

Towards the Readiness of Infopreneur Usage in Malaysia: A Pilot Study

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The term Infopreneur (Information Entrepreneur) is a registered trademark belonging to H. Skip Weitzen (author of the book 'Infopreneur') who describes an infopreneur as "a person who gathers, organizes, and disseminates information as a business venture or as a value-added service." Infopreneurship involves the creation, marketing and sale of products (mostly digital), that share one's life experience or knowledge, to creating profit and educating or influence an audience. The increasing usage of the internet has created a new style of business, which allows anybody with a computer and an internet connection to start businesses by publishing information that may appeal to specific markets. This paper is discussing the pilot study which focuses upon the readiness of infopreneur usage in Malaysia. The findings show a relationship between an infopreneur and educating an audience on disseminating business information online. There are four variables to be considered as tools in educating the audience when it comes to give or disseminate business information online. They are business websites, sales funnels, business management and content creation. The findings show that there is a relationship among those variables and they are significant in terms of publicizing business information.

Key words: *Information Entrepreneur, Entrepreneur, Infopreneur.*

Introduction

The total population of Malaysia was estimated at 32.66 million people in 2019 (Department Of Statistics Malaysia, 2019). Population growth and lifestyle changes have escalated the cost of living. Rising cost of living is a global phenomenon, especially in countries on a growth path to developed-nation status. To ensure increased earning capacity over the long term, the plan has allocated funds towards the creation of businesses through upgrading skills, reskilling and promoting business-making.

Based on the economic data in Malaysia in 2019, businesses are becoming increasingly confident with the overall confidence indicator rising by 2.8% from being down 2.2% in the first quarter of 2019. The Services sector is the most positive, followed by Wholesale & Retail Trade. In the Services sectors, the confidence indicator recorded a 20.8% increase as compared to a 5.9% increase in the previous quarter. This data shows that opportunities for infopreneurship businesses cannot be denied. (Business Tendency Statistics Second Quarter 2019, Malaysia, 2019; Carter & Goldie, 2018).

Information Entrepreneur (Infopreneur)

An infopreneur is someone who takes knowledge, turns it into products and sells them. While infopreneurship involves the creation, marketing and sale of products (mostly digital), that share one's life experience or knowledge, to create profit and educate or influence an audience. Infopreneurship is the practice of self-employed individuals, who have acquired specialized skills in developing, selling, and reselling information products and services. Their products and services are supported by appropriate consumer demand and justify charging fees for a profit. (Lahm and Stowe, Rugge and Glossbrenner, Mason and Dobson).

Information has more value than physical inventory; information is the future. Information is the essential ingredient in today's knowledge-based economy which is dynamic, expensive, and continually being reconfigured and repackaged (R.F. Peters, 1997). The Internet has dramatically improved the efficiency and reliability of information services. Technological improvements in electronic products have resulted in the rise of media through which information-based products are provided. The internet has also developed as a means of both marketing and distributing goods and services. In contemporary society, information and knowledge have become as significant in the discourse and practice of social and economic development as other factors of production such as land, labour, and capital.

Today, information specialists are compelled to use new skills and strategies in order to change, survive, and continue to compete in the world of virtual information. In consideration of the benefits of infopreneurship highlighted above, there appears to be a strong justification for infopreneurship as an alternative employment sector to information providers; one that is worth exploring, understanding, and exploiting.

Infopreneur in Various Fields

The increasing usage of the internet has created a new style of business on the Internet, which allows anybody with a computer and an Internet connection to start businesses by publishing information that may appeal to specific markets. Information is a commodity that can be produced, purchased, replicated, distributed, manipulated, passed along, controlled, traded

and sold (Ikoja-Odongo 2006, 147); it is also as a resource (Toit, 2000, 86). The effective utilization of (ICT's) has undeniably changed the way people interact. This have resulted in the creation of new knowledge, products, jobs and services and infopreneurship is one of the new fields that have innovated mainstream information practice. Infopreneurship has the potential to limit the unemployment rate of graduates, enhance per-capita income and advance economic growth. The below are some examples of the usage of an infopreneur in various fields:

Infopreneur in Education:

Infopreneurship has opened a wide space for education to expand. Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM, 2019) has offered relevant courses to support information management (IM) which would eventually lead to Infopreneurship. The creation of these products, mean that this field is unique and supported by demand from the market. Therefore the education of infopreneurs is important in shaping a competitive information business and guaranteeing career opportunities for graduates in information science (Coulson-Thomas, 2001; Çetinkaya et al, 2018).

Infopreneur in Business:

In today's economy, most businesses utilise an internet-based information business to promote themselves. Businesses such as tuition centres, nurseries, telecommunications providers, system developers, software developers, printer, advertisers and others (Yatin et. al, 2018) are using online marketing promotion through the distribution of their information online. Distribution may include: advising a client on matters within the expertise of the consultant; developing new skills and knowledge on behalf of a client; reviewing and evaluating technologies on behalf of a client; and performing specific professional tasks based on a consultant's specialist knowledge, and may be done through staff selection, education, and development (Ocholla, 1999).

