

EFFECTS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL QUALITY TOWARDS NEW VENTURE CREATION: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF SUCCESSFUL NEW VENTURES IN E- COMMERCE IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: Over the past three decades, research on entrepreneurship has garnered significant attention, primarily focusing on new venture creation and the processes underpinning quality entrepreneurial growth. However, studies have largely overlooked e-commerce ventures as a critical aspect of the psychology of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs, as central figures in this domain, play a pivotal role in establishing new ventures, driven by specific personality traits, cognition, and motivation. This study aims to explore the impact of these factors on the creation of e-commerce ventures in Malaysia.

Methodology: This qualitative study employed a multiple case study approach, with data collected through interviews conducted with 12 e-commerce entrepreneurs between May 2013 and December 2014.

Findings: The findings revealed that seven key personality traits—creativity, risk-taking, inspiration, autonomy, tolerance for ambiguity, diligence and persistence, and optimism—significantly influence the creation of e-commerce ventures. Cognitive factors, including personal background and experiences, alongside both internal and external motivational drivers, were also instrumental in fostering entrepreneurial ventures and business development. Internal motivation stemmed from the need for achievement and personal interest, while external motivation was bolstered through interactions and networking with family members, customers, and industry players.

Contributions: This study highlights the importance of recognizing personality traits, cognitive factors, and motivational drivers in promoting entrepreneurial activities in Malaysia. It is recommended that the Malaysian government foster entrepreneurship by identifying and supporting individuals with these qualities to enhance the creation of new ventures, thereby contributing to the country's economic growth. Future research should consider quantitative methods to examine the relationships between these variables and new venture creation in e-commerce.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, new ventures creation, E-commerce, psychology, sociology.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is vital to the financial development of a country (Carree & Thurik, 2005; Wennekers & Thurik, 1999), as the extent of entrepreneurship can influence the stock exchange and the economic system (Davidsson, 2008). Davidsson (2005) has compiled several definitions of entrepreneurship, where most academicians relate entrepreneurship to creation. New enterprises (Low & MacMillan, 1988) and organizations (Gartner, 1988) are created through entrepreneurship. As these enterprises or organizations grow, more entrepreneurial activities for products and services (Shane, 2003) would be developed, too, generating more wealth (Drucker, 1985; Morris, 1998). Entrepreneurship can also create something unique and valuable (Hisrich & Peter, 1989), which can influence the economic growth of a country. One of the many ventures for

entrepreneurship in this digital age that has influenced the economic growth in Malaysia is e-commerce.

E-commerce and other related businesses based on information and communications technology (ICT) have not only gained popularity in recent years but have continued to progress further due to the advancement of ICT. Dheeriya (2009) describes e-commerce as any business venture conducted solely through the Internet or the World Wide Web. Unlike traditional businesses, e-commerce uses the Internet and technology-based computer systems to trade. E-commerce has notably become one of the critical sectors for sales expansion (Dheeriya, 2009). From 2010 until 2011 alone, the e-commerce trade in Malaysia had counted for almost two billion dollars, with an increase to three billion dollars in 2012. The lucrative amount garnered has proven that e-commerce business and opportunities for entrepreneurs to venture into this area of business are increasing, although there is limited information on the number of e-commerce entities that have traded in Malaysia throughout those three years.

The expansion of e-commerce is similar to the concept in entrepreneurship by Lumpkin and Dess (1996), who associated entrepreneurship as a new entry, which involves a complex and interactional process of various components that address the question by Gartner (1988) on "How does an organization come into existence?" The psychology of entrepreneurs has been regarded as an essential element of new venture creations based on past studies on entrepreneurship. A study by Shane (2003) examined the relationship between individual differences and decision-making in entrepreneurs and found that personal attributes such as personality traits, cognition and motivation affected the discovery and exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities.

Studies on existing theories of the economy from sociological perspectives have also highlighted psychological elements, particularly personality traits, cognition, and motivation on the development of entrepreneurship. An entrepreneur should have personality traits that are critical in successfully managing a business to create new business ventures. These personality traits include creativity, risk-taking, inspiration, autonomy and freedom, tolerance for ambiguity, diligence and persistence, and optimism, as listed by Md Fadzil et al. (2018). According to Cromie (2000), there is the "psychological principle" that influences an entrepreneur to establish his own business, which is the commitment to achievement that leads to autonomy, risk-taking, creativity, tolerance towards ambiguity and a sense of control and freedom in their actions. Meanwhile, a recent study by Amber Waqar and Md Fadzil (2020a, 2020b) pointed out individual characteristics

such as the need for achievement, locus of control, age, risk-taking propensity, previous experience, and education as the main elements for new social venture creation and sustainability of entrepreneurial family. Thus, this present study aims to identify the roles of psychology in creating new e-commerce ventures in Malaysia by selecting twelve entrepreneurs as samples to be interviewed using semi-structured interviews.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

It is widely argued that cognitive capacity in individuals differs from one another due to discrepancies in personal background or life experiences. This background and experience, however, are critical influences on entrepreneurs' judgments and decisions when starting a new business venture. Most researchers, such as Baron (1998), believe that the cognitive abilities of reasoning and thinking about the 'when' and 'why' are essential in entrepreneurship, as entrepreneurs are regarded as individuals with different thought processes than others. There have been two fundamental questions that Baron (2004) has always sought to answer, which are 'why can some individuals recognise opportunities to create new organisation while others could not?' and 'why do some choose to become entrepreneurs?'. Personal background and experiences, which are related to cognitive elements, as argued by Md Fadzil, Yaacob, and Muhayiddin (2017) and Md Fadzil et al. (2020), can potentially shed light on answering those questions.

Motivation can also be another critical cognitive element in entrepreneurship since various studies in the past have argued that motivation can be a crucial aspect in entrepreneurs to exploit business opportunities extensively (Shane, Locke, & Christopher, 2003). A study by Segal, Borgia, and Schoenfeld (2005) also reveals that self-employed entrepreneurs usually have a high level of motivation as they are interested in getting extra income.

Many researchers are interested in exploring the motivation behind the decision made by an entrepreneur to start a new business (Townsend, Busenitz, & Arthurs, 2010). Within e-commerce, as an emergence of new venture creation, the type of business may influence entrepreneurship (Gartner, 1985) as the engine for a country to compete with the global economy (Baron & Shane, 2008; Gartner & Bellamy, 2009). Nonetheless, a conceptual framework for the development and establishment of e-commerce entrepreneurship is still being debated by researchers because of the differences in e-commerce compared to the traditional form of entrepreneurship (Dheeriyaa, 2009). Studies on entrepreneurship, particularly regarding new

venture creation in e-commerce, remain the least investigated. There is, therefore, a gap that needs to be addressed in examining how entrepreneurial psychology can influence and create new ventures in e-commerce, primarily through creating new businesses, jobs and innovations.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study was qualitative research, employing a grounded-study method to gather data. The sample comprised 12 entrepreneurs who were involved as participants in semi-structured interviews. These respondents share several common aspects, all highlighted by the Communication Commission (MCMC) 2013 due to their success in e-commerce. Their business was categorised as small and micro enterprises (MSE) with less than 30 employees or less than RM30 million a year for total business sales. They had been actively managing their ongoing business full-time for one to six years, including the duration to start their business. However, the demographic information of these samples varied based on their gender, location, historical background of the e-commerce business, and the business sector. The interviews were audio-recorded before being transcribed verbatim to be reviewed and analysed through open and axial coding. These approaches in coding were based on the concept that *“coding comes from reflection on interpretation and meaning”*. Tentative categories or themes that emerged from the analysis were used to achieve the purpose of this study (Merriam, 2009).

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), for grounded theory, this study underwent three coding phases in developing the themes. The first coding process in the early stages of data analysis was open coding, where tentative ideas were discovered inductively through category construction (Merriam, 2009). Interview transcripts were continuously examined, line by line. The codes were collected within a category known as axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), where several codes that emerged from open coding shared similar meanings to construct a particular theme. Once the themes were built, data from these categories were analysed using the comparative analysis method. Finally, selective coding was done to selectively explore the main categories encompassing several axial codings. The construction of the main categories resulted in the development of themes for this study.

