

THE E-COMMERCE TRAINING FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN FACING FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

The 4th Industrial Revolution requires technology as aid for people to gain valuable information and to empower them. These opportunities has provided a platform in supporting entrepreneurs continue to populate the continent, and with increased access to the internet, entrepreneurs in emerging economies will continue to utilize various technological tools and resources to start, expand, and grow their businesses especially for women entrepreneurs as getting involved in business helps them to gain valuable knowledge and experience to escape the poverty trap. As we know, women have to bear and hold many roles which one of them is caretaker of the children at home, juggling between their careers and family commitment and at the same time, as seller and buyer if they choose to be entrepreneurs. Different backgrounds, education and upbringing call for different type of approaches and training to assist women to become an online entrepreneur. Almost two hundred twenty-two women entrepreneurs in a state in Malaysia have been trained under the collaboration of Government and a public university in Malaysia. This training is intended to empower and develop women entrepreneurial skill and knowledge in business by using technology. Thus, this paper would describe the training conducted among women entrepreneurs selected in a state in Malaysia and how it can be a model for further training to increase women participation in digital economy.

Keywords: Netpreneur, women entrepreneurs, e-commerce, digital literacy, online business, online marketing, digital economy, 4IR

1. INTRODUCTION

In March 2017, Malaysia has launched world first digital free trade zone which aims to capitalize on the confluence and exponential growth of the internet economy and cross border e-commerce activity. The e-commerce and logistics hub in Malaysia will be setting up by Jack Ma, the owner of Alibaba Group which is known as one of the technology giants in the world. One of the strategy is to spur young entrepreneurs to venture out of the country. Ma, who was appointed as a digital economy advisor to the Malaysian Government last year, said that e-hub would empower young entrepreneurs and small-and-medium enterprises (SMEs) dreaming about venturing overseas. Most importantly, he also emphasized that the role and the influence by women are really important and affect the sustainability over a long term in a company. He said, women made better employees as they were natural careers compared to men. He also added, the Internet had empowered more women to become entrepreneurs as their gender was not seen as a barrier in the digital space, unlike in the traditional workspace. This phenomenon can be seen in the online business trend nowadays, as a lot of online business is owned by the women entrepreneurs and they initially started their business online and began expanding their business in physical store, for example in Bangi Central, Bangi and Shah Alam, Selangor. The existence of social media has become the core factor that lead to this matter as we can see lots of business online are conducted and marketed in Instagram and Facebook. Through the implementation of Internet, it helps the entrepreneurs to move fast across time and space in engaging with their customers and production. Thus, it shows that technology plays a big role in paving the way for entrepreneurs to grow their business effectively and at the same, provide immediate growth to economy and country which are in line with the new goal set up by Government and the needs of 4IR.

In line with the growth of digital economy, this paper is seen as a platform in producing a good netpreneur as they have been trained on how to market and grow their businesses online. Almost two hundred twenty-five women entrepreneurial in a state in Malaysia have been trained under the collaboration of Government and a public university in Malaysia. This training is intended to empower and develop women entrepreneur's skill and knowledge in business by using technology. This is due to the development of the technology nowadays where the trend of using technology such as internet or social media specifically provides mass of opportunities for the women entrepreneurs to promote or conduct their business online. For instances, banking, advertising, business transaction and social interaction can be conducted online. Thus, the process of conducting the business seems to be easier to be performed online. Through this initiative, women entrepreneurs will adopt 'breakout' strategy in order to expand their small-scale business and embrace digital economy as 2017 is the year of digital economy. This will push the local women entrepreneurs to be the regional as well as global champions. As the outcome of the program, more than 200 SMME (Small and Medium Sized Enterprise) women entrepreneurs especially single mothers and women under B40 category were selected and trained to enhance and improve their business and marketing skill nationally and globally. In this training, there are seven modules involved. The list of the modules is shown below:

- i. Module 1: Effective Internet Marketing Module
- ii. Module 2: Effective Writing for Advertising Module
- iii. Module 3: Business Development through Facebook Module
- iv. Module 4: Business Development through Instagram Module
- v. Module 5: Business Development through Wordpress Module

