

Improving Women Entrepreneurs in Small and Medium Enterprises in Malaysia: Policy Recommendations

Wendy, Ming-Yen, Teoh, Multimedia University, Malacca, Malaysia, myteoh@mmu.edu.my
Siong-Choy, Chong, Putra International College, Malacca, Malaysia, scchong@iputra.edu.my

Abstract

SME has been recognised as a major source of global economic growth and employment and women entrepreneurs have been acknowledged to play critical roles for bringing their ideas and capabilities towards successful achievement of the SME development in their countries. Prior literature indicated that capital, networks affiliation, education, training and counselling, and usage of ICT are important factors influencing the growth of women entrepreneurs in Malaysia. This paper not only helps the government to appropriately identify the appropriate target of women entrepreneurs, but also leads the Malaysian women entrepreneurs in developing sound skills and capabilities in doing businesses especially at the start-up phase, which might help them to create and sustain successful business ventures.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurs, Growth and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

1. Introduction

Malaysian women entrepreneurs are increasingly recognised to play an important role to the unprecedented rate of growth of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and indirectly to the Malaysian economy. The number of women in Malaysian SMEs in 2003 was 1,122,000, or 36.8 percent of the total employment in SMEs. A proxy for women entrepreneurs obtained from Population Census in 2000 indicates that 30.0 percent of them are working proprietors and active business partners [36]. In Hamisah's [23] report, she indicated that 44 percent of Malaysian women surveyed professed desire for self-employment. She also opined that this figure is likely to grow over time.

It is not surprising that the number of women entrepreneurs in Malaysia has increased in the past three decades due to the emphasis on industrialisation, and growing interests in privatisation, self-employment and business-oriented employment [46]. All of these have been facilitated by the growth in various sectors such as

banking and financing, food manufacturing, general trading, personal and public services, education, training and consultancy, and others. It was found that Malaysian women have been involved in various enterprises formerly male-dominated [31, 32]. According to The Department of Statistics of Malaysia [19], there were 518,000 companies involved in services, manufacturing and agricultural sectors, of which 99.1 percent were SMEs. About 16 percent were women-owned companies with 89.5 percent of them involved in the services sector, 7.5 percent in manufacturing and 3.0 percent in the agricultural sector.

The Malaysian government has come to realise that fostering the development of women entrepreneurship in the country is crucial for the achievement of Malaysia's broader development objectives, including economic development and growth. Malaysia is one of the very few countries which established the Ministry of Entrepreneur and Cooperative Development (MECD) in May 1995 and the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD) in 2001. Together, these ministries oversee the growth and development of existing and potential women entrepreneurs in the country. Various government grants and funds are made available to the women entrepreneurs through many of its agencies such as the Special Assistance Schemes through the Small and Medium Industries Development Corporation (SMIDEC). Table 1 shows that between August 1999 and August 2006, 523 women-owned companies were granted soft loans by SMIDEC worth a total of RM51.97 million. Besides, a total of 196 approvals were grants estimated to worth RM2.44 million for the information and communications technology (ICT) sector, while 128 approvals worth RM850,000 were grants for market development projects [48]. Besides, about 128,000 SMEs, women entrepreneurs, graduates and students received entrepreneurship and training from the SME Development programmes implementation in 2006 [4].

Table 1: Special Assistance Scheme for Women Entrepreneurs, August 1999 – 31st August 2006

No.	Executing Agency:	Small and Medium Industry Development Corporation (SMIDEC)		
		August 1999 - 31 August 2006		
	Financial Schemes	Approvals	Amount Approved (RM)	Disbursement (RM)
1	ITAF	206	4,453,024.35	918,692.25
2	PAKSI	36	19,574,500.00	4,930,805.00
3	SLSME	46	23,170,010.00	13,242,010.00
4	Y2k Grant			
	Phase 1	54	338,500.00	338,500.00
	Phase 2	23	336,016.00	336,016.00
5	E-Commerce	104	886,350.00	82,540.00
6	IKS Terengganu	35	1,979,702.00	1,585,684.00
7	DKKP	9	548,000.00	548,000.00
8	Halal Products	10	688,579.00	10,800.00
	Total:	523	51,974,681.35	21,993,047.25

Notes: ITAF- Industrial Technical Assistance Fund; SLSME- Soft Loan for Small and Medium Enterprises; PAKSI - Financial Package for SMIs; DKKP - Dana Khas Kerajaan Persekutuan.