4.0 FINDINGS

The findings revealed seven themes under the entrepreneurial personality of the theoretical process

towards entrepreneurship. The emerging themes that supported entrepreneurial personality were described.

a. Creativity

The first theme was about creativity: how entrepreneurs generated ideas and implemented these ideas to achieve business goals. Entrepreneurs gave two definitions to help them understand creativity in e-commerce. P1 referred to creativity as a way of thinking that precedes others in the business. Entrepreneurs were constantly required to be creative in their thoughts and actions and be ahead of others. In business, entrepreneurs need to be creative in coming up with better ideas without having to follow the same strategies that are similar to others. Therefore, they needed to think of a business strategy with some differences to provide competitiveness compared to regular entrepreneurs. As mentioned by P1, the difference in strategy was to sell a product in ways other entrepreneurs in the industry had not explored through e-commerce. Meanwhile, P5 defined creativity as the ability of entrepreneurs to change existing concepts to something better. This change can be done through creativity in advertising, such as strategically placing attractive product pictures to convince customers to buy through the business platforms offered. The following excerpts were taken from P1 and P5.

The creativity is the idea that no one has created (P1)

That's creative; we changed something in other business concepts... (P5)

The first aspect of creativity was effective in product marketing through multiple e-commerce business platforms. Some entrepreneurs generated creative ideas by focusing on marketing strategies to introduce products to customers. Other aspects of creativity in the e-commerce business highlighted by entrepreneurs included the placement of photographs, the use of digital icons, attractive sentences, and attractive price packages offered through online advertising platforms. Effective marketing through good advertising strategy helped entrepreneurs to attract customers' attention to online business platforms, which, in turn, generated high sales quantities. The following excerpts were taken from P1 and P5.

The first creative way is the way marketing is. The way how to market the goods to customers; how to do, why we have to do it, and for whom that we do it... (P1)

Creativity is to create a word, creativity to write sentences, design creativity to be advertised. If the picture is too blur, that is not interesting. Our creativity is to make an interactive sentence that people like to read and creativity to play with the icons in Facebook and so on... (P5)

The second aspect of creativity was the attractive design of products that can be highly competitive in e-commerce. The product design process required entrepreneurs to have creative ideas to design and produce goods that customers would accept. The product design process was complex as entrepreneurs were required to think of ideas from various sources of information according to the customers' current needs. Entrepreneurs had to be prepared with contemporary designs to fulfil the customers' needs. The failure of the entrepreneurs to meet customer needs meant that they would face problems in keeping up with customer demands, which continuously changed according to current fashions or trends, as described by P9 and P2.

It means we need to lead, to create the right product compared to others. We lead when others don't think to come out with something new. In fashion, it's very fast-changing. Then it is easily imitated. So, I have to think a step forward before someone else starts doing something. So I need to always be one step ahead "(P9)

Yeah ... actually, as an entrepreneur, we are like a designer, we have to be creative. Creative means; we are trying to produce a variety of product designs. Although it seems simple, we as an entrepreneur need to generate the idea and sometimes to make it different. So creative entrepreneurs will lead the business to fulfill customer needs. They always do something to make it different from others. It's a creative person (P2)

b. Risk-taking

Risk-taking is the willingness of entrepreneurs to accept any possibility of business. E-commerce businesses were often exposed to many potential uncertainties that demanded a high incidence of risk. The willingness to accept the consequences of uncertainty can be observed through the desire

for entrepreneurs to bear the risks of e-commerce businesses.

The first risk that frequently occurred in the e-commerce business was found to be cyber-fraud, where the weakness of sellers and buyers was taken advantage of. The impact of cybercrime that involved trading transactions has affected entrepreneurs in the e-commerce business. Buyers lost their trust as cyber-scaling improvements affected the image of the e-commerce business industry. P1 and P10 acknowledged this fact based on the following excerpts.

Online business must have the risk ... Goods received by customers but money has not been received in the transaction. Unlucky if our money is lost in the account too (P1)

That's right ... online business has its own risk. When we deliver the goods to the customer, they cheat us. Claim the goods received were broken. So they want the money back. If there is no proof, that is the risk for us. Sometimes, products are delivered, but our customers are unsatisfied...so they return. It is our costs... (P10)

The second risk entrepreneurs were required to take was delivering goods to customers. Entrepreneurs of e-commerce businesses needed to pay postal services, which were a medium of transmission to customers but were often exposed to risks beyond the control of the entrepreneurs. The risk of liabilities often faced included loss, damage, and delay of the goods during the delivery process to customers, which usually had financial or non-financial impacts on the business. As P6 said,

Ok, sometimes things may happen in terms of delivery, the delivery of goods to customers. Sometimes we have good packaging; then, when it reaches the customers, maybe the box is broken. If it happens, we need to deal with the customer on how to create a win-win situation. The point is when something happens, please do not blame 100% on the customers. We try to negotiate with customers on how to solve the problem (replace the item), and each party gets the benefits (P6)

Another risk entrepreneurs faced was the difficulty in creating attractive product designs matching customers' needs. Failure to do so can lead to financial loss due to unsold products in the market.

Risk also occurs if the service provider closes the e-commerce business platform without notice due to policy violation or other related matters. Consequently, e-commerce entrepreneurs must accept that their entire business could be lost. E-commerce entrepreneurs also needed to promote products with minimal expectation of profit as promotional activities usually incurred higher costs that would eventually be a burden when generating sales. If the promotional investment did not significantly impact sales quantities, then there would be a risk of loss in the business. Most of the time, only high-risk entrepreneurs can engage in such high-risk contexts to sustain their business. The following excerpts from P12, P8, and P5 illustrate the situation mentioned.

Customers, it is hard to get our customer satisfaction. So, we know what our customers are interested in. That's hard. Until now, I still fail to understand what customer needs. Our product sometimes fails; sometimes, it is excellent. To find our customer's needs is hard. So, we need to learn a little bit about customers' needs. Which one they like and not like...
(P12)

First, Facebook is still not stable. So, we cannot only depend on Facebook, because anytime, Facebook will shut down. It was the most significant risk for online entrepreneurs who solely relied on online platforms. If they rely on Facebook or others, social media popularity dropped sharply ... "(P8)

Ok, we need to dare to take the risk in business, especially in online marketing. Online, we can't wait for our buyers to purchase. The roles of marketing are crucial. But we need to spend a lot on marketing, especially on social media. I paid Facebook close to a thousand dollars. We are not sure whether customers are interested to buy or not. But I am brave ...
(P5)

c. Inspiration

The next personality theme found in this study was the inspiration behind the ambitions to explore the potential of e-commerce entrepreneurs. This study found a majority of the entrepreneurs interviewed had a high level of motivation to achieve their goals of pursuing business growth in Malaysia. This fact was acknowledged by P1, who was very interested in exploring the potential

of e-commerce in Malaysia: *This is a new thing; broadband ... the internet is everything... I am so curious about something new... I want to explore all these things (P1)*

Inspired entrepreneurs were the ones who were always looking forward to developing business success. The inspiration of several entrepreneurs was highlighted through the future goals they had set to achieve, such as sales penetration into the international market, brand enhancement, expansion in operations, and market leadership. The inspiration had given them the platform to move forward to achieve business success. Without motivation to accomplish a goal supported by a clear mission and vision, an entrepreneurial business could not thrive. The following excerpts from P2, P10, and P8 illustrated the context mentioned.

I want to see my brand is active with other popular brands in the world... To be a big name. The main goal is to make sure my beauty product to hit the target... I want to sell the product into 1 million in sales soon... That's my plan ... (P10)

In terms of competition... There are so many competitors outside. But we want to win the competition... We want to be first. This means we want to be the market leader in the industry, especially in online business. So, do it ... (P2)

... My goal is to bring our brand to the international stage. It means we don't want to only sell on Facebook but in the megamall boutique. We want to open a boutique in New York and Dubai. So, I have a vision, a goal. So when we have a clear goal, we will not easily give up... (P8)

d. The Need for Autonomy and Freedom

Another theme found in personality was the need for autonomy and freedom, referred to as the desire for an individual to seek freedom, especially in aspects related to career choice. The personalities of entrepreneurs when deciding to start new ventures were found to be unique compared to other individuals as they seek the freedom that was not possible in other careers. Entrepreneurs appreciate personal freedom without restrictions in terms of generating income. This fact was illustrated by several interviewees who indicated that they were not interested in working with others because they did not like to follow certain instructions that may limit

creativity, freedom, and certain actions while working, as proven from the following excerpts by P12 and P7.