- vi. Module 6: Canva: Graphic Design Module
- vii. Module 7: Effective Photographic Techniques Module

These modules have been built based on the previous research project on Access, Adoption and ICT Value among women in Malaysia. This past research have been conducted in order to contribute to the development of women in terms of education, information and practicality based on the ICT development. Hence, this article will describe and discuss on the need for the ICT oriented training for women entrepreneurs and to what extent the ICT skills on using social media or online platform helps them to expand their business. The outcome of this article would be in line with the government's plan to elevate the role of women in the country and announced 2018 as the Year to Empower Women. In addition, they even have allocated RM20 million in Budget 2018 for training and entrepreneurship programmes for women as a part of their initiatives.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This paper intends to provide an overview of the training conducted among two hundred women entrepreneurs in a state in Malaysia and to develop a model for further training to increase women participation in e-commerce.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid development of technology nowadays together with the emergence of digital economy as one of the crucial components in national plan have been a sole reason for every one of us to enhance skills and knowledge related to technological aspect. Through TN50 or Transformasi Nasional 2015 and Fourth Industrial Revolution, it takes a whole plan for the government to initiate and conduct various initiatives to instill the need of to capitalize on the confluence and exponential growth of the internet economy and cross border e-commerce activity. It shows how the technology and ICT influence the development of all sectors include political, economy and others.

In relation to the core of business in this study, Devendra et. al., (2012) defined that electronic commerce, commonly known as e-commerce, consists of the buying and selling of products or services over electronic system such as internet and other computer network. In its basic form, it involves placing orders online and making payments online. These transactions can be done in the form of online marketing, electronic data interchange, data management, social marketing and more. These recent years, the e-commerce market continues to grow as online sales accounted for more than a third of total U.S. retail sales growth in 2015, according to data from the U.S. Commerce Department. Web sales totaled \$341.7 billion in 2015, a 14.6 percent increase over 2014. E-commerce conducted using mobile devices and social media is on the rise as well where Internet Retailer reported that mobile accounted for 30 percent of all U.S. e-commerce activities in 2015. Even in Malaysia, we have boasted 15.3 million online shoppers in equivalent to 50 percent of the population and 62 percent of mobile users their devices to shop online (export.gov, 2017). In 2016, the Malaysian Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) launched a new *e-commerce Initiative* with the goal to bring roughly 80 percent of small- and medium size enterprises into the world of e-commerce and to expand market access for more than 87 million digital customers in the ASEAN region. When it concerns on online business and e-business, it is actually a part of e-commerce but more connected to online business marketing or refers to undertaking industry, trade, and commerce, with the help of information technology and communication.

In this era of globalization, women constitute an important and potential asset to the nation. The role of women is vital towards nation building and parallel to the male counterparts. However, in the course of progress and development brought by the new technology, the roles of women have never changed, both traditionally and professionally. In fact, they are faced with added responsibilities. Their traditional roles as wife, mother, bread-winners are still the same and no dully recognized. In the current information age, women are professionally expected to go hand in hand with the men to contribute to national development. Especially with the help of current technology which offers a lot of opportunities and information for women to take part of it. According to Norizan Abdul Razak (2007), a proliferation of mobile phones, the internet and cybercafé's are providing new opportunities and outlets for women, particularly those in highly industrialized countries who are proficient to take advantage of these technologies.

Information and communication technology (ICT) is a key in the development of a country towards achieving a developed country status (Norizan, et al. 2007, Norizan et al 2009). ICT can also give a lot of opportunities especially to marginalized group to empower themselves in terms of life-long learning and getting a job and marketing their products (Norizan, et al., 2007). In order for business to grow, it is necessary to apply the use of ICT and other online platforms such as by implementing online transaction such as PayPal or other online payment gateway. (Norizan et al. 2009). In terms of the women empowerment in digital economy, Malaysia government begins to address women entrepreneurship formally in Sixth Malaysia Plan (RM6) (1991-1995). This is prior to the introduction of Dasar Wanita Negara (DWN) in 1989 which acts as a ground policy to acknowledge and recognize women as one of the key player for national development. This policy highlights women's roles and rights to be included economically, socially and politically along with the other respective gender. This policy can be seen as a start in increasing equality and promoting inclusive economic and social growth.