Source: Small and Medium Industry Development Corporation (SMIDEC, 2006).

In its effort to turn Malaysia into “Information Society” as part of the efforts to become a knowledge-based economy, the government has pledged to see that all segments of the society, including women entrepreneurs in urban and rural areas have access to new information technology (IT), particularly computers and Internet facilities. Formal and informal training programmes and seminars were jointly conducted by the Government and the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to ensure that women entrepreneurs are not marginalised in this era of information and communications technology (ICT). From 1995 to 2000, a total of about 10,000 women benefited from these courses [39].

In addition, some women entrepreneur associations functional already, such as the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs Association Malaysia (FEM), National Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Malaysia (NAWEM), Persatuan Usahawan Wanita Bumiputera (USAHANITA), the Women’s Wing of the Malay Chamber of Commerce Malaysia of the State of Selangor, aimed at promoting and encouraging more Malaysian women to become entrepreneurs besides creating a platform for networking among them [46, 47].

It is clear that the Malaysian government has been actively involved and concerned about women entrepreneurship development in the last decade. This is to ensure that women entrepreneurs are not left out from the process of national and economic development, particularly in important sectors such as ICT and bio-technology, in order for the country to successfully realise Vision 2020 [46].

From the research perspective, various attempts were undertaken to identify factors that support the growth of women entrepreneurs as evidenced from the literature and prior surveys, albeit these factors were studied in a fragmented fashion. It is important that a comprehensive list of factors are identified and that the Malaysian women entrepreneurs are able to comprehend these factors as they bear substantial influence on their business growth, especially when they compete in this challenging, globalised business arena. This is the objective of this study. As the factors proposed are generic in nature, they are also applicable to women entrepreneurs globally. Practical recommendations are provided before the paper is concluded.

2. Issues in Women Entrepreneurship

Researchers have made attempts to distinguish an entrepreneur from a bread-winning businessperson [42]. They consider an individual to be an entrepreneur if he/she exhibits a high propensity for growth [29]. They view growth propensity as one’s desire to grow and change in future as well as his/her self-perceived power to achieve the same. As such, size and growth are typically used as criteria for evaluating organisational success [16].

Women, however, conceive their businesses differently from the way men do which women have different socialization experience which might shape varied strategic choices among themselves such as their prior professional experience and social network affiliation [9, 14]. This leads to different approaches to venture creation and business growth expectancies [7, 16]. Some studies show that women-owned businesses are no more likely to fail than men-owned [27, 28]. Cliff [16] and Fasci and Valdez [22], however, reported that women perform less well on quantitative measures such as job creation, sales turnover and profitability since women do not enter business for financial gain but to pursue intrinsic goals (for example, independence, and the flexibility to run business and domestic lives) [18, 20, 40, 41]. Implicitly, women are deemed to assess success in relation to their achievement in attaining personal goals (i.e. self-fulfilment, goal attainment etc.) [11, 30, 44]. Other researches found that differences in initial capital and goals explain the poorer performance in growth and survival of women-owned businesses [18].

While businesses need more women in order to capture the full benefit of diverse thinking and problem solving of making decisions and managing strategies based on their expectations on business growth, some significant barriers especially financial barriers remain for women establishing and growing businesses [1, 2, 12, 26]. Among the list of priority barriers to women entrepreneurship were lack of access to: (i) credit; (ii) formal business and social networks; (iii) opportunities to gain management experience and exposure; as well as (iv) the limitations of combining household and family care responsibilities with those running the enterprises. As shown in Fig 1, these barriers can be summarised to four elements, i.e. financial and capital assistance; network; education, training and counselling; and usage of ICT, which impact on the growth of women entrepreneurs in the development of SMEs in Malaysia as drawn from a myriad of studies indicated herein. The next section discusses the four elements in detail.