I had experienced working with others...I worked under someone for six months. From there, I learned how hard it was to work with someone... I realised I couldn't work under someone else. Whatever the boss says, I need to follow his instructions without my consent... It was hard to accept all of it. I cannot work under anyone, and I will try to do my business without always depending on someone else (P12)

...I am from an accountant background. I just realized that I'm not interested in working with someone. I don't like to follow people's time. I always prefer someone to follow my time. That's my attitude. So I think that it is not suitable for me to find a job from others. So, starting a business is a good deal. In the beginning, I don't know what types of business to start, but when I realized the potential of e-commerce, I learned more. We read a lot; we learned from experienced people. I met them... (P7)

E-commerce has become an excellent platform for entrepreneurs who appreciate the freedom to organize their work according to their flexibility, without interruption or based on directives from others. The entrepreneurs planned all jobs required in the e-commerce business based on success rate and projected achievement. This fact was acknowledged by P2.

The freedom in the online business is much broader than in the regular business. It means that we are more flexible in terms of the time we have to work. In terms of online business, we are trading, so more freedom. Meaning our store is open 24 hours. We want to update our blog anytime, anywhere, out of place, out of date. Which means we don't have to wait for someone else... So it's free. We can do it at night, out of office hours. We can connect with customers every day... They can leave messages, so on ... So it's exciting. Something that means we can handle it well. So it does give you more autonomy than a regular business (P2)

e. Tolerance for ambiguity

The fifth theme in personality was tolerance for ambiguity, where entrepreneurs were willing to deal with uncertainties after choosing a business career. Some interviewed entrepreneurs had a high degree of tolerance for ambiguity, as they were willing to take on the challenges in the e-commerce business, which were often exposed to various possibilities of risks compared to other careers. These were mentioned by P12 and P6, who started an e-commerce business without having a solid background and knowledge to face these potential risks. However, after getting involved in the e-commerce business, their confidence and courage increased as customer reviews were always positive.

I didn't expect that Cala qisya could grow like this. I was not sure on what to do at the beginning of my business. Because I don't have a background in business... But when I do, I enjoy it. People are coming in for a positive response. From there, I feel a little more brave. So this is my kind of stuff I don't like to say. It's hard for me to work under anyone. So I think this is a good career for me. I try to fulfill the customer's expectations and the challenges; it never stops coming (P12)

I start into this business without ... basic information. I tried as much I could. If we don't try, we don't know what happens. In the beginning, I don't expect something, but once I realize customer feedback is positive, So it makes me happy, and then for it to be my main income (P6)

Entrepreneurs were supposed to be more resilient in facing every possible situation in the e-commerce business than those who chose a more secure job of working with others. Many aspects of entrepreneurship needed deliberation, such as incomes, future jobs, and ways to minimize losses. P2 had previously worked in a factory, which had promising good salaries and promotions but had decided to take on the challenge of being involved in a business that may not guarantee a good income in the future. In the beginning, P2 had repeatedly encountered episodes of failure in the business. However, he persevered and continued pursuing a business career, leading to his success.

Well ... we have to try different fields of business ... I don't want to say my first business was going to be successful...we don't always succeed ... In business, sometimes we tried 2-3 times to succeed. There is no success without failure...So don't be afraid to fail in business ... (P2)

A similar dilemma was faced by P3, a local university graduate who had chosen to start his own business, despite earning a good income by working in the private sector. Entrepreneurs believed they should accept that income was uncertain, a context that required them to face the uncertainties. P3 was quoted saying:

When we are involved in the business, we need to be patient. Because I know when I started a business, I know my income is not high. Second, everyone says I dare to take action. ... With my degree certificate, I can earn more than RM2000 at that time ... But I decided to do this (business) ... with no expectation to receive high income ... (P3)

Uncertainty in business was not a reason for entrepreneurs to begin their own businesses and engage in unsafe zones. This fact was based on interviews with entrepreneurs who encountered various challenges despite having safer options. Some even decided to ignore all possible circumstances to pursue their interests, aspirations, and successes. Without a high degree of tolerance for the ambiguity of accepting uncertainties, it would be impossible for them to decide on being entrepreneurs, a career with varied challenges in many aspects.

f. Optimism

The sixth theme of personality was optimism, which was the level of confidence of an entrepreneur towards an expected outcome. Entrepreneurs were found to be confident in their expectations of future outcomes despite dealing with uncertainties in business. High confidence can be developed through positive thinking and wanting to achieve a goal despite having challenges in the industry. Positive thinking among entrepreneurs has given rise to high confidence to succeed by rejecting all negative possibilities.

Some entrepreneurs interviewed were identified to have a positive attitude when faced with uncertainties to achieve business success. Having positive thoughts gave them the confidence to

progress compared to other people. P1 attributed his success to believing in oneself to continue and compete in the current business world: *We need positive thoughts, nothing is impossible... We can do it! (P1).*

Entrepreneurs with a positive attitude would be more optimistic about trying something new in the business without considering many uncertainties to achieve a specific goal. Entrepreneurs with positive thinking would also be more determined despite having limitations. This fact was acknowledged by P6, who was brave enough to venture into e-commerce despite the uncertainty over its future success: *I want to say that if we want to do something, don't overthink it. Just do it. Start from beginning with what what we have... (P6).* Therefore, an optimistic entrepreneur should have a positive attitude and be brave to make decisions based on the expected profitability regardless of the possible uncertainties. P9 could prove this by having the optimism to run a business based on the expected profitability return rather than focusing on the uncertainties that had yet to happen.

I am a determined person. I do it when I decide on something ... I do whatever, whether it is risky or not. If I decide to make something, there will be no compromise, I will do it right away until I succeed... Just like that (P9)

Optimistic entrepreneurs were also identified as having high stubbornness that influence their decision-making to achieve goals despite taking on various obstacles. Having a high degree of determination led P12 to start a business and face all the possibilities: *I'm kind of stubborn. When we are stubborn, we don't care about obstacles. We will try to overcome those obstacles too (P12)* Having the same attitude as P12, P11 was determined to run a business despite family objections at the initial stages of setting up the business. The stubbornness made P11 more optimistic about the decisions made for future success.

As I said before, I am stubborn. I don't listen to other. I mean, my dad and mom. When I first started the business, everyone disagreed with me to take it seriously. My parent disagreed with my decision... (P11)

g. Diligence and Persistence

The last theme of the personality in entrepreneurs is diligence and persistence in dealing with uncertainties. Hard work and persistence were key characteristics that gave entrepreneurs the determination to achieve goals during the start-up process. Without the elements of diligence and persistence, entrepreneurs may not be able to manage the uncertainties, which in turn requires the willingness of these entrepreneurs to face all challenges, especially those related to marketing. The marketing sector requires a high degree of effort to ensure that products are being sold in the market. P9 acknowledged this fact and believed in being hard-working despite facing difficulties, especially in efforts in marketing: *I was the kind of hard-working person. Someone who is stubborn to take the risk in business. I will face all challenges especially in marketing (P9)*

It was a different situation for P2, who focused on producing quality products due to criticism from a customer at the early stages of the business. P2 was hard-working, working until late at night to fulfil the customer's needs. He was driven to improve the quality of products and ensure the products were enhanced and delivered on time to customers. Prompt production of products was essential to avoid inconveniences among all parties: *Well ... Once I do something, I continuously work hard. Regardless of a specific time. I will do my work until the end (P2)*

In addition to hard work, entrepreneurs had a high degree of persistence in dealing with all kinds of expectations, especially in the early stages of business. At the beginning of a business, entrepreneurs must be more persistent in managing everything related to marketing, product development, or customer relationships. Developing a new venture was complicated and required entrepreneurs not to give up on securing success. According to P7, one should not easily give up and should make a consistent effort: *We, as an entrepreneur, cannot give up. Some people say we need persistence. So, we need effort on how to make sure our business grows (P7)*

E-commerce business was not as accessible to generate significant profits for entrepreneurs as expected. The challenges in e-commerce require entrepreneurs to always be persistent, passionate, and patient when managing the business. According to P11, many of those involved in the business had experienced failure due to a lack of patience after facing challenges that required high commitment.

