



Economics Entrepreneurship of the Female Business Operators: A SWOT Analysis

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The main objective of this study is to identify the factors that may influence the performance of businesses operated by female entrepreneurs in the east coast region in Malaysia. In particular, the focus factors are; the Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. To achieve this objective, the study was conducted in three selected areas, namely in Besut and Kuala Terengganu in Terengganu state and in Pasir Mas of the Kelantan state. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, and 280 sets were successfully returned. The data was analyzed by using a descriptive method which was processed through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 20 software. The results for the performance analysis reported "Expansion" as the highest percent in Besut (77.8%), Kuala Terengganu (100%), and Pasir Mas (95.6%). The overall findings showed the highest percent of 90.71% is documented as experiencing "Expansion"; the following 21.8% documented an "Unchanged" or Status Quo performance, while the next 0.36% reported a "Decline". The results for the SWOT analysis reported the aggregate mean score for the Strength analysis is 4.11, Weakness analysis is 2.83, Opportunity analysis is 3.86 and finally the Threat analysis is 3.64. These findings lead us to conclude that the majority of the items in the list do contribute significantly to business operations except for the Threat items. The lowest aggregate mean score with a value of less than 3.5 provides an indication that the respondents do not agree that the listed items contribute a threat to their business operations.

Key words: *Female, Entrepreneurship, East Coast, Strength, Weakness.*



Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a branch of economics which plays the business role (demander for resources and supplier/seller of goods and services) in the economy. It is a platform to generate revenue through economic activities. Aggressive female participation in entrepreneurship is no longer a strange matter in the public eye, whether in Malaysia or even at the world level. The effect of economic progress and the relative patterns of female entrepreneurship involvement have shown consistent progress over time. The ability of the East Coast female business sector entrepreneurs has been recognized based on their domination (in the small and medium scale), and their ability to last in the economic activity. These capabilities are considered as special and unusual. In relating to this, according Hyzer (1989) in Askiah Jamaluddin (2002), the female entrepreneurs involved in this sector are necessarily driven by certain pushing and pulling factors. Subsequent to this assertion, the current research aims to conduct a study on the influence of the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threat (SWOT) factors on the businesses operated by female entrepreneurs in the East Coast region (Joshua, 2016).

Objectives of Study

This study aims to:

- i. determine the performance of the businesses operated by female entrepreneurs
- ii. analyze the influence of the SWOT factors on the business performance of the female operators.

Literature Review

Cohoon, Wadhwa and Mitchell (2010) conducted a comparative study; between male and female entrepreneurs, on the issues of motivation, background and experience. The findings identified; the desire to build the wealth, the wish to capitalize own business ideas, the appeal of startup culture, a long standing desire to own a business and the preference to not working with someone else, as factors that motivate women to become entrepreneurs. Leyla Sarfaraz, Nezameddin Faghieh and Armaghan Asadi Majd (2014) investigated how gender-related economic development and women entrepreneurial activity are related. Their findings suggest that female entrepreneurial activity is not significantly correlated with gender equality.

Jennifer E. Jennings and Candida G. Bush (2013) in their study aimed to document the development of women's entrepreneurship research, to assess the contributions of this work and to discuss both difficulties and opportunities for scholarship on female entrepreneurs. They discovered that; entrepreneurship is a gendered phenomenon, entrepreneurial activity



is embedded in families and can result from necessity as well as opportunity, and finally, entrepreneurs often pursue goals beyond economic gain. Thuaibah @ Suaibah et al. (2005), Okon (2016), Tee (2000), Alam et al.(2011) and Jalil et al. (2017) conducted studies on female entrepreneurship in Malaysia's perspective. Alina (1997) in Thuaibah @ Suaibah et al. (2007), conducted a study on female entrepreneurs and made comparison with male entrepreneurs. The results reported that there is no psychological gender difference between male and female entrepreneurs. Successful entrepreneurship does not depend on the gender factor, but rather on identified characteristics, traits and temperament.

