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Conceptualising Marketing Capabilities and Entrepreneur Success among Orang Asli in Malaysia

Siti Normah Awang Tuah^a, Maymunah Ismail^b, Noor Azzura
Mohamed^c, Mohamed Saladin Abdul Rasool^d, Azhana Othman^e

^aFaculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka Branch, Alor Gajah Campus, Melaka, Malaysia, ^bFaculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka Branch, Alor Gajah Campus, Melaka, Malaysia, ^cFaculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka Branch, Alor Gajah Campus, Melaka, Malaysia, ^dFaculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka Branch, Alor Gajah Campus, Melaka, Malaysia, ^eFaculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka Branch, Bandaraya Melaka Campus, Melaka, Malaysia
Email: sitinormah@uitm.edu.my, azzura005@uitm.edu.my, saladin@uitm.edu.my, azhana395@uitm.edu.my

Corresponding Author's Email: maymu791@uitm.edu.my

Abstract

The Orang Asli are the indigenous minority people, meaning "original people", "first people" or "Indigenous People". Their socio-economic status has changed over the last decades whereby they are now more modern and not primitive as before. Some of them are involved in micro business and small business. The main objective of this study is to conceptualize the marketing capabilities of Orang Asli entrepreneurs that determine success Marketing capabilities in terms of presentable packaging, labeling and its marketing management need to be improved. In addition, several elements such as raw material sources, entrepreneur motivation, industry knowledge, technology, planning skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills and risk taking are also needed. Furthermore, ability to communicate a clear purpose, allocate resources effectively and efficiently, and take responsibility for fostering and nurturing people to reach common goals should also be emphasized. Thus, the insights of this study can enhance the guidelines for addressing the substantial economic disparity between Bumiputera, especially Orang Asli in improving their standard of living, reducing poverty problem and achieving the sustainable development goal.

Keywords: Orang Asli Entrepreneur, Marketing Capabilities, Entrepreneur Success

Introduction

Orang Asli or (indigenous) in Malaysia are relatively low socio-economic status and still a matter of significant concern. Their socio-economic status has changed over the last decades whereby they are now more modern and not primitive as before. Some of them are involved

in business to increase their standard of living and run from micro and small size of business. The Malaysian government placed high ranking and importance to help the orang Asli community to reduce poverty and provide several programs for orang Asli entrepreneurs. Government initiatives include the creation of work opportunities and the reduction of the unemployment rate, the improvement of living conditions and the reduction of poverty, and the reduction of social problems and crime. In line with that, poverty reduction is number 1 (No Poverty) in Sustainable Development Goals out of the 17th SDG. In which was set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and is intended to be achieved in 2030.

Despite expanding prospects for entrepreneurship around the world, the Orang Asli people continue to experience chronic poverty, low levels of education, and poor health (Naim et al., 2017; Mojikon et al., 2019). In addition to its value as a source of growth prospects, entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged as the engine of economic growth (Wennecke et al., 2019). In fact, entrepreneurs who need the business capital are the poor group, then run the micro and small business. The issue is: Do entrepreneurs have good marketing capabilities to succeed in their business? Entrepreneurs must face many adventures and boundaries and need to strive against other entrepreneurs that already exist in this field that are experts in business and have a lot of experience in this field. This is a big challenge for entrepreneurs to start and advance their business (Din et al., 2019). Thus, the awareness and an ability to make changes depend on understanding the internal capabilities of the entrepreneur. The success of entrepreneurs in business depends on their capabilities, especially marketing.

Therefore, marketing capabilities are identical capabilities and competencies but are not limited to just capabilities, but a process designed. The process designed on the other hand is for the business marketplace that implements the integration of the entrepreneur collective knowledge, skills, and resources, enabling the addition of competitive valued goods and services and meeting the demands of the business. Furthermore, marketing capabilities can specifically provide better market sensing, customer relationships, and the ability to strengthen the bonds between channels in the market to enhance their business performance. Increased business activity is certainly in line with the increase of business transactions that generate the source of income (Rekarti and Doktoralina, 2017). Thus, an entrepreneur with marketing capabilities can gain more income and survive in business activities.