For online entrepreneurs, first of all, we need to be patient. Then, not to easily give up and higher motivation. Some peoples said it is easy to generate profit in online. But no ... it's challenging... (P11)

The interviews have found the motivation to be the essential support that prompted the new ventures for e-commerce in Malaysia. Further investigation showed that these motivations further influenced the behaviour of entrepreneurs. Results from this study revealed two factors that increased the motivation among entrepreneurs, which were based on internal and external stimuli. In this study, internal stimuli identified as personal interests and desires to succeed were innately formed within the entrepreneurs that influenced their behaviour to achieve their goals. On the other hand, external stimulus is the external environment that affects the entrepreneurs' behaviour towards establishing entrepreneurship.

h. Need for achievement

Within the theme of motivation, the desire to succeed in future business was the first internal stimulus identified in this study. This internal motivation can be developed when entrepreneurs are eager and passionate to achieve success, driven by personal aspects such as social background and personal interests to generate high income from e-commerce businesses through e-commerce. The historical background of entrepreneurs has been instrumental in triggering the desire to be successful in the future. An individual who grew up in a low-income family and had been exposed to entrepreneurial engagements since childhood would want to continue their family business and expand it further through the various business opportunities they encountered. Interviews in this study revealed that some of the entrepreneurs had a history of family difficulties before venturing into entrepreneurship. P1, P2, P5, P7, P9, and P12 had a similar need to succeed in the future based on their family circumstances.

P1 came from a low-income family in a rural area of Kedah and had taken over his family business in 2006. As described by P1, he strongly desired to change his standard of living by selling products based on kapok pillows. Through the innate motivation and ambition to succeed, P1 diversified his business after venturing into e-commerce in 2011. His self-motivation further increased after experiencing the potential of kapok pillows in less competitive regions. P1 had definite goals focused on changing his current business model to e-commerce.

first try looking at these areas... the way people do business ... will it go forward? Selling a pillow with a traditional platform? That motivated me to change the current business approach to e-commerce(P1)

This innate desire to succeed in e-commerce was similar to P9, who was also from a low-income family. Previous experiences had motivated P9 to become a successful entrepreneur, which was crucial in his approach to running his own business later. P9 rationalized that working with other people did not guarantee future success. He was determined to change his standards of living, and by learning from the failures of others, he became more interested in becoming an entrepreneur, especially when he could gain lucrative income. P9 was quoted saying:

Since I was a child, I was interested in doing business. My family comes from the poorest background. So I was determined since I was a child to be rich through my own business... I don't want to work with someone else because I know it won't change anything. When I retire, I don't want just to have a proton car. I don't want to be insulted, but I have seen it since I was a child. If you want to be rich, do business... I remember the richest person in my village... Doing a start-up petrol station business... (P9)

P9 aspired to become a successful entrepreneur, and as e-commerce businesses flourished since 2008, he became successful within this sector, further promising good opportunities. The following excerpt by P9 illustrates this context.

At that time in 2008 ... The trend was using a blog shop as a business platform. So, I took that opportunity. I know online business is a good business. So, I made it. It's not about online marketing, but it's about good business. I do that. It looks to the new future. (P9)

On the other hand, P2 was highly motivated by her family, who always encouraged her to be an entrepreneur. Having no interest in working with others, P2 realised that there was family pride linked to a career as an entrepreneur instead of working for others, which may not guarantee a change in living standards. Successful entrepreneurship can garner high revenues and improve the standards of life, which may be different from working for others.

It's a matter of family motivation, my dad, even though my father is a farmer, but he has a spirit of enthusiasm for our siblings. It's no use to work with people, which is our family pride... Greater. Half of the family say working with the government is better than doing business, with business, one is not certain... But for us, government work is just temporary. I have four male siblings; all four of us resigned as government servants (P2)

The social background of P10, P12 and P5 also motivated them to change their lives for their future. They realised that their family background had influenced their motivation, personal efforts and interests in starting a business. These personal desires to change the fate of their lives became their priority, as described by P12.

I was raised in a low-income family. It means nothing special with my family, the same as others. My father was a lower-class worker. So I tried changing my life. I want to feel how happy, rich people feel. From there, I become passionate about doing business. From there, I tried my best to grow my business (P12)

Besides the motivation driven by family and social background, certain motives that influenced the desire to succeed in life could be achieved through e-commerce business. As previously discussed, entrepreneurs have high ambitions to succeed, especially financially, in their businesses, influencing them to set goals and aspirations. In this study, entrepreneurs had goals and targets for their businesses to be achieved in the future, as explained by P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10 and P11. Two passages from the interviews with P11 and P8 were quoted below to provide the context of this argument.

The main aim that P11 aspires to become is to be a leader in a product brand. Hence, e-commerce platforms allowed him to achieve his objective by increasing the awareness of Malaysian consumers towards his business brand and products.

The thing that motivates me to become number one, I mean, is like my brand, is to be number one amongst the tops, that makes me want to plan. That's why I want to be a top brand and I'm famous for it. (P11)

In addition to achieving success in the e-commerce business, P8 aspired to penetrate the international market by expanding its business network to Dubai, New York, and London. This desire pushed P8 to work harder to achieve the goals despite facing family objections.

The most motivating thing for me is the goal that can be achieved.... I want to go international, and I want to open a network up in Dubai, New York, and London. So it's a mission ... So I do not stop until I succeed. (P8)

Through these interviews, this study also identified self-determination in entrepreneurs as the essence of achieving business targets or goals. Entrepreneurs would not be able to succeed in business if they did not have the determination within themselves to achieve their goals. Most entrepreneurs need to be aware of business potential, which depends on the knowledge and information received from their surroundings. P10 aspired to become a successful entrepreneur through an e-commerce business and was determined to learn from role models and readings.

I see that success ... because I'm getting the information from the book. I realize the potential to generate a lot of money, being able to enjoy doing business, I read not just one book, but many books. All the business book stories. Who are the rich people we see in the world? Most millionaires in the world or Malaysia, all of are businessmen ... (P10)

P3 shared similar opinions by pointing out the potential of e-commerce businesses and the success rates through stories revealed on the Internet on business start-ups by international entrepreneurs. All these stories shared standard business start-up processes, such as having operated only at home with low cost during the initial stages of a start-up before expanding and achieving a reputation in their business area. Nonetheless, there were several key elements unique to this study's context: computer skills and marketing techniques and strategies.

Because I was searching the internet, I read and researched in the US and the UK about what they did in business and went through the same process. Starting a business at home, no need for much money, free ... But they used the internet for marketing... "(P3)

Entrepreneurs were able to generate money because of the indefinite potential of e-commerce. Entrepreneurs brave enough to change the setbacks and limitations of their external contexts to become the advantages and possibilities for e-commerce businesses would be successful in generating income. P10 was highly committed to living in the city but was encouraged to start an e-commerce business due to the potential and available demand in the city. He was able to generate income quickly and, since then, has been ready to be financially independent and bear the cost of living in the city.

It can give a better income. Living in the city is very expensive, and we might fail to deal with the commitments of surviving here. So how? How can we ensure we have monthly income to pay our commitments? So I see that e-commerce has the potential, and that motivated me to do so. I'm interested in online business; I see the potential of being very easy with the knowledge ... make money via online business(P10)

Good income would usually be generated through an unlimited supply of products sold to targeted locations, and wider marketing audiences of the products. For entrepreneurs with a broader market for their products, product sales would indirectly increase due to the more significant number of customers. P7 and P4 acknowledged this fact through the unlimited volume of e-commerce business sales from the high rates of online marketing penetration compared to sales from regular businesses. The excerpt was quoted from P7.

Online marketing is unlimited. If you sell a burger a day for at least 100 pieces, tomorrow 150 pieces, after that 120 pieces ... this is an average quantity...but if you sell online, the income is unlimited ... It's fun doing online business... we have no average, unlimited quantity of selling (P7)

Therefore, many entrepreneurs aim to market their products locally and internationally to generate high sales, resulting in higher profits and income. Entrepreneurs should first emphasise their marketing strategy of introducing the products to customers to gain confidence and brand loyalty. This step was taken by P1 and P5 to establish an e-commerce business that placed great importance to product introduction that would help market expansion. P1 was quoted in the following two

passages.