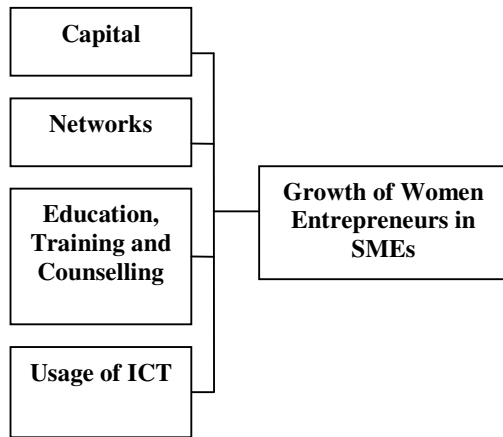


Fig 1. A Conceptual Framework for Supporting the Growth of Women Entrepreneurs in Malaysia

Finance and Capital Assistance to the Women Entrepreneurs

Much of the research conducted in the 1980s identified business challenges specific to women entrepreneurs [22]. Some of the difficulties reported included obtaining start-up funds, financial management and development of effective marketing and advertising [38]. The root causes of limited financial success were often attributed to early management practices of the women entrepreneurs.

Female owners tended to prefer internal to external sources of financing. In addition, women used smaller amount of capital at the start-up phase and that they are less likely to use financial instruments such as overdrafts, bank loans, and supplier credit. Indeed, women were more likely to use their banks for a source of advice, but men were more likely to

respond to that advice [15]. Specifically, women-led businesses that used bank loans as a primary source of start-up capital outperformed those that used alternative funding sources. Therefore, Haynes and Helms [24] stressed the importance of having a relationship with a bank in place at the time of the business launch. This is because having access to financial resources and emphasizing the financial aspects of the business had stronger effects on growth than did intention or choice [13].

However, it was reported that one of the biggest obstacles facing women entrepreneurs is the discrimination they suffer from the banking and finance communities [8, 35]. Thus, they prefer to rely on their own personal funds [17]. In Malaysia, many women entrepreneurs feel that there is a huge barrier for them to obtain debt capital at banks and lending agencies [50]. It is therefore crucial for the government agencies, banks and lending agencies and women associations especially Women SME Association of Malaysia (WSME) to assist the women entrepreneurs in terms of financial problems.

Networks towards the Growth of Women Entrepreneurs

Networks have long been hailed as essential to the survival of female-run establishments [5, 6, 43]. It is a critical element for entrepreneurs in gaining access to capital/loans, advice and information needed for initiating and operating a new venture easily [10]. Entrepreneurs make use of social relations and social contacts as channels to gain access to information, customers, suppliers and to the sources of finance. They make use of family networks to access unpaid family work as well as emotional support. It has been found that support from personal network improves survival and growth chances of new ventures. Specifically, support from strong ties (spouse/life partner, parents, friends and relatives) is more important than support from weak ties (business collaborators, acquaintances, former employers and former co-workers) which influence the success of new ventures. Besides, active help and emotional support from spouse are more important for success in case of the women entrepreneurs [29].

Men and women, however, have different priorities in establishing networking relationships. Men's motives are often more instrumental (seeking personal gain) while women have more affective considerations in social relationships. Their management style is not seen as being relevant and thus, women are often excluded from the male networks which are very effective. Women do not have the same tools, assets, and chances than men in the small business arena. When confronted by business problems or difficulties, women

entrepreneurs seek assistance first from family, then from close friends and only last from knowledgeable business sources [5, 25] whereas men entrepreneurs rather seek advice from their networks. This might be due to lack of professional experience [2] or the diverse social network needed for women to fully utilise the information and resources provided.

This phenomenon seems to be applicable to Malaysian women entrepreneurs. It was reported that women entrepreneurs faced a shortage of peer support networks compared with men [49] even though various women entrepreneurs and industry associations have been formed (i.e. FEM, NAWEM, USAHANITA) which generally serve as a platform for women entrepreneurs to establish networks and exchange information and experiences as well as to conduct training programmes, seminars and workshops on motivation, leadership and entrepreneur development and to provide other means of support. This is due to the fact that women may not join these associations as they might be overloaded with business and family responsibilities. This limits the women entrepreneurs' ability to seek informal advice and peer financing as well as the information networks needed for survival and growth. This might pose a challenge to women entrepreneurs in establishing networks which are helpful to the survival of their businesses [46, 47].