However, contextually, in the case of the entrepreneurs, most capital assistance has been found to end in failed ventures, despite all the provided training, facilities, and monitoring (Muhamat et al., 2013; Ramli et al., 2017). Only a few numbers have elevated their business from micro to small or at least to maintain the status quo as micro entrepreneurs. The remaining are not successful in the business or out of radar and uncontactable (Shiyuti et al., 2021). In this regard, recent research has conveyed that capital coupled with courses, training and knowledge are important to poor entrepreneurs (Muhamat et al., 2013b). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to conceptualize the marketing capabilities of the Orang Asli entrepreneurs that enhance their business success.

Literature Review

Orang Asli Entrepreneurs

Orang Asli (Indigenous) entrepreneurs are indigenous people that are involved in business and mostly start from micro level business to Small Medium Enterprise (SME) size of business. They are the B40 category of community but are now slowly developed in lifestyles, healthier, successful in education and business, even the number of the successful people among them

is still small. It is evident that indigenous people are beginning to learn how to develop their knowledge base and expertise in modern areas of sustainable resource human capital, in marketing and on their competitive advantage as can be seen in cultural tourism industries. On the other hand, various types of business involve by the indigenous entrepreneurs are frozen food, bekam, zumba, grocery stores, tailor shops, madu kelulut, ikan tilapia (fisheries), agriculture etc. They are also motivated by JAKOA that helps in business management via financial assistance for entrepreneurs.

As Malaysia approaches the twenty-first century, the concern, and interest in the topic of entrepreneurship have been emphasized, among other things. It is evident by the government's massive funding investment for the encouragement of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is viewed as a solution to the Orang Asli's escalating unemployment and low level of living. They are now attempting to alter their lifestyle since they do not wish to be bound by poverty (Norasmah & Hasril, 2016). Orang Asli participation in entrepreneurship is a novel way to improve their quality of life and their communities' economies. According to the eleventh Malaysia plan, Orang Asli's primary concerns and issues include poverty. The government has provided this group with numerous possibilities and resources to encourage people to engage in entrepreneurship (Rohayu et al., 2017). Government initiatives include the creation of work opportunities and the reduction of the unemployment rate, the improvement of living conditions and the reduction of poverty, and the reduction of social problems and crime. Despite expanding prospects for entrepreneurship around the world, the Orang Asli people continues to experience chronic poverty, low levels of education, and poor health (Naim et al., 2017; Mojikon et al., 2019). In addition to its value as a source of growth prospects, entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged as the engine of economic growth (Wennecke et al., 2019).

Entrepreneurship contributes significantly to the improvement of economic growth, economic recovery, and societal progress through the creation of employment, social empowerment, and innovation. Entrepreneurship is a fantastic endeavor that creates employment, income, and new markets. The concept of indigenous entrepreneurship is a construct that describes the creativity and innovativeness toward new venture creation by a given culturally homogeneous group of individuals within a locality or geographical location, who are subjected to the same or similar environmental conditions and forces; and natural endowments (Akpor -Robaro & Erigbe, 2020). On the other hand, Ibrahim & Dawood (2020) asserted that entrepreneurship increases employment for society, raises the standard of living for citizens, and provides access to information, financial resources, knowledge, innovation, technology, and a new paradigm for conducting business. Moreover, promoting entrepreneurship can boost the economic growth of developing nations. Through the study of Orang Asli's entrepreneurial motivations, it is hoped that they will be encouraged to engage in business activities, which will assist them in escaping poverty.

An entrepreneur is a person who is accountable for organizing, managing, and accepting of risk when operating a business. The field of entrepreneurship is essential to a community's socioeconomic development. The Malaysian government has made persistent efforts to encourage Orang Asli participation as entrepreneurs, particularly in tourism-related businesses (Simpung et al., 2018). The Orang Asli community has been encouraged to engage in entrepreneurship in order to raise their economic standing and join the modernization movement. This is done to boost their confidence and demonstrate that the community is capable of productively competing in the nation's development (Malay Mail, 2019).