As I said before, start from marketing ... emphasize on marketing. So we introduce our goods, customers are out there (P1)

To succeed, we need to sell our goods. So if we do not sell our products, how can we get profit? The way of marketing... which is the way of our product is marketed (online) ... (P1)

The next step for business success was to have sales penetrate the larger market, leading to more sales quantities. Marketing trends in e-commerce allow such situations due to the international-related online platforms. Entrepreneurs must be able to pursue the opportunities naturally created by these international platforms to expand and maintain business growth. Thus, e-commerce marketing techniques complement conventional marketing strategies by introducing and attracting customers to buy products online to reach a global audience. The following quote was taken from P2.

It's about business success; we need to go through an online platform. This online business is one of the latest marketing techniques nowadays, so if you want to be successful today, online business is easier to succeed. It's easy for us to sell our products if we have an online business ... (P2)

Entrepreneurial success was often related to sales numbers. Entrepreneurs need to not only focus on the existing marketing strategies that include product introduction to customers but also constantly improve their marketing models to generate more sales and avenues for products to be sold. Within e-commerce, entrepreneurs should explore new market opportunities to generate more profit due to the stability and availability of customer demand. P1 was confident of growing the business and expanding the product to the global market through e-commerce. As quoted from P1:

So if we want to expand our market. We can't only depend on the existing market. We need to improve ourselves by having a good marketing plan. Emphasize on marketing first. So, that is why marketing is important to entrepreneurs (P1)

If you do not do online business, the product market spread is lesser. So we need to introduce our product. It's essential to be marketed. So the current situation in this era needs everyone to use online, it is a good move (P1)

P12 also saw the opportunity of marketing products through e-commerce business to generate more revenues in Malaysia. The e-commerce business provides a platform where any products can be easily marketed to customers anywhere in Malaysia. The e-commerce business allowed customers to buy the products even if they were far from business locations. This situation reaffirmed the importance of the Internet, which had helped forge a closer relationship between entrepreneurs and customers than conventional businesses. As acknowledged by P12:

As I said, we want to market our brand, our products; we use online. It means if we are not using online, how do we get buyers from all over Malaysia? From there, we can see online is very important. In terms of helping our business, it means we use it online as well. We know online; we understand how buyers use online to buy our goods. We can generate more revenue (P12)

i. Interest

Besides the need to succeed, personal interest in business was also identified as an internal stimulus in an entrepreneur that greatly influenced e-commerce ventures in Malaysia within this study. The difference between interest and the need for achievement was based on the entrepreneurs' motives. For some, the interest could be caused by the tendency or desire to fulfil individual needs without particular purposes. For others, the interest can be caused by the need for achievement due to individual motives such as changing lifestyle and the desire to become rich, which can affect individual behaviour.

Findings from this study found that seven out of the twelve interviewed entrepreneurs linked their interests as motivational aspects that had contributed to the creation of new e-commerce ventures in Malaysia. The entrepreneurs were interested in two aspects of e-commerce: business and information technology. Both types of interest were key combinations in creating new e-commerce ventures, which entailed entrepreneurs favouring having business within the parameters of information technology.

Interest in business is essential to motivate a person to become an entrepreneur and create a new business. Interest, though without having a clear motive, had encouraged individual behaviour of trying out new ideas based on their intentions and intuitions. Interests were often associated with historical backgrounds, where past experiences encouraged entrepreneurs to think and behave in a certain way. This is evident in the interview with P1, who explained that interest resulted from self-disclosure to businesses acquired since helping small-scale family businesses. P3, on the other hand, had a very special interest in business since a child, and with a hard-working attitude, it was an advantage to start up new ventures in the e-commerce business. The following excerpts were taken from P1 and P3.

Business knowledge is original because of an interest ... When you are interested in business, it comes too ... Because when I was born, my mom was already involved in a small business ... she was selling a variety of goodies such as cakes (P1)

I like doing business since I was a child. I always think about business matters. I'm a workaholic. I work as hard as I could ... So if I am doing business, the more money I can get ... So, I do business (P3)

A slightly different situation happened with P11, who began to identify his interest in the business after studying tourism as well as marketing for his degree. Knowledge learnt in marketing raised my interest in P11 to manage the business, and I exploited this interest after graduation.

So, Alhamdulillah, that tourism courses have a lot of marketing study... After that, I know what I'm interested in ... after my graduation. I know my interests in doing business. (P11)

Interest had widened additional opportunities for P11 and P8 to work tirelessly in managing their businesses until they succeeded. Without having this keen interest, it would be impossible for them to become entrepreneurs and manage a challenging business. Business interests had also taught them to be consistent and perseverant even when they faced immense losses. As explained by P11 and P8 in the following excerpts:

I have an interest in the business, but I do not know. Because at the beginning I don't think I am serious when doing business... When I give up, I will stop doing business ... But everything changed when I was involved with hijab stuff... I never want to stop doing business. (P11)

Both... passion ... deep interest. But some people may not see them as necessary, but for me, passion and interest have caused me to become despair quickly. My losses were not RM50 or RM100 ... But hundreds of thousands. I stay on making t-shirts and not do anything else. (P8)

For P7, interest in e-commerce was because of the possibility of making more money. The experience of spending a lot of time on online gaming opened his mind to do other more beneficial activities, such as running an e-commerce business. His change in attitude triggered P7's interest in e-commerce and led to his success in business. An excerpt from P7 illustrated this context:

One, the main point is in deep interest. We are interested in doing online business because it can give good income... So, from there, I think we could get easy money from online business... Thus, the main point is to be interested in business (P7)

In addition to business interests, entrepreneurs were also known to have a high interest in information technology (IT), the basis of an e-commerce business. A person interested in information technology (IT) was more likely to be susceptible to e-commerce business, assuming that the relationship between them and their customers would be closely intertwined. Entrepreneurs least interested in information technology (IT) were not likely to carry out e-commerce business that demanded a full commitment to computer use.

Interest in IT.... If we are not interested in IT or computers, we can't do it online. Better to go offline ... conventional business. There are people like that (P9)

P10, keen on computers, acknowledged this interest in IT, which was converted into use when he began running an e-commerce business capable of generating huge revenue. Based on a quote from P10:

But I'm interested in computers; I'm interested in the internet... My father was angry with me because I forgot to eat and to do prayers. He disconnected the internet at home... I did not lose hope ... So I went to the cyber cafe, from morning to night (P10)

j. External stimulus

The third sub-theme was external motivation, which stimulated external motivation among entrepreneurs. Unlike internal motivation driven by the need for achievement and interest, external motivation was triggered by factors influencing decisions and actions. Findings from the interviews showed external factors influenced the motivation among entrepreneurs during their process of the creation of ventures. Without the support of external motivation, it was difficult for them to boost the business spirit. This fact was acknowledged by P12, where the response from customers on the products sold motivated him to continue doing business until he was successful. The continuous flow of customer support resulted in P12 developing a creative product designed to meet their expectations, which would also continuously support the new products offered. The presence of customers who exhibited a deep interest in the products sold was a sign of business support which motivated P12 to move forward without worrying about the market demand. As mentioned by P12:

The main reason is the strong support from my regular customers who are always demanding new products from Cala qisya. From there, I was motivated to continue my business(P12)

When we've created an attractive product, and we market it, we've got buyers, so our customers never stop purchasing. They need to know what is the new product line, and this makes them eager and they wait... From there, we can proceed with our business. We feed our customers with information on our new items as well as update them with the current trend (P12)

Having customer support for products was an additional external stimulus for entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs who saw a gap in the availability of resources to meet customer demands were motivated to expand their business to overcome the market gap. In the case of P2, he tried to expand traditional crafts that were almost extinct because of the lack of interest among today's younger generation to continue this business path. The gap in the market was to improve the traditional craft industry to align the expectations of the people with the future generation:

An example (of moral support) comes from customers who want us to continue this business because the current generation seems to be able to it ... Most are old businessmen, so customers had to wait a long time for parang making ... So we tried to solve the gap. We would try to fulfill customers' orders within 1-2 months... So we try to reach our target. Every order will be no more than two months ... Customer will then receive the items ordered (P2)

Most active entrepreneurs in the industries for traditional craft had either become unproductive or were currently less competitive in manufacturing products of good quality for the market. The challenging situation within the traditional craft industry was due to the monopolisation by intermediaries, who generally controlled the market price. As a result, the monopoly affected the lives of traditional craft entrepreneurs who faced difficulties such as orders arriving late for them to begin work. The oppression of these intermediaries towards traditional craft entrepreneurs motivated P2 to overcome this gap. By directly marketing the products using e-commerce, not only was there a solution to this problem that changed the business strategy, but the monopoly of these intermediaries was also eradicated. As quoted from P2:

Kelantan has a lot of artisans ... but all of them are poor... Why? The main reason is the role of middlemen... The middlemen mainly control the market price. Customers would contact the middlemen to order the products ... As an entrepreneur, I don't like what is happening, why the middlemen are playing too much in this industry (P2)

Motivation in entrepreneurship also depended on external motivation through interactions and support systems from close family members. Having supportive people around can influence the

entrepreneurs' motivational level, which would impact their business actions. Gestures such as personal help, advice, encouragement and information dissemination were reasons for entrepreneurs to be successful in their business. This fact was based on situations experienced by P4 and P10, who were supported by their family members when they needed to solve their business problems.

