dealerships should focus on



improving their market positioning, particularly through strong online marketing, enhanced customer experience, and offering bundled services that add value without significantly reducing profit margins. Supplier-related issues, such as price control and limited sourcing options, can be managed by expanding supplier networks and developing stronger relationships with traders and auction houses.

To address buyer power, which remains moderate but significant, dealerships should increase transparency and customer trust by providing inspection reports, offering flexible pricing, and maintaining strong after-sales communication. The high threat of substitutes suggests that dealerships must emphasize the unique advantages of used cars and ensure that their online listings are complete, attractive, and credible.

Finally, since new entrants can easily enter the market, existing dealerships must focus on brand-building, customer loyalty, and process improvement. Efforts such as referral incentives, standardized operations, and strong online branding can help sustain competitive advantage even when new players arise.

The action plan aims to strengthen competitiveness through strategic improvements in marketing, sourcing, customer service, and business processes, ensuring that used car dealerships in Nueva Ecija remain resilient and adaptable in a dynamic market.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Used car dealerships in Nueva Ecija are generally small-scale, newly established, and independently operated businesses, relying on limited manpower and modest monthly sales. Their operational structure—mostly registered sole proprietorships—shows that the industry is still developing, with business performance affected by supplier availability, competition, and customer preferences. The overall competitiveness of used car dealerships is shaped by strong rivalry, moderate supplier and buyer power, high threat of substitutes, and a moderate threat of new entrants. These factors collectively create a challenging business environment where owners must constantly adjust pricing, marketing, sourcing, and customer service to remain competitive. The proposed action plan is a necessary

response to the competitive pressures identified in the study. Strengthening marketing efforts, expanding supplier options, improving customer engagement, enhancing online visibility, and building brand reputation are essential strategies that can help used car dealerships improve their market position and achieve long-term business sustainability.

#### V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Used car dealerships should maximize their small-scale setup by adopting efficient business practices such as digital recordkeeping, streamlined customer processes, and improved inventory tracking. Owners may also benefit from attending local business seminars or training programs to enhance managerial skills and strengthen business operations. Dealerships should respond to competitive pressures through stronger online marketing, transparent vehicle information, and customer-centered pricing strategies. Expanding supplier networks and exploring additional sourcing channels such as auctions and online car exchanges can reduce reliance on limited suppliers and improve negotiation outcomes. To support long-term competitiveness, dealerships should implement the proposed action plan by building a strong brand identity, offering referral incentives, improving after-sales follow-up, and maintaining consistent digital visibility. These initiatives can help increase customer loyalty, counter new entrants, and differentiate the dealership from substitute products and other competitors.

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