Information revealed by JAKOA is that there are more than eight hundred Orang Asli entrepreneurs in the whole country and the number is continually increasing. The increasing number of entrepreneurs from Orang Asli communities in Malaysia who are involved with their own entrepreneurship mainly selling forest products and products (herbs, tripolis and wood-based products). In consistent with that, various financial and non-financial assistance, training, courses, and encouragements are continually provided especially by the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development and the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) in uplifting the Orang Asli entrepreneur (Derani et al., 2020). According to Simpong et al (2018), the JAKOA is responsible for ensuring the overall policies and programmes for the advancement and development of the Orang Asli's welfare in the nation. JAKOA provides entrepreneurial training and courses in a variety of fields, including clothing design, automotive technology, motorcycle, mechanical, and painting, among others. The cultural and traditional products, including Seruling Buluh, Bamboo Guitar, and Drum. Additionally, they carved rattan, reeds, roots, etc. Orang Asli who are currently engaged in entrepreneurship should make judicious use of the government's valuable resources made available through JAKOA to advance in their business realm. The enhancements should address increased self-sufficiency, financial gains, morale, operations management skills, innovation, networking opportunities, technology, and information support, as well as a number of other factors. By engaging Orang Asli in entrepreneurship, the Malaysian government intends to eradicate poverty among Orang Asli and improve their socioeconomic conditions. JAKOA also implements the entrepreneurial training and courses in various fields ranging from clothing design, automotive technology, motorcycle mechanical, painting, etc. to develop the orang asli entrepreneurs. It is in line with statements by Encik Adzrein, an officer or person in charge in JAKOA Melaka; JAKOA provides financial assistance for orang asli entrepreneurs to develop their business. The assistance in the forms of equipment and capital needed to start their business and training as well to increase their skills as an entrepreneur.

Moreover, social entrepreneurs are at the center of the entrepreneurial process, whose ultimate objective is to create meaningful and mutually beneficial social and economic value simultaneously. Personal and external factors, such as experience or background, skills, communication, demographics, and goals, encourage individuals to become social entrepreneurs (Roddin et al., 2019; Widjojo & Gunawan, 2019). Moreover, it is crucial for an entrepreneur to realize the nation's goals, as the purpose of entrepreneurship is not merely the pursuit of profit, but rather to assist the nation in becoming more prosperous and successful (Rosly et al., 2015).

Marketing Capabilities

Marketing capabilities can be defined as integrative processes designed to apply the firms' necessary resources to its market related needs, enabling the firm to add value and meet competitive demands (Day, 2011). The marketing literature supports marketing capabilities as value creators (Martin et al., 2020) and related to any marketing mix namely product, price, place, and promotion. The Orang Asli businesses are often either self-financed or family financed or some resort to loans from the middlemen. Most of them are poorly educated and furthermore lack training and marketing skills.

Products that Orang Asli sell are livelihood forest products such as rattan, wood, and dammar (Rosdi et al., 2018). On the tourism perspective, handicraft, cultural and traditional identity products such as music instruments Siol, (Seruling Buluh), Gooh (Buluh Centong), Genggong

(Ranggot), Bateq (Drum) and Kerep (Bamboo Guitar), traditional herbs for medication such as Raja Kayu, products from variety of art, carvings (rattan, reed, roots and so on), weaving and famous unique wood carving are some of the examples of the Orang Asli products (Simpong et al., 2015). However, currently they sell modern handicraft and products from home such as foldable tote bags, 3-ply fabric masks which were saw or made by Orang Asli entrepreneurs (tailors) themselves.

However, the marketing capability of Orang Asli entrepreneurs are observed still lacking in terms of presentable packaging, labeling and its marketing management. Evident study by Jamak et al (2010) on Orang Asli entrepreneurs in the Pahang area, found that, several respondents have the idea of expanding their businesses but are unable to do so due to lack of confidence, trust, and feeling inferior. They have limited knowledge in packaging where they do not know how to pack their product. For example, they just sell their product (i.e., tapioca) without putting it in any form of suitable bags or wrapping them in any way or in proper packaging (just use newspaper or tie with string or rope). Other products such as honey (madu kelulut) are also bottled generically without any label and brand names. Moreover, in terms of promotion efforts, studied by Jamak et al (2015) revealed that the aborigines need not advertise their services as guides. Most of the time, tourists, adventure seekers and hunters alike, would approach the *Tok Batins* and the *Tok Batins* will assign the guides to the respective parties. Thus, there is still room for improvements on marketing capabilities for the Orang Asli entrepreneurs to succeed in their business.

They also have problems putting price on their products. The Orang Asli entrepreneurs do not know the practice of negotiating or haggling for prices with potential customers (i.e. as a case in point, the author tried to haggle for the price of tapioca at one of the roadside stalls and was only met with silence. The micro business owners do not seem to know how to deal with hagglers. If a potential customer were to negotiate the price of an item, the micro business owners will either only keep quiet or in certain instances will totally ignore the customer, or sometimes they will tell the customers that the price have been set by their suppliers (their relatives) and the owners would have to refer to the suppliers first before the prices can be changed.