In terms of friends, surrounding people ... or my family, especially – they always push me to change in life and give me money to run the business start-up (P4)

But the wife is ... she always motivates me to succeed in business. So the motivation comes back. When it comes back, and I will be stronger to face any business challenges... (P10)

From fifteen interviews recorded, this study identified four among twelve entrepreneurs who believe their past education provided some basis to start a new business and venture into e-commerce. Previous knowledge gave them basic ideas and primary guidelines for creating new ventures and managing their business activities through proper strategies. According to P9, her studies at Malaysia Multimedia University (MMU) provided her with knowledge of multimedia graphics and digital media, which were essential skills for starting her business in e-commerce.

My previous study at Malaysia Multimedia University (MMU) helped me a lot in this business. I really... like the computer. It highly impacted me because, during my studies, I was like studying about graphics, multimedia, and digital media. So I can create graphics, take pictures, edit the pictures. I can do it. So during the early stages of a startup, that knowledge helps me. All about graphic skills. This is about online business. (P9)

P11 also believed that the marketing strategy and branding she had learnt previously helped create the format of her business approach. She could recall the skills and knowledge needed when beginning her new business.

My previous study can be used to create my business now. So I know a little-bit about marketing and branding. When I wanted to start-up my business, I can recall back the things I learned before. Oo... I learned about this before. I learned about target marketing, market reach. I learned about branding and word of mouth. Like that. So I can use it back for my business (P11)

A degree in hospitality from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UITM) gave her an advantage in starting a new business because she had basic knowledge of marketing strategy.

Yes. That is the influence: previous education. It may be an advantage to me. Maybe not all people learned about branding, right? So it is an advantage. How I am going to make the customer remember and know about our business (P11)

With a degree in digital computer art from Malaysia Multimedia University (MMU), P3 was also exposed to e-commerce, which was a compulsory subject at that university. She also claimed that almost all MMU students were involved in e-commerce business upon graduation because they were already exposed to the basic e-commerce knowledge.

I was exposed since I studied at the Malaysia Multimedia University. So if you realize, many students from Malaysia Multimedia University (MMU) started the business online. We were already exposed to doing business online since university. That is a good advantage as we studied at MMU (P3)

A different experience was gained by P2, who was not a degree holder but obtained a highly skilled certificate in technical design from the National Youth Skills Training Institute (IKBN). He learned a lot about product-based design using steel during his studies at the institution. The necessary skills learnt were also applied to the wood-based product, his current business focus. His expertise was in machete (parang) making, which has been sold via e-commerce since 2009. Initially, he tried to make machetes by learning from experts in the field, as he had no experience in this area. With basic skills as a steel-based designer, he made machetes exclusively with good-quality casting, surpassing his customers' expectations. He later gained the confidence to move his

business after five years of operation to e-commerce in 2009. Technological changes, especially based on the Internet, had encouraged him to pursue his dream and seized opportunities to establish a new firm in e-commerce to tap into the untapped market due to the burgeoning industry. Besides, being a former student from a religious school had also taught him the importance of doing business in the Islamic way to become successful.

Another cognitive factor related to personal background was the family history of being involved in the business, where the knowledge acquired due to the early exposure to the environment of entrepreneurship was strongly embedded throughout their lives. Nonetheless, this early exposure to business had either consciously or subconsciously initiated the creation of new business ventures, which was considered an advantage that was not easily gained by others. Seven out of twelve entrepreneurs interviewed believed their interest in entrepreneurship was much related to family history, a significant factor in starting a business.

According to P1, he had a sister and brother who were already involved in the business, while his mother was the founder of Kapok Pillow for more than 20 years in his hometown. Having a great mother as the founder and producer of the kapok pillow company in the village, his late grandfather, on the other hand, pioneered the rice processing plant business in Alor Star, Kedah. He took over the business of Kapok Pillows after his mother retired in 2006. In 2011, he began to venture into e-commerce when the Internet was accessible in his hometown, realising the potential of e-commerce and becoming interested in exploring more ways to expand the market.

...When we have our product to sell to the customer, the main focus is on how are we going to market the product? That influences my decision to do the business online (P1)

As for P12, he was motivated to participate in business because of his wife, whose family owned a business. P10, on the other hand, was always motivated to be a successful businessman even though his father had a humble business selling traditional cakes around the village. Hence, family background was identified in this study as an important factor for entrepreneurs because they would be familiar with business situations that became part and parcel of their lives.

According to P5, it was his destiny also to be a businessman, as almost all his family members owned businesses: *What I said earlier, I was born to be a businessman ... my blood flow ... as an entrepreneur, because most of my family members is a businessman (P5)*. He had hands-

on experience in business since childhood, as he always helped out in his mother's business during the school break. That experience had given him more confidence to build his own company: *It teaches me... to be brave, more confident with yourself (P5).*

P11 also helped her mother sell traditional biscuits, especially during the Hari Raya celebration. That situation gave her experiences since childhood, which resulted in her great interest in being an entrepreneur. During her studies at UITM, she polished her entrepreneurship capabilities, and unlike other students, she was also very active in business.

...That is true (family background). Yes. My mother is very active in making biscuits, especially during the Hari Raya celebration. She makes the biscuits from my village tradition. Not on Hari Raya celebration only but my mother also received a large quantity of demand and sold a thousand of pieces to be made as door gift and so on..." (P11)

Out of the twelve entrepreneurs interviewed, only three believe that they ventured into entrepreneurship due to failure to secure a job or work for others. P12 started his business because job opportunities in Malaysia were limited based on his qualifications.

One reason I started this business was because of employment opportunities in Malaysia is limited. I looked at the limited job because of what? When I graduated with master, I tried to find suitable jobs, it was very difficult... (P12)

P10 was also found to be unemployed for a few years before he began his business.

So when I finished my study, I was unemployed. I tried all kinds of jobs. I worked as a canteen school assistant and helped my father at night market. I also work as a salesman, walking from home to home to sell the product... (P10)

Previous work experience as a technical assistant, a designer, and a foreman in the factory led P2 in his venture into e-commerce by exposing him to basic computer skills. This knowledge gave him the advantage of starting a new business, especially in e-commerce related to the computer.

I realize my previous work is the greatest experience to start a new business in e-commerce. I already know the computer since my office used the computer as black and white (monochrome) (P2)

Experienced entrepreneurs were one of the essential elements that contributed to new venture creations via e-commerce in Malaysia. Some e-commerce entrepreneurs started from having other businesses before establishing an e-commerce enterprise. In this case, P1 had experienced the brick-and-mortar business since 2006, emphasising the business's most important aspect was how a product was marketed. He realised e-commerce was a viable marketing strategy that could sell products, as quoted below:

Based on my experience, what I had said, e-commerce enables us to market the product outside. So through the internet, we can market to the outside. So if before we are only at the local market like Pahang, Perak. But by doing business online, we just ship the product to the customer via post nationwide. Thus, it greatly simplifies (P1)

P12 was also involved in other Kuala Lumpur (KL) businesses before establishing a new e-commerce venture in 2012.

Before exiting my business online, I always joint business in bazaar. I was going everywhere. But before I go to the bazaar, I also used the online platform to inform the customer that I was going to open a small shop in the bazaar everywhere in Kuala Lumpur... (P12)

P10 also had many experiences handling other businesses before establishing a new company. He was involved in the consultancy and trading business for seven years, which started in 2006 and ended in 2013, before he established his current company based on cosmetic products in 2014.