Until now, a lot of initiatives has been implemented and proposed in order to strengthen this marginalized group in digital economy sector. During the 2018 national budget speech last Friday, Prime Minister Najib Razak declared that 2018 will be Women Empowerment Year. One of the initiatives is the government has allocated RM20 million for women to attend training and entrepreneurship programmes, including the PEAK Entrepreneur Programme under MyWin Academy, an avant-garde institution aimed at enculturing innovation for the advancement and empowerment of women. Lifelong learning is key to making it through the changing times, and it is seeing how the education being made more accessible. A study conducted by Abdul Razaq et al (2009) showed that increase knowledge in computer usage among adult helped them to realize that knowledge in ICT

can empower them to search for information and get information much quicker. As a result, their motivation to use the computer more often increased. In addition, a study by Norizan Razak et al (2010) among women aged 35 and above, in terms of ICT application, revealed that time, low literacy and low needs affected the patterns of computer use among these women.

However, based on the training that have been conducted by UKM in Smart Marketing Platform for Small Scale Producers Project the collaboration between UKM, e-Entrepreneurs Women Association Malaysia (eWA), Angkatan Kerjasama Kebangsaan Malaysia Berhad (ANGKASA) Johor in 2015. The impact of the program was analysed after 6 months and it showed that 80 per cent of 200 women entrepreneurs has gained benefits. Their digital literacy increased up to 80 per cent from the first day of training. Their monthly sales also increased from 30 percent to 50 percent. 75 percent participants has successfully uploaded their products and services on the online platforms and digital malls. Those who have higher literacy tend to be more successful after training as they are able to manage their website on their own. (Norizan & Fatin Nadiah, 2016).

THE STUDY

This study was conducted at two research sites in Johor Malaysia based on collaboration between UKM Pakar Runding, LPPKM (*Lembaga Penduduk dan Pembangunan Keluarga Malaysia*), UPEN Johor (Economic Planning Unit Johor), JKM (*Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat*), EDC (Entrepreneur Development Centre) dan Muafakat Johor. Through this program, almost 200 women entrepreneurs from all parts in Johor have joined and trained for two whole days. They have been trained based on the seven modules prepared by UKM's team. In whole, the training has been conducted in two months period for five different sessions. Every session was being conducted in different locations for two days. For the first day, the training was began with the first four modules as shown above which were Module 1, 2, 3 and 4 followed by others for the second day.

Every entrepreneurs was required to bring along their products or anything that can be used as their marketing subject for photography session which were specially requested for Module 7. These modules have been developed based on the findings on the previous research projects and extensive training program in collaborations with almost every state in Malaysia. These previous research projects are Access, Adoption and ICT Value among women in Malaysia, Laureate Smart Marketing Platform for Small Scale Producers and Online Women Development through Mobile Incubator. These past researches have been conducted in order to contribute to the development of women in terms of education, information and practicality based on the ICT development. These past researches focused on the development of women through online business in the form of marketing in various platforms such as website, social media, online payment gateway, graphic design, digital mall and more. Therefore, through this training, it provides the opportunity to the entrepreneurs to get in-hand experience on how to apply the right techniques when capturing the images of the products for marketing purposes. They also have the chance to create their own logo or slogan regarding their company with the assistance of experienced trainers. Every training given is in practical way of learning as they would directly need to apply every knowledge and sharing together with the trainers in the class. Hence, it gives a good opportunity for them to use what they have learned and applied at the same time instead of having lecturing session only.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs quantitative and qualitative research methods which is survey and observation. According to Babbie (2013), survey method is a method of collecting data which are considered the best in a social science research because this method can give a proper explanation to represent a large population. Data collection was conducted in two stages, observation and online surveys through Google Form. The population in this study consisted of women entrepreneurs who run a business in Malaysia. Most of the respondents were single mothers.

For the first stage, they had a workshop for two days in Johor. All of them were placed in a computer lab and trained based on 7 modules developed by the researchers. They were observed based on their participation and involvement during the training session in order to see the effectiveness of the training and modules used. They were given the opportunity to get in-hand experience on how to use social media platform which were Facebook Page, Instagram, online platform; Wordpress and also several design tools on internet for marketing purposes. Also, they also have a change to conduct their own photography session with the assistance of the expert.