Education, Training and Counselling, and Growth of Women Entrepreneurs

The combined impact of globalisation, changing patterns of trade, and evolving technologies such as ICT call for skills that women entrepreneurs on the continent do not for a large part possess, as many more women than men lack the requisite level of education and training, including business and technical skills and entrepreneurship training.

Nevertheless, women are often disadvantaged in terms of access to training. They are often unaware of training opportunities and are less likely to be able to afford the cost of training provided by the private sector (and subsidisation of training is limited by the willingness of donors to support this). According to a report by the International Labour Office, African Development Bank and Private Sector Department [26], even if women could afford to pay for the training, they have difficulty in travelling to central locations to participate in training programmes, and quite often cannot afford time away from their enterprises and family responsibilities to attend weeklong programmes – even assuming their husbands give them permission to be away from home. In fact, some husbands often object to training offered by men in certain countries.

In addition, most entrepreneurship training programmes is too general in scope and does not offer a growth strategy orientation. Many of them focused on the start-up process with very limited effort on the part of the training providers with regard to doing any post-training follow-up. In addition, women tend not to use supporting government programmes [34] including the training programmes provided. This might be a problem pertinent to Malaysian women entrepreneurs as generally there is a lack of entrepreneurship training and skills development in Malaysia where most women entrepreneurs acquired their skills and experience through their family members, friends and previous experiences [3]. Efforts are thus needed to increase the level of awareness among women entrepreneurs of existing training opportunities.

Usage of ICT and Growth of Women Entrepreneurs

The use of ICT is crucial and arguably unique in allowing small businesses and their entrepreneurial owners to sharpen their strategies in order to achieve success [33]. The wide-reach of technology provides businesswomen with greater access to the market, networking opportunities, and greater promotional capabilities which will undoubtedly augment the competitive advantages for their businesses. However, it was reported that most of the local SMEs do not have internal IT infrastructure installed in their premises such as the Local Area Network, and fewer than 20 percent of SMEs have access to the Internet [37]. Besides, there exists a “digital gap” between urban and rural women, and between women of different economic status even though the government and NGOs have jointly organized many training programmes and seminars on ICT. About 10,000 women benefited from these courses [39] between 1995 to 2000, which are relatively few compared to the population of women entrepreneurs in Malaysia. This problem should be addressed by policy, particularly policy aimed at providing entrepreneurial skills to women.

3. Policy Recommendations

This paper has provided a holistic view of factors which affect the growth of women entrepreneurs through a comprehensive review of literature available on entrepreneurship. This resulted in the development of a research framework which points out that financial assistance, networking, training, education and counseling, and usage of ICT are critical factors to the success of women entrepreneurs in the SMEs. Prior theoretical and empirical findings provide support that the same factors are also important to the Malaysian women entrepreneurs. The identification of these factors aid in the initiation of policies and programmes for entrepreneurship development among women. It also provides self-check to the current women

entrepreneurs through a better understanding of the critical factors which determine their business growth in general.

In addition, this paper provides a guideline to the women entrepreneurs in understanding what the prerequisites to be successful in their business ventures. In a nutshell, the women entrepreneurs should be able to have a good understanding of the financial assistance available to them. Additionally, they must also understand the importance of social and business networking to their business success. They must take the initiatives to participate in any training programmes organised for them. Finally, the women entrepreneurs should realise the opportunities brought about by E-commerce as virtual outlet and therefore make efforts to employ them in their businesses.

Indications are that the government can do more in providing special assistance to women entrepreneurs on a continuous basis. From the financial perspective, the women entrepreneurs must be made to understand on the advantages of external sources of financing for their businesses. Understanding the limitation of grants that could be provided by the government even by increasing the allocation, the government should encourage more banks and micro institutions through tax incentives to provide a wider range of financial services with flexible terms and conditions so as to assist women in establishing and expanding their own enterprises. The government could engage in dialogue with the banks and financial institutions in expanding their range of financing products and delivery mechanisms to the SMEs. Besides government grants and loans from financial institutions, the associations of women entrepreneurs and NGOs can also play important roles in providing credit schemes to women entrepreneurs.