Before this, I was in trading (business). I was also a consultant, business consultant. I was a trainer in IPTA (public university) and IPTS (private university). Many universities call me to talk about sharing in an entrepreneurship issue. Before I created my product, I sold other sellers' products too... (P10)

P10 first began e-commerce by selling products online through ebay.com, an international market platform. Based on the experience and the benefits, he later established his new venture on cosmetic products, which was the business path he was confident in.

I had tried a lot of business. I had sold all kinds of things involving the consumer products, household, and accessories. I started my first product by selling to the overseas market. I sold in e-bay... (P10)

P5 started dabbling with the business when he studied at a local university when he realised he could identify opportunities to solve students' problems. He realised the opportunities to sell printed t-shirts to students, which were always ready in stock as the t-shirts were from outsourced suppliers. There were other areas of the business, such as being a contractor and a trainer, that he was involved in, but he decided to establish e-commerce by setting up a printing company in 2011/2012.

Similarly, P2 had previously worked in the trading businesses, such as fixing machinery, plumbing, and welding, since 1998, but all of these failed. These experiences, nonetheless, were essential to his current e-commerce business, especially in managing and treating customers with respect: *The experiences in terms of business principles. That means we can also apply it to online business. Online business is easier because we do not deal with customers directly... (P2)*

P4 started her business when she was single when she received orders to sew traditional clothes for customers in her village. At that time, the interest in building a company began when she thought of her future. Hence, she started the company in a traditional bakery in 2005. She realised the potential market of selling traditional biscuits online and planned to establish an e-commerce venture in 2011.

As for P11 and P8, they both had business experience since studying at the university a few years ago. P8 started her online business during the final semester at Universiti Teknologi

MARA (UITM) when she realised the opportunities for online business.

From the start of business (business history)? Ok, I started from the time that I was studying in a degree of tourism at UITM Shah Alam, final semester. I see at the time that online business was still not established. So I tried to start, at that time people did not know about online business... (P8)

5.0 DISCUSSION

Based on this study, personality traits in entrepreneurs have impacted the new e-commerce ventures created in Malaysia. The seven personality traits identified in this study are creativity, risk-taking, inspiration, need for autonomy and freedom, tolerance for ambiguity, diligence and persistence, and optimism. Nonetheless, entrepreneurs' cognition and motivation significantly impact the creation of e-commerce as a new venture in Malaysia. The demand for entrepreneurs to achieve success has resulted in high motivation. This study has also identified two main elements in fulfilling the desire for achievement or success that stimulate entrepreneurial motivation: the push-and-pull factors. The push factors are the personal background of these entrepreneurs, while the pull factors include the desire for high income.

Entrepreneurs from low-income families have a considerable role in creating start-up e-commerce businesses. The personal background and experiences of growing up in a low-income family have motivated the entrepreneurs to change their lives and desire for success in the future. They believe that to live better, they need to exploit business opportunities instead of working for others, as the income earned through business would be unlimited compared to the static payment as an employee, which may not increase significantly in the long run. Therefore, these entrepreneurs are motivated and have decided to venture into e-commerce, which promises unlimited income as they can enter the global market. The second factor is the need to gain profits from their business. Entrepreneurs find many benefits in e-commerce, especially in marketing their products globally to a more substantial target audience, which will result in a higher quantity of product sales that, in turn, will generate more income.

This study also found interest in entrepreneurs to be important to venture into e-commerce based on their historical background and motives. Besides, entrepreneurs interested in information

technology such as computers, the Internet and other technologically-related elements can also influence new ventures into e-commerce.

External motivation also influences entrepreneurial motivation, as found in this study, which helps in the initial stages of new ventures in e-commerce. High external motivation results from entrepreneurs interacting with their surroundings, giving them the confidence to decide and act upon their decisions. Most interactions with family members, customers and industries will motivate entrepreneurs to create and develop future businesses.

The findings of this study showed that cognition is related to an entrepreneur's cognitive perspective of thinking and reasoning. Personal background and previous experiences were found to significantly influence human cognitive processes when it comes to making judgments and decisions about starting a new venture in business. The cognitive roles, such as personal background, whereby families are involved in business or having own experiences on information, computers, and technology, greatly influenced entrepreneurs to create new ventures in Malaysia. Figure 1 below shows the themes that emerged from this study.

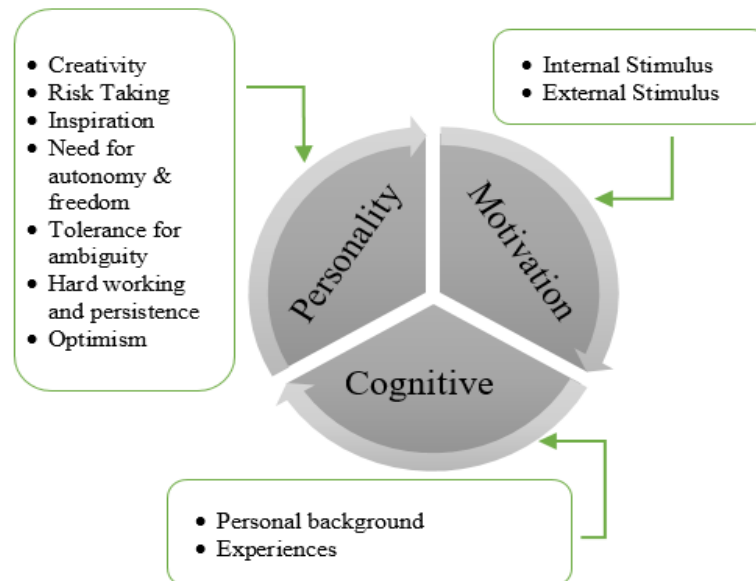


Figure 1: Personality traits, entrepreneurial motivation and cognition of entrepreneurs that influence new venture in e-commerce in Malaysia

Based on Figure 1, the first element of the personality in entrepreneurs is based on the creativity among entrepreneurs to utilise social media such as Facebook, blogs and YouTube as online

marketing strategies. E-commerce naturally exposes entrepreneurs to be creative in communicating virtually with their audience through writing and uploading good pictures as marketing techniques instead of verbal communication. Having to interact more with computers and the Internet as the main medium for business, entrepreneurs also need to design creative marketing strategies such as promoting online and using attractive captions and photos that will attract customers. Customers are expected to contact entrepreneurs easily and be interested in buying the products. Hence, creativity arises when entrepreneurs can integrate all forms of applications in computers and the Internet to market their products and carry out their business. This finding is consistent with Cromie (2000) and Mubarak, Abd Rahman, and Yaacob (2014), who state that entrepreneurs should have creativity in their businesses.

Secondly, entrepreneurs should be willing to take risks in the business that they started. E-commerce is still quite new in Malaysia, which requires entrepreneurs to bear every uncertainty beyond expectation. The unexpected risk is related to the payment process in business transactions. Entrepreneurs encounter problems when dealing with dishonest customers who try to exploit the weaknesses in e-commerce. Entrepreneurs always suffer losses when goods are delivered, but payments are still not received through electronic transfers, which have become the primary transaction method in e-commerce. Entrepreneurs also bear the risk of items posted being damaged or unable to be delivered at the expected time to the destination. In such cases, entrepreneurs must replace the product to gain customer confidence. Besides problems regarding payment and delivery, entrepreneurs also need to consider the risk of return on investment through online marketing, such as Facebook or Google advertisements, which can result in zero impact on sales. Unlike regular businesses, the risks entrepreneurs need to face may be higher in e-commerce businesses due to the complex transactions resulting from indirect customer relationships. Hence, certain issues that bring additional risks to entrepreneurs need a high level of readiness from e-commerce entrepreneurs. This study shares similarities with Brandstätter (2011), Shaver and Scott (1991), and Mubarak et al. (2014), who contended that entrepreneurs should be willing to take risks.

