

TITLE : INNOVATION MANAGEMENT: A STUDY OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN KLANG VALLEY

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Entrepreneurship has been playing a very important role in the economic growth of a country contributing to gross domestic product. Research completed in foreign countries like United Kingdom, Sri Lanka, Australia and United States of America showed the importance of women involved in entrepreneurship. Women penetrated in many industries such as retail businesses, service industries, science and technology field which consisted of prospects that enable women entrepreneurs to excel in the entrepreneurial world and contribute towards employment opportunities in the country. There were some examples of successful women entrepreneurs who have inspired and motivated generations of Malaysian women, for example, Melinda Looi, Bridget Lai, and Dr. Zaha Rina Zahari.

Entrepreneurs consist of male entrepreneurs, copreneurs (husband and wife) and woman entrepreneurs. However, women entrepreneurs are getting more proactive in the participation of entrepreneurial activity, be it a small or large scale industry. It shows the capabilities and ambitions of women entrepreneurs for achieving excellent performance in entrepreneurship.

Research done on women entrepreneurs is limited and is not extensively explored in Malaysia. However, judging by the growing number of Malaysian women involved in

entrepreneurship, one cannot help but to be drawn into an in-depth study on the challenges and issues faced by Malaysian women entrepreneurs and how they solve these problems by implementing innovation management.

1.2 Purpose and significance of the study

By identifying the issues and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, it was decided that further investigations on how innovation management could solve the problems of women entrepreneurs was needed. Entrepreneurship among women provides employment and enhances the work force in the country. Therefore, this study is to examine how women entrepreneurs actually solve the challenges and problems in the enterprise successfully. The emphasis would be on innovation management processes implemented by women entrepreneurs among sole proprietors and copreneurs. Further, it also investigates how do sole proprietors execute innovation management differently from copreneurs.

The objective of this study is to examine how the women sole proprietors solve the problems they faced differently compared to women entrepreneurs involved in copreneurship. In view of the above, it is important to identify the issues and challenges faced by the respective category of women entrepreneurs. Thus, innovation management is the main key element to be addressed in this study.

There was no such measure and comparison being done to explore the difference of innovation management between women involved in sole proprietorship and copreneurship in the Malaysian context. Therefore, a knowledge of the different innovation management of women entrepreneurs will equip practitioners, entrepreneurs

and/or managers with the expertise to solve all aspects of issues in businesses effectively. In addition, the purpose of this research is to generate among the public an awareness of some gender issues in the world of entrepreneurship.

1.3 Research Questions

These research questions posted based on the background of this study. They are as follows :

- (i) What are the issues and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs?
- (ii) How do woman sole proprietors solve the issues and challenges faced by them as compared to women entrepreneurs involved in copreneurship ?
- (iii) What are the differences in innovation management implemented by women entrepreneurs participating in sole proprietorship and copreneurship ?

1.4 Scope of the study

The scope of study concentrates on women sole proprietors and copreneurs in Klang Valley. Through reference of friends and colleagues, potential respondents who are involved in retail business and service industry were identified. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, in-depth interviews with open-ended questions were introduced in this study. The aim of the personal interview was to find more details and information on targeted respondents and to address innovation management aspects in this study.

1.5 Limitation of study

The limited respondents who were willing to be interviewed resulted in a limitation for this study. It was difficult to find prospective respondents to actually share their entrepreneurial experiences with the interviewer. This included having to deal with interviewees who were not sufficiently open-minded to reveal any information of their enterprises. Besides, when some sensitive issues such as marital relationship among copreneurs and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs were asked, some of the interviewees were reluctant to address the relevant issues openly to the researcher. In view of the above, participation and observation were suggested in this study in order to obtain further details from women entrepreneurs in respective industries. For instance, by interviewing the relevant workers and customers of the respective industries would reveal some 'insightful' information for this research.

On top of that, the methodology in qualitative research such as interviewing has limitations specifically in the context of reliance on conversation and text which is generated from the interviews as mentioned by Jennifer Mason. (Jennifer Mason, 2002, p.83) . Even if the interview was required to be tape-recorded, not every respondent agreed that the interview should be tape-recorded. This subsequently affected the transcription process in obtaining the data to summarize the themes for the purpose of analysis of the results.

1.6 Organization of the study

This research report comprises five chapters. Chapter One introduces an overview of role of women entrepreneurs in the existing economic situation in the world, the significance and objective of the study as well as the scope and the limitation of this study.

Chapter Two focuses on the analysis of literature review on related previous studies in innovation and women entrepreneurship.

Chapter Three deals with the research methodology of the study, which consists of introduction of qualitative research and in-depth interview approach in this study. It also explains the limitation of this data collection strategy.

Chapter Four presents the major findings of this study. It explains the themes which have been compiled from the interviews and discussion on the overall findings.

Chapter Five summarizes the discussion of results as well as the implication of this study. Moreover, it also identifies and states the limitation of this study and suggests potential areas for future research.

Therefore, this chapter covers an overview of this study and explains the significance of this study based on the research question which arises after the review the previous research. The gap is required to be filled up in order to address the various innovation management strategies being implemented by woman entrepreneurs in sole proprietorship and copreneurship.