Although the SME promotion programmes could be gender-neutral, additional support and services should be made available to women in view of the additional constraints they face, particularly the dual role they play in running a business while at the same time taking care of their households. The government should think of an effective mechanism to get support from women entrepreneurs towards the programmes planned for them. One of the ways would be to involve their spouses in these programmes. By understanding the businesses of their wives, the husbands are in better position to lend their support to the wives and their businesses. In addition, the government should improve the conditions and infrastructure for well-functioning business networks especially aimed at women, both locally and internationally. Women entrepreneurs must be made to realise the importance of network in gaining access to capital/loans and information

from various stakeholders. The government, associations of women entrepreneurs and NGOs can also formulate strategies to enable informal mentoring supportive relationship among the women entrepreneurs. This will definitely help the new entrepreneurs to bypass the obstacles which impede growth, success, and personal fulfilment.

In addition, efforts are needed to improve the scope and quality of affordable, accessible entrepreneurial and management training and seminars targeted to women. More training opportunities for women entrepreneurs should be provided by engaging successful women entrepreneurs as trainers. The training programmes should focus on marketing, trade fair participation, product quality, business opportunity identification, capital/loan sourcing, networking, mentoring and ICT infrastructure and tools. The associations of women entrepreneurs play important role in getting their members to participate in the training programmes. The government can lend their support by providing subsidies or tax incentives to the SMEs. Besides, the existing curriculum of institutions of higher learning should be changed to integrate entrepreneurship in the academic programmes. More women should be trained as facilitators toward such programmes.

It is imperative that the government invest more on the necessary infrastructure to make E-commerce possible so as to encourage more young women entrepreneurs to involve themselves in E-commerce and other ICTs. Some form of incentives could be provided to the women entrepreneurs in developing their internal IT infrastructure, such as tax relief for equipments bought. Related to the above, training programmes on the use of IT infrastructure should be provided to the women entrepreneurs. They must be made to realise that the digital revolution has taken place and the involvement in E-commerce activities will definitely help the women entrepreneurs in opening up opportunities for their business ventures.

Finally, the success of the initiatives above will not be forthcoming without the support from all the parties involved. The women entrepreneurs must complement the policies and programmes arranged by the government. Similarly, the associations of women entrepreneurs and NGOs can play a better role in helping the government to reach out to women entrepreneurs. The society should encourage the development of more women entrepreneurs and see them as key enablers in the nation's economic development agenda.

4. Conclusion

This paper provides a comprehensive review of the four critical factors influencing the growth of women entrepreneurs in the SMEs, particularly in

Malaysia. As the factors are derived from the global literature on women entrepreneurship, it is hoped that the recommendations made in this study provide useful guidelines to women entrepreneurs, government, associations, the NGOs and other relevant stakeholders. It is also hoped that additional research will be undertaken to build upon this work. Empirical evidence and/or case studies on successful women entrepreneurs based on the factors proposed are possible research areas. These would aid in better positioning the significance of these critical factors towards the success of women entrepreneurs in Malaysia and in general.

5. Acknowledgement

The authors acknowledged Dr. Uchenna Eze of Multimedia University in reviewing the earlier draft of the paper.