The third personality is associated with inspiration in entrepreneurs, especially in terms of the expectation of potential in e-commerce. Most entrepreneurs know of the huge potential of e-commerce in Malaysia, especially in marketing a product to the world. They will set up an ambitious and new business model to be more competitive regarding e-commerce business

opportunities in Malaysia. Some entrepreneurs have set targets for their businesses to market their products overseas via e-commerce and continue to grow rapidly by setting up new business branches over the next few years. The inspiration is largely influenced by the goal of expanding their businesses through the platform in e-commerce that could broaden their consumer market. The number of customers that can access the Internet and current lifestyle changes have made e-commerce purchases more vivacious in Malaysia. E-commerce entrepreneurs need to exploit such business opportunities because Internet access and lifestyle changes in Malaysia can further expand their market in the future (Mubarak et al., 2014).

The fourth personality in entrepreneurs is related to the need for autonomy and freedom, which are the desire to work independently without being controlled by an employer. Self-employment gives satisfaction to entrepreneurs as there is no employer to control them besides being able to enjoy unlimited income. Entrepreneurs earn more by selling products through e-commerce platforms and have the flexibility to carry out their daily work without being bound by normal working hours. Time and commitment in the e-commerce business can be flexible, where potential customers can contact the entrepreneurs anytime via email or Facebook as a form of 24-hour communication. This study shares the common findings with Shane (2003), van Gelderen and Jansen (2006), and Mubarak et al. (2014).

The fifth element of personality is tolerance for ambiguity, which is also the willingness of an entrepreneur to accept uncertainties in business. Since e-commerce businesses are still new in Malaysia, entrepreneurs must face uncertainties. Although e-commerce promises unlimited marketing opportunities, it does not guarantee business success. Various strategies in e-commerce need to be learned because of the many risks that may happen. In this study, some entrepreneurs have experienced failure in business a few times after opting to resign from their previous work and refusing to enjoy a fairly high payroll based on their education level. These experiences clearly show that they have a high tolerance for ambiguity when deciding to be an entrepreneur. They have made a dramatic decision towards the uncertainty they are bound to face to become successful entrepreneurs. The findings of this study can be related to Cromie's (2000) and Gartner's (1988) tolerance for ambiguity, apart from the willingness of an entrepreneur to accept uncertainties in business.

The sixth element, diligence and persistence, is important and influences entrepreneurial aspirations in achieving goals in creating a new venture. Without having personalities such as

diligence and persistence, it would be impossible for entrepreneurs to face the uncertainties in an e-commerce business environment, especially concerning marketing and product-making processes. The persistence of entrepreneurs in implementing effective marketing strategies is highly demanded to ensure that the best-selling products are always available. All efforts should be transferred into the marketing of the products that are yet to be recognised by customers.

It is one of the major challenges for entrepreneurs in the early stages of the business establishment to generate customer demand, as they would face losses if the products are not sold. Entrepreneurs also need to work hard to manufacture products, ignoring the time used to ensure orders can be delivered to customers on time. Entrepreneurs are also known for being persistent in meeting all risk expectations, especially in the early stages of the business startup. In the early stages of business, entrepreneurs need more patience in managing all aspects of marketing, product development or customer relationships. The process of a startup of a new business is difficult and requires entrepreneurs not to give up on every action to ensure success in the future. E-commerce is one of the most difficult businesses to manage despite generating lucrative profits, which requires entrepreneurs not to give up on their ventures easily, to be eager to achieve success, and to be patient in managing e-commerce. This study shares a similar finding with Mubarak et al. (2014), who suggested diligence and persistence influence entrepreneurial aspirations in achieving goals in the new venture creation.

Finally, the personality in entrepreneurs is related to optimism, which is the confidence level towards the expected business outcomes in the future. Entrepreneurs are optimistic about what they expect to achieve despite facing uncertainties in the business. The results of the interviews show that entrepreneurs have a high degree of confidence and courage in making decisions, regardless of the uncertainties. The optimism in entrepreneurs during decision-making is due to their positive attitude and a high degree of stubbornness. Positive-minded entrepreneurs are more accepting of uncertainties, while stubborn entrepreneurs are more courageous in decision-making. Both attitudes have made entrepreneurs opportunists in taking advantage of e-commerce, which has been identified to have great potential in the future. Therefore, it is no surprise that entrepreneurs are courageous to face any challenges because they are optimistic about what they hope to achieve in the future, a similar finding reported in Cromie's (2000) and Townsend et al.'s (2010) study.

This study also described the role of motivation, which emerges from two main factors related to new venture creation in e-commerce in Malaysia. The first main factor related to the internal stimulus contains two essential elements; (i) need for achievement and (ii) interest. Someone who grew up in a low-income family will be more exposed and engaged in entrepreneurship to change their lives through business opportunities. Previous experiences have motivated them to become successful entrepreneurs when starting up their businesses. Some entrepreneurs argue that working with others is not guaranteed to change their lives. In other words, they are more interested in becoming entrepreneurs, allowing them to receive higher income quickly.

Next is the desire to receive substantial income from their involvement in the business. E-commerce provides a platform that comes with a lot of advantages for entrepreneurs, especially in product marketing, where items can be widely distributed around the world. Entrepreneurs who desire to succeed in business must grab the opportunity to start an e-commerce venture that promises broad product marketability. Therefore, being able to penetrate a larger market will increase the number of sales and generate profitable income. The interest in entrepreneurs also greatly influences new e-commerce ventures in Malaysia. Interest is an internal stimulus in entrepreneurial motivation to start up new ventures apart from the desire to succeed. The interests emphasized by entrepreneurs in this study can be divided into two factors, which are business and information technology. Both types of interest make an important combination for e-commerce ventures, which entails entrepreneurs favouring business and information technology. This study shares a similar finding with Gartner (1985) and Mubarak et al. (2014), who pinpointed two essential elements of internal stimulus: the need for achievement and interest towards the success of entrepreneurs in business.

Next is external motivation, which entrepreneurs consider motivation due to external factors. Based on this study, external motivation is driven by three essential elements: family, customer support, and situational factors, which can cause entrepreneurs to become successful in business. Surrounding themselves with people who always give their full support can influence the motivation and action of the entrepreneurs in their business. With personal support, advice, inspiration and information, entrepreneurs are likely to become successful in business. Continuous customer support for existing products can also be an additional and external aspect for entrepreneurs to continue producing various product designs in the future. At the same time, the

industry is becoming more challenging as it is often monopolised by middlemen who control market prices. The monopoly has affected traditional craft entrepreneurs, continuously oppressed by the middlemen. The solution to overcome this gap is to pursue e-commerce as a business strategy to market the products, breaking any form of ties with the middleman.

As demonstrated in Figure 2, the roles of cognitive perspective emerge from two main factors related to new venture creations in e-commerce in Malaysia. The first main factor associated with the roles of the cognitive entrepreneur is personal background, such as previous education they have received and family background. The second factor refers to the cognitive aspects of the entrepreneurs, which are related to previous work and business experiences before deciding on the e-commerce business in Malaysia.

Personal historical background, such as the education they received before starting their business, is an essential factor influencing their decision to create a new venture in e-commerce. Education gives them information to generate basic ideas and awareness on how to start new ventures in e-commerce. Family business backgrounds are an influential factor that can encourage entrepreneurs to be involved. The family business background gives entrepreneurs information and exposure to the business since they are young, especially about creating quality products and managing the business.

Work experience also plays a significant role in the creation of new ventures among e-commerce entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Their previous work experiences give them basic knowledge and skills in business, especially computer skills, which are fundamental to establishing an e-commerce business. Some entrepreneurs in this study have experienced difficulty finding suitable work that encourages them to start new e-commerce ventures as a source of income. Some entrepreneurs have had various experiences in other businesses before starting e-commerce ventures. They already have a strong foundation in the business, such as the essential knowledge from other businesses as basic ideas to create new e-commerce ventures. This study shares a finding similar to Shane's (2003) and Rahayu's and Day's (2015) findings.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The determinant factors for being an e-commerce entrepreneur are based on personalities such as creativity, risk-taking, inspiration, need for autonomy and freedom, tolerance for ambiguity, diligence and persistence, and optimism. Two essential elements of internal motivation, which are

the need for achievement and interest, are developed based on the push factors (such as the personal background) and pull factors. The desire to generate income can also influence entrepreneurs to succeed in e-commerce. Within this study, entrepreneurs can venture into e-commerce because of their high interest in business and information technology (IT) such as computers, the Internet and other technologically-related aspects. This study has made significant contributions to helping future e-commerce entrepreneurs succeed in business.

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