Methodology

The focus of this research is on individuals, of all ages, who identify as infopreneurs. Purposive random sampling will be used in the survey. The respondents (200) are chosen, and the survey conducted, in 4 areas in Klang valley. The 4 areas from Klang valley were randomly selected by dividing the area into 4 zones: North, South, East and West; in each zone, an area was randomly chosen. There were four major races involved in this research, Malay, Chinese, Indian and others. The survey consists of 5 sections, and begins and ends with questions that provide demographic information about the respondent. The bulk of the survey asks a range of questions about four variables namely business websites, sales funnels,

business management and content creation. With each question, the respondent will choose from a choice of Likert scale answers. These answers have been developed to include all possibilities and with a concluding answer of “strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree”, “don’t know, not applicable, refused”. SPSS 10.0 has been used in analysis of the data.

Research Finding

The research shows the relationship between an Infopreneur, and the education of an audience on disseminating business information online. Infopreneurships involves the creation, marketing and sale of products (mostly digital) that share one's life experience or knowledge, for the purpose of creating profit and educating or influencing an audience. Infopreneurship is all about sharing and selling information to others.

Table 1: Infopreneur Profile Demographic

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age:		
• <20 Year	5	2.5
• 21-30 Year	61	30.5
• 31-40 Year	89	44.5
• 41 Year and above	45	22.5
Sex:		
• Male	100	50.0
• Female	100	50.0
Academic Qualification :		
• SPM or equivalent	31	15.5
• STPM or equivalent	24	12.0
• Diploma or equivalent	103	51.5
• Other qualification	42	21.0
Duration of Service :		
• 1 - 2 Years	63	31.5
• 3 - 5 Years	36	18.0
• 6 - 10 Years	50	25.0
• > 10 Years	51	25.5
Ethnics Group :		
• Malay	90	69.0
• Chinese	54	27.0
• Indian	40	20.0
• Others	16	8.0

Table 1 above shows that 89 (44.5%) of the respondent are aged between 31 – 40 years, 61 (30.5%) are between the age of 21 – 30 years, 45 (22.5%) are aged above 40 years, and 5 (2.5%) are below 20 years of age.

The duration of services means the number of years that the infopreneur has been involved in online services which relate to information selling. 63 respondents (31.5%) have had their business for 1 – 2 years, 51 (25.5%) for more than 10 years, 50 (25%) for 6 – 10 years and 36 (18%) for 3 – 5 years.

90 (69%) are Malays, 54 (27%) Chinese, 40 (20%) are Indians and 16 (8%) came from other races.

Tools in Educating an Audience on Infopreneurship

There are four variables to be considered as a tool in educating the audience when it comes to giving or disseminating business information online. They are: business websites, sales funnels, business management and content creation. These variables are significant in terms of publicising business information.

Table 2: The Importance of Variables and Relationship in Educating an Audience on Infopreneurship

Variables	Importance	Relationship in Educating Audience (sig)
Website	4.5	0.423 (0.000)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Domain Registration ✓ Web Hosting ✓ Graphic Design 		
Sales Funnels	4.0	0.676 (0.000)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Landing Pages, Sales Funnels, CRM, Course Hosting ✓ Email Marketing ✓ Credit Card Processing 		
Business Management	4.7	0.623 (0.000)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ File Storage / Management ✓ App Linking / Automation ✓ Scheduling ✓ Client Communication ✓ Secure Password Sharing 		

Content Creation	5.0	0.891 (0.000)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Video Recording / Streaming ✓ Audio Recording ✓ Video Editing ✓ Video Meetings Online ✓ Video Hosting ✓ Video Transcription 		

Table 2 shows the importance of the variables as tools in promoting business information to customers (online audience). The respondents strongly agreed (4.5 Likert scales) that websites which encompass domain registration, web hosting and graphic design are important in disseminating business information.

The respondents agreed (4.0 Likert scales) that sales funnels or channels through landing pages, sales funnels, CRM, course hosting, email marketing and credit card processing are important to infopreneurs.

The respondents strongly agreed (4.7 Likert scales) that business management, being: file storage / management, app linking / automation, scheduling, client communication and secure password sharing, is the second most important variable in distributing business information online.

The respondents strongly agreed (5.0 Likert scales) that content creation, being: video recording / streaming, audio recording, video editing, video meetings online, video hosting and video transcription, is the most important variable in educating an audience on online business information.

Table 2 shows the relationship between the variables considered in educating audience and infopreneurship. The Website; which consists of domain registration, web hosting and graphic design has a moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.423$, sig-value = 0.000) in disseminating business information online.

Sales funnels or channels through landing pages, sales funnels, CRM, course hosting, email marketing and credit card processing has a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.676$, sig-value = 0.000) with infopreneurship.

Business Management, being file storage / management, app linking / automation, scheduling, client communication and secure password sharing, has a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.623$, sig-value = 0.000) in distributing business information online.



Content Creation; which consists of video recording / streaming, audio recording, video editing, video meetings online, video hosting and video transcription, has a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.891$, sig-value = 0.000) in educating an audience on online business information.

Future Recommendation

Since the study assessed the variables and their importance on the readiness of infopreneur usage in Klang valley, we would like to expand this research to other selected states in the Peninsular Malaysia. Future research should expand the number of respondents (up to 400) and the survey will be conducted in 4 states from Peninsular Malaysia and both states in East Malaysia. The 4 states from Peninsular Malaysia should be randomly selected by dividing the Peninsula into 4 zones: North, South, East and West. In each zone, a state will be randomly chosen and there will be five major races involved in this research which are Malay, Chinese, Indian, Iban and Kadazan. Such a study will contribute to the outcomes on the readiness of infopreneurs usage in Malaysia.



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