6. References

- [1] Aldrich, H. (1989). *Networking among women entrepreneurs* in Hagan, O., Rivchun, C. and Sexton, D. (Eds), *Women-Owned Businesses*, Praeger, New York, NY, 103-32.
- [2] Ashwin, S. (2000). Gender, state and society in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, in S. Ashwin (ed.) *Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*, London: Routledge: 1 – 29.
- [3] Ayadurai, S., & Wan Rosnah, A. (2006). A Study on the Critical Success Factors of Women Entrepreneurs in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia. Retrieved August 14, 2007, from <http://www.asiaentrepreneurshipjournal.com/AJESII3All.pdf>
- [4] Bank Negara Malaysia. (2007). <http://www.bnm.gov.my>.
- [5] Blanco, Huguette, Rolland LeBrasseur, & Nagarajan, K.V. (1996). Successful Women Entrepreneurs in Northeastern Ontario. In *changing Lives: Women in Northern Ontario*, Margaret Kechnie and Marge Reitsma-Street. Eds. Toronto: Dundum Press, 174-185.
- [6] Brodsky, M.A. (September 1993). *Successful Female Corporate Managers and Entrepreneurs: Similarities and Differences*. Group & Organisation Management. USA: Sage Publications Inc. 18(3), 366-71.
- [7] Brush, C.G. (1992). Research on women business owners: past trends, a new perspective and future directions. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 17(4), 5-30.
- [8] Brush, C. G. & Hisrich, R. D. (1991). Antecedent influences on women-owned businesses. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 6(2), 9-16.
- [9] Bussey, K., & Bandura, A. (1999). Social cognitive theory of gender development and differentiation, *Psychological Review*, 106, 676-713.
- [10] Buttner, E.H. (1993). Female Entrepreneurs: How Far Have They Come? Women in Business. *Business Horizons*. U.S.A.: Foundation for the School of Business Indiana University: 36(2), 59-68.
- [11] Buttner, E.H., & Moore, D.P. (1997). Women's Organizational Exodus to Entrepreneurship: Self-reported Motivations and Correlates with Success. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 35(1), 34-46.
- [12] Carter, N. (1997). Entrepreneurial processes and outcomes: the influence of gender, in Reynolds, P., White, S. (Eds), *Economic Growth, Men, Women and Minorities*, Quorum Books, Westport, CT.
- [13] Carter, N.M., & Allen, K.R. (1997). Size determinants of women-owned businesses: choice or barriers to resources?. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 9(3), 211-20.
- [14] Carter, N. M., Williams, M., & Reynolds, P. D. (1997). Discontinuance among new firms in retail: The influence of initial resources, strategy, and gender. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 12, 125-145.
- [15] Carter, S. & Rosa, P. (1998). The Financing of Male- and Female-Owned Businesses. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 10, 225-241.
- [16] Cliff, J.E. (1998). Does One Size Fit All? Exploring the Relationship Between Attitudes Towards Growth, Gender, and Business Size. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 13(6), 523-542.
- [17] Coleman, S. (2003). Risk tolerance and the investment behavior of Black and Hispanic heads of household. *Financial Counseling and Planning*, 14(2) 43-52.
- [18] Cooper, A., Gimeno-Gascon, F.J., & Woo, C. (1994). Initial Human and Financial Capital as Predictors of New Venture Performance. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 9, 371-395.
- [19] Department of Statistics Malaysia. (2005). <http://www.statistics.gov.my>.