Once the session ended, they were required to answer the online survey provided. As for online survey, one set of questionnaire was administered using Google Drive with specific terms automatically provided that a respondent is only allowed to answer once to ensure no repetition of data. This method takes quite a long period of time since the sample was only online it depends on their willingness to answer the questionnaire. The survey were coded and the data were analyzed using SPSS.

5. FINDINGS

The findings presented are based on the analysis of the training and the analysis of the online survey.

5.1 The analysis of the training

Based on the observation, 50 out of 220 women entrepreneurs have high and active online presence in terms of sales. Most of them are the ones that were selected to present their online platform that have been built during the training at the end of the workshop. This group was the one that successfully developed their business sites include Facebook Page, Instagram for business, website and also poised to venture into online business. The modules developed act as a constructional module and guidance for them to developed their social media platform and also business sites. The researchers also identified that almost half of them have low ICT literacy. Besides that, they also did not have a smartphone to begin with together with other important base that play a crucial part in participating in this training which are email and information about their present social media

account such as password. These people were basically the participants from the first series where most of them are single mothers and belongs to B40 group in Malaysia. In terms of the writing skill based on Module 2: Effective Writing for Advertising Module, the researchers found that most of them still did not have a tagline and description of their product. Even there are some participants who cannot use computer without the assistance from the researchers. As they claimed that, every time they want to surf internet or social media, they need to ask the assistance from their daughters, sons or friends. Thus, this training is a good platform for them to practice and do it by themselves without having to depend on other people. In terms of the language use, only a few of them confidently used English language in advertising their products and services online. They preferred to use Malay language when they want to advertise their products online.

Besides that, there are several issues that have been identified and pointed out during the training session. First, many participants did not have smartphones. When they have been asked about that, some of them claimed this training was actually their first workshop of online marketing through online platform or even though they have attended the similar workshop before, they did not get in-hand experience in setting up their online platform and implementing the strategies on the spot. The second issue is we found that most of them have low ICT literacy and they were regarded at the beginner level. During the session, some of them needed to be assisted by the facilitators on how to set up their email account and other platforms even though we already showed and shared with them on how to set up the accounts. Even there were few who cannot use computer. Thus, this hold-hand coaching has given them a chance to get in-hand experience and work by their own to market their products without depending on other people. Next, due to the participants' different levels of ICT literacy, 50 of them are considered as potential online entrepreneurs as they seemed to have high ICT literacy and have presented their online platform during the training. These people should have a further training on advanced class of online marketing includes on how to conduct online payment through Paypal atau ipay88 in their business sites.

5.2 The analysis of the survey

In terms of demographic background, Table 1 shows majority of respondents have gained RM1500 and below for their monthly income which is 62.4%. Only one respondent that obtained RM10000 for her monthly income. Most of them are Malaysian local entrepreneurs that belongs to SMME. As for the number of customers, most of them agreed that they usually got 10 people for a week which is 54.6%. The study also found 54.6% of them did not hire any worker in assisting their business. But this finding does not include their own family member or close friends that help them to conduct their business. As for the business branch, 92.1% did not have a business branch and they only worked in one station only either their house or in shop.

Table 1 Business Demographic

Business Demographic	Frequency	Percent/%	
Monthly Income	RM1500 and below	93	62.4
	RM1501 – RM3500	34	22.8
	RM3501 – RM6000	11	7.4
	RM6001 – RM10000	10	6.7
	RM10000 and above	1	0.7
No. Of Customers Per Week	10	83	54.6
	11-12	34	22.4
	21-30	12	7.9
	31-40	7	4.6
	40 and above	13	8.6
No. Of Workers	0	83	54.6
	1	22	14.5
	2	11	7.2
	3	15	9.9
	4	7	4.6
	5	8	5.3
	6	1	0.7
	10	1	0.7
	11	1	0.7
	13	1	0.7
	30	1	0.7
	40	1	0.7
	Business Branch	Yes	11
No		140	92.1