Entrepreneur Success

Success and failure factors of entrepreneurs can be related with several elements such as raw material sources, entrepreneur motivation, industry knowledge, technology, planning skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills and risk taking (Rozell et al., 2010). All these elements greatly affect the success and failure of entrepreneurs. Therefore, as a successful entrepreneur, there must be all the above elements to further strengthen the business from time to time. Whitfort and Ruhanan (2009) developed a diagnostic test as a guide to establishing and operating a successful and sustainable Indigenous tourism business in Queensland. The study identified 17 business success factors that include training and knowledge; product development; funding; community connection; business strategies; government support; cultural sustainability; triple-bottom line; authenticity; uniqueness; collaboration; ownership; reliability; family support; commitment; commercial experience; and respect. The success factor and diagnosis tools serve as the basis for a training program and training materials for indigenous tourism businesses.

Meanwhile Rohayu et al (2015) done a study on Mah Meri tribe in Kampung Sungai Bumbun, Pulau Carey. Mah Meri tribe is involved actively in the tourism business that covers weaving, carving and dancing. In the study, 11 participants among Mah Meri entrepreneurs were

interviewed. Seven internal factors and 10 external factors were identified as factors that influenced the success of Mah Meri tribe in the tourism sector. The internal factors that influence Mah Meri community includes openness, experience, attitude, knowledge, motivation, controlling and skills. While 10 external factors consist of entrepreneurship, infrastructure, ideology, networking, community engagement, resources, financing, image, supporting system and governance. The existing support system is helpful in changing the community. JAKOA is the most closely related department that is attached to the Mahmeri community. While the other article written by Simpong et al (2018) on a study among the individual Orang Asli entrepreneurs who had been reached into mainstream tourism-related businesses. 10 entrepreneurs are being selected in the study. Based on findings, attributes that support the success of Orang Asli entrepreneur on tourism business are attitudes, role model and encouragement, knowledge, skill and competency, interest, patience and persistence. The themes being divided into a) attitude, role model and encouragement, b) knowledge, skill and competency and c) interest, patience and persistence.

Attitude is having a strong relationship with the work performance and having a positive attitude. A person is in control, confident and will perform at their best when they are becoming an entrepreneur. Acquiring knowledge, developing skills and competency is important, providing entrepreneurs with the foundation and guide to deal with the overall business operation. Long term interest, patience and persistence process are important to build a successful entrepreneur in facing the obstacles and challenges of business. Besides, the government supports either through financial and non-financial and social networking of Orang Asli entrepreneurs in creating more business opportunities and increased confidence is vital in expanding their business. It is directly creating motivation, awareness and encouraging the successful ones to share their experience with those who are currently involved in the small business and the potential ones. Attitudes, values and role models are the attributes that are part of socio-cultural elements that become the pushing factor for them to participate in the tourism business realm.

Notwithstanding that, according to Hasril et al (2021) there are five main factors influencing indigenous youths to become successful entrepreneurs, including the demographic factors of indigenous youth, the entrepreneurial field suitable for indigenous youth, the characteristics of entrepreneurs who are suitable for indigenous youth, transferable skills possessed by indigenous youth, as well as the policy and financial assistance to develop indigenous youth. Demographic factors that are found to influence the interests of indigenous youth to build a career in entrepreneurship up to become successful entrepreneurs including family background, educational background, knowledge of entrepreneurship and experience gained through entrepreneurial training. The findings support Kuratko (2017) where family background involved in entrepreneurship and involvement in training on entrepreneurship are factors in the success of entrepreneurship. From the literature review and preliminary study conducted with the ten experts from successful entrepreneurs among indigenous, the results from the study indicates that the framework of successful indigenous entrepreneur business incubators in Malaysia can consist of eleven independent variables and one dependent variable.

The eight success factors were external support factors including financial, mentoring and business advice, networking, government policies and stakeholder objectives, research – university, entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial skill, physical and logistical infrastructure, and technology support. The three independent variables were internal support factors including the demographic, field of entrepreneurship and characteristic of

entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, the dependent variable is the successful indigenous entrepreneur. Examples of entrepreneurship appropriate for indigenous youth include retail, services, manufacturing, agriculture, food, handicrafts, textiles, tourism, automotive, beauty and hairdressing, construction, shipping, transport, and fisheries. This study was supported by (The JAKOA Annual Report, 2016). In addition, these findings indicate that the characteristics of entrepreneurs suitable for indigenous youth is the main factor influencing indigenous youths to become successful entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs' characteristics that are appropriate for indigenous youth such as risk inclination, achievement, motivation, goal-orientation and vision, consistency, internal control, commitment, competitive, proactive, responsible, honesty and commitment. This finding is supported by the findings of Chittithaworn et al. (2011) which found that the characteristics of entrepreneurs and financial assistance facilities are the most important factor that affects the success of entrepreneurs to succeed. Transferable skills also influence the interest of indigenous youth to build a career in entrepreneurship.