- [20] Du Riets, A., & Henrekson, M. (2000). Testing the female under-performance Hypothesis. *Small Business Economics*, 14 (1), 1-10.
- [22] Fasci, M. A., & Valdez, J. (1998). A Performance Contrast of Male- and Female-Owned Small Accounting Practices. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 36 (3), 1-7.
- [22] Greene, P.G., Hart, M.M., Gatewood, E.J., Brush, C.G., & Carter, N.M. (n.d.). Women Entrepreneurs: Moving Front and Center: An Overview of Research and theory.1-46.
- [23] Hamisah Hamid. (2002). Survey: Self-employment a Rising Trend. Nation (Thailand), July 26, 2002.
- [24] Haynes, P., & Helms, M. (2000). A profile of the growing female entrepreneur segment. *Bank Marketing*, 32(5), 28-35.
- [25] Hisrich, R., & Brush, C. (1986). *The Woman Entrepreneur*. Lexington Books, Lexington, Massachusetts.
- [26] International Labour Office (ILO). (2003). *Ethiopian Women Entrepreneurs: Going for Growth*. ILO Sub-regional Office, Addis Ababa and Ministry of Trade and Industry, Women's Affairs Department (MTI/WAD) in association with SEED, International Labour Office, Geneva.
- [27] Johnson, S., & Storey, D. (1993). Male and Female Entrepreneurs and Their Businesses, in S. Allen and C. Truman, eds. *Women in Business: Perspectives on Women Entrepreneurs* London: Routledge.
- [28] Kalleberg, A.L., & Leicht, K.T. (1991). Gender and Organisational Performance Determinants of Small Business Survival and Success. *Academy of Management Journal*, 34(1), March, 136-161.
- [29] Krishna, K.V.S.M. (2003). Bridging the Gap: Conceptual Paradigms and Training for Entrepreneurship Development. *The Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 12(1), 91-116.
- [30] Lerner, M., Brush, C., & Hisrich, R. (1997). Israeli Women Entrepreneurs: An Examination of Factors Affecting Performance. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 12(4), 315-339.
- [31] Maimunah, I. (1996a). Gender needs analysis of women entrepreneurs. *Pertanika Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 4(1), 1-9.
- [32] Maimunah, I. (1996b). Usahawan wanita: Satu analisis keperluan dari perspektif gender. Dalam Mazanah Muhamad dan Ezhar Tamam (eds.). *Rakan Kongsi, Komunikasi dan Media dalam Pembangunan*. Serdang: Penerbit Universiti Pertanian Malaysia, 55-76.
- [33] Martin, L.M., & Wright, L.T. (2005). No Gender in Cyberspace? Empowering Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Female-Run ICT Small Firms. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*, 11(2), 162-178.
- [34] Nagarajan, K.V., Lebrasseur, R., & Blanco, H. (1996). Business Start-ups by Women in Northeastern Ontario: A Study of Motivations and Approaches. *Journal of Small Business Entrepreneurship*, 13(1), 61-71.
- [35] Neider, L. (1987). A preliminary investigation of female entrepreneurs in Florida. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 25(3), 22-29.
- [36] Normah Mohd Arjs. (2006). *SMEs: Building Blocks for Economic Growth*. Paper presented at the National Statistical Conference, Kuala Lumpur.
- [37] Patrick, S. (n.d.). *New Economy, Same Old Problems*, 1-7.
- [38] Pellegrino, E.T., & Reece, B.L. (1982). Perceived formative and operational problems encountered by female entrepreneurs in retail and service firms. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 20(2), 15-25.
- [39] Questionnaire to government on implementation of Beijing platform of action (1995) and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the general assembly (2000). Retrieve March 10, 2008, from http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/uclg/upload/docs/MALAYSI_A_English.pdf.
- [40] Rosa, P., Carter, S., & Hamilton, D. (1996). Gender as a Determinant of Small Business Performance: Insights From a British Study. *Small Business Economics*, 8(4), 463-478.
- [41] Sexton, D.L. (1989). Research on Women Business Owners, in O. Hagen, C. Rivchun and D.L. Sexton (Eds). *Women Owned Businesses*. New York: Praeger.
- [42] Sexton, D.L., & Bowman, U.N. (1991). *Entrepreneurship: Creativity and Growth*. New York: Macmillan.

[43] Shim, S, & Eastlick, M.A. (1998). Characteristics of Hispanic Female Business Owners: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Small Business Management*. U.S.A.: *International Council for Small Business*, 36(3), 18-29.

[44] Still, L.V. & Timms, W.(2000). Women's Business: The Flexible Alternative Work Style for Women. *Women in Management Review*, 15(5-6), 272-282.

[45] Supporting Growth-Oriented Women Entrepreneurs in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania. An overview report prepared by International Labour Office (ILO), SEED programme, African Development Bank (AfDB), & Private Sector Department (OPSD). (July, 2004).

[46] Teoh, W.M.Y., & Chong, S.C. (2007a). Women Entrepreneurship in Malaysia: A Framework of Factors Influencing Performance. Proceedings of the Seventh Asian Academy of Management Conference 2007: Reimagining Management in an Era of Multiple Crisis: Success and Sustainability of Business in Dynamic Asia, May 21 – 25, 2007, Park Royal Hotel, Penang.

[47] Teoh, W.M.Y., & Chong, S.C. (2007b). Theorising a Framework of Factors Influencing Performance of Women Entrepreneurs in Malaysia. *Journal of Asia Entrepreneurship and Sustainability*, 3(2), 42-59.

[48] The Star. (2006, July 24). Rafidah: Filter info down. Retrieved May 30, 2007, from <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2006/7/24/nation/14929866&sec=nation>

[49] Women Institute of Management (WIM). (1997). <http://www.wimneet.org.my>

[50] Women SME Association of Malaysia. (2006). <http://www.women-sme.com>

Copyright © 2008 by the International Business Information Management Association. All rights reserved. No part or all of this work should be copied or reproduced in digital, hard, or any other format for commercial use without written permission. To purchase reprints of this article please e-mail: admin@ibima.org