Table 2 Impacts of Training Conducted

Impacts	Frequency	Percent/%		
ICT Skill Enhancement	30%	26		
	50%	42		
	70%	65		
	100%	17		
The Need for Advanced Netpreneur Courses	Facebook Marketing	Yes	55	36.2
	Marketing Strategies	No	96	63.2
	Marketing Strategies	Yes	124	81.6
	Marketing Strategies	No	27	17.8
	Copywriting	Yes	107	70.4
	Copywriting	No	44	28.9
	Website Marketing	Yes	96	63.2
	Website Marketing	No	55	36.2
	Graphic Design	Yes	103	67.8
	Graphic Design	No	48	31.6
Value of Netpreneur Courses	Very useful	135	88.8	
	Useful	16	10.5	

Based on the impacts of the workshop, the study found that 42.8% or majority of the respondents agreed that they have enhanced their ICT skill at 70% through this workshop. Meanwhile, 17% of them 100% agreed as they have completely enhanced through this training. As for the need for further training on netpreneur courses, most of the respondents agreed to further and have an advanced courses related to online entrepreneurship. However, based on the findings, most of them eager to have some additional courses of marketing strategies, copywriting, website marketing and graphic design to enhance their skills related to online marketing except for Facebook marketing. Based on the findings, only 36.2% of them would like to further their training on Facebook marketing. It may due to their enhancement of using Facebook marketing as they have been used them even before this training have been conducted. Please refer to Table 2 for details.

The results show that the requirement and enhancement of ICT skills play an important role for this group to advance in this online marketing especially for those who wants to expand their knowledge, network and business market in cyberspace. Even though some of them have been running their business for a long period and years, however they are still having some difficulty to get a lot of customers, high income and wide connection. Thus, through the help of technology, they would be able to utilize this application which are low in cost, easy and in trend without any limit on time and place, hence increase the chance for them to grow their business well.

5.3 The Development of Advanced Online Course

Based on the findings, some of the modules have been constructed to the advanced online courses which have been identified as relevant to the need of the further or advance training for selected women entrepreneurs who have potentials to develop their business further and perhaps to the global level. These courses include online coaching, business model canvas, effective copywriting, effective marketing in online platform, online payment gateway and lastly, the use of digital mall: Lazada, Shopee courses. The selected women entrepreneurs have to fulfill these criteria where they must have high ICT literacy, their company must be registered with SSM or Companies Commission of Malaysia, have a good product packaging and have completed all the three phases of trainings. All of these women entrepreneurs will be given extensive training on these courses and opportunities to market their products to the next level.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, effective marketing on online platform plays a crucial part to make sure the women entrepreneurs to realize the importance of using the technology in order to grow the business out of traditional border. Traditional border here refers to the traditional way of conducting their business offline. It may work well but due to the expansion and development of technology and ICT that take place at every part of this world would make it hard for them along period of time. Especially with the demand of the market that requires them to embrace online business. However, it is not looked as easy as it seems. As most of the women entrepreneurs involved in this program were having some difficulty to fully utilize this opportunity due to certain issues such as low ICT literacy, lack of access to technology and low motivation to utilize technology. Hence, the findings in this study seem to imply that those who are have these issues may require some time, support and further training to enhance their skills, knowledge and motivation. As in the training, even though they realized that they faced these issues, it did not stop them to participate actively in the class. Yet, it cannot be denied that those who have higher literacy tend to be more successful after training as they are able to manage their website on their own. (Norizan & Fatin Nadiah, 2016).

Based on the findings, the new model of effective e-commerce training would involve one additional module which is *Online Payment Gateway*. It is due to the performance of the participants in the training. Despite of having all these issues, they managed to participate and involve in the whole session successfully. However, the application of this model for future training also must be depended on the participants' ICT literacy and motivation. In relation to this matter, further studies should be conducted on the motivation of women entrepreneurs in using online platform as one of the tools to market and expand their business. In overall, the e-commerce training conducted is a success as all of them have created, managed and enhanced in embracing and utilizing online platform in marketing and further managing their business. Step by step, this process of learning

would be a remedy for them to face, improve and survive in this era where fourth industrial revolution and TN50 are taking their places in Malaysia starting from now.

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