A company's success is achieved through entrepreneurs who can communicate a clear purpose, allocate resources effectively and efficiently, and take responsibility for fostering and nurturing people to reach common goals (Tichy, (2002) cited by Abu Bakar Sedek et al., 2014). The ability to compete is embedded in an individual's education which is related to knowledge, problem-solving skills, self-confidence, and behavior that allow entrepreneurs to identify market opportunities and gather resources required to set up the new business (Martinez et al., 2007; cited by Kunene, 2008). Programs working with micro-entrepreneurs should adopt a comprehensive approach, focusing on business training, sales and marketing, access to finance, and access to markets as part of a suite of programs to promote entrepreneurship. Abu Bakar et al (2014) concluded that governments and related organizations should work together with the private sector to create and sponsor financial products targeted at micro entrepreneurs in states where risk capital is lacking, with a focus on micro-enterprises. Examples include cash-flow loans, loan guarantees, and loans based on customer contracts. A mentoring program that encompasses strategic coaching by successful entrepreneurs would be beneficial to share real business experience and offer mutual benefits (such as sharing of the market-niche, marketing strategies and networking) among the micro entrepreneurs.

Mark Morrison from CSU's Institute of Land Water and Society did a study on 360 indigenous business in urban, regional and remote centers across mainland Australia and found effective marketing, networking and adaptability to market changes are the keys for success of Indigenous business. The development of successful businesses is an important part of the strategy for improving the quality of life for Indigenous Australians and their communities. It is found that diversity of Indigenous businesses and the key role they play in the community by providing jobs, pathways to self-determination and new possibilities for youth. Indigenous entrepreneurs are motivated to achieve income and opportunity for themselves, family, and their community. These businesses act as an important source of Indigenous employment and a big contributor to the community in a range of other ways, such as leadership, mentoring, sponsoring community activities and supporting community groups. Business success, measured by growth, number of employees, sales revenue and longevity, depends crucially on the adoption of a range of sound business practices. A new model of Indigenous business development emerged that involves helping early start Indigenous business improve a range of business practices through in-depth skill development, mentoring and business

network engagement. The skill development would not solely focus on financial skills; skills such as in marketing, business planning and information technology that need to be taught by mentors from several disciplinary backgrounds. Indigenous businesses are very open to new technologies and have much higher rates of adoption of internet and social media than other small businesses in Australia. Indirect policy support to improve Indigenous outcomes in education and employment will clearly assist in this regard and these policies need to be supplemented with new policy initiatives to tap the potential of Indigenous entrepreneurship more effectively in Australia, particularly with respect to income support during the establishment phase of the business.

Conclusion

The Orang Asli population is a national asset that must be highlighted in the national development agenda. Although their way of life is vastly different from other Malaysians, they deserve respect. Their right to experience development and life's luxuries cannot be denied because their culture and beliefs are different. This population must receive adequate assistance to improve their level of living. As a mean of enhancing their economy, it is necessary to focus on the Orang Asli community's current skills so that they may be cultivated and extended in entrepreneurship.

The government's efforts to educate and enhance the Orang Asli community's entrepreneurial expertise are ongoing to generate excellent human capital and contribute to the growth of the nation's economy. Accordingly, Orang Asli entrepreneurs are encouraged to be bolder, highly driven, deeply interested in business, innovative, and knowledgeable, and constantly prepared to meet obstacles in a business climate that is becoming increasingly competitive.

Thus, the insights of this study can enhance the guidelines for addressing the substantial economic disparity between Bumiputera, especially Orang Asli. Under the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 (SPV2030), it aspires to expand the number of qualified, viable, and resilient entrepreneurs among the Orang Asli, as well as the capabilities of local entrepreneurs, particularly in the SME sector. The SPV 2030 is a pledge to transform Malaysia into a nation with sustainable growth and fair and equitable distribution across income categories, ethnicities, regions, and supply chains. As an ethnic minority in Malaysia, the Orang Asli will enjoy a higher living level as well.

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