Thuaibah @ Suaibah et al. (2005) and Pei (2000) focus their studies on motives of female entrepreneurs' involvement in business. The former study found the main driving factor is to take business as an economic activity that contributes the main source of income. Other motives on the list are interest, a side job and finally diminished satisfaction with a previous job. Tee Kee Pei (2000) has revealed, factors that motivate women to become entrepreneurs are; knowledge usage, the complementary of skills and talent to get more reward and to become financially independent, the desire to be independent, and also the aspiration to have a career which guarantees ongoing interest and a hobby.

Alam et al. (2011) examine the key factors that contribute to the success of women entrepreneurs in the Southern region in Malaysia. The results provide suggestions that family support, social ties and internal motivation affect positively and significantly to the success of women entrepreneurs in small business. Also, women were observed to rarely venture into business not because of lack of interest, but because of lack of opportunities. Jalil et al. (2017) conducted a study on female business operators in the East Coast Region which specifically focused on Strength and Weakness. The results were that the mean score value for the Strength factor is relatively much higher (4.11) than the mean score value for the Weakness factor (2.83).

In conclusion, all studies highlighted in the literature are studies on gender or on female entrepreneurs. The scope of discussion is diverted into different areas. The current study which is similar to Jalil et al. (2017), pays specific attention to the influence of the SWOT factors to business performance of the female entrepreneurs.

Methodology

This research is an exploratory study. This approach is chosen because it has a high degree of reliability, requires a short study period and also saves costs (Sakaran, 2003). A total of 300 respondents were targeted as the sample size. There were 280 successful responses to the survey; 90 people are from Besut, 100 people from Kuala Terengganu, and 90 others from



Pasir Mas. The instrument used for data collection is a questionnaire set; which covers questions related to the entrepreneur's demographic and business profiles in Part A while Part B covers questions relating to the SWOT factors. The reaction of the respondents for all item statements is prepared in a Likert 5-Scale format; extending from the Strongly Disagree (1) to Disagree (2), followed by level 3 (not sure), and then stage 4 and 5 which represent the Agree and Strongly Agree (Maximum) levels. To achieve the targeted objectives of the study, the results of the descriptive analysis and frequency are averaged using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

The pilot study result is displayed in Table 1f below. The Cronbach Alpha value documented for all sections is > 0.7 . According to Ghafar (1999), an alpha value between 0.6 to 0.7 is acceptable and alpha values in excess of 0.8 is excellent.

Table 1: Reliability Test

Sections	# items	Cronbach Alpha
Analyses on Profiles		
Respondent Profile	7	0.7478
Business Profile	20	0.9239
Analyses on SWOT factors		
Strength	18	0.7510
Weakness	22	0.7840
Opportunities	10	0.7725
Threats	11	0.76.21

Results Reporting

The results summary for each analysis is reported in the following order; Demographic Profile, Business Performance, and finally the SWOT analyses.

Demographic Profiles

The respondents are all female Malay entrepreneurs. The age distribution category of 31-50 years is over 80% while other age categories are all in the range of 9-10%. In terms of academic qualifications, almost half of the respondents are with PMR and SPM background. Entrepreneurs with tertiary education only covers 15% (42 people). In terms of marital status, majority (81.07%) of the respondents are married, while the next 12.85% are either divorced or widowed and the remaining percent is single. The distribution of number of children

shows a majority (65.36%) is in the range of 0-5 children followed by 26.43% in the category that is having from 6-10 children and the last 08.21% is having between 11-15 children.

In terms of types of business, the overall statistic recoded the highest percent in the Textiles and Clothing (31.07%) industries; followed by the Food and Beverages (31.07) industry, and the remaining types of businesses score less than 10%.

Business Performance

Table 3 below summarizes the overall findings of the performance analysis.

Table 3: Performance Analysis

Districts	Stats.	Expansion	Decline	Status Quo	Total
Besut	Freq.	70	1	19	90
	%	77.78	1.11	21.11	100
K. Trg.	Freq.	100	0	0	100
	%	100	0	0	100
P. Mas	Freq.	84	0	4	90
	%	93.33	0	4.44	100
Overall	Freq.	254	1	23	280
	%	90.71	0.36	8.21	100

All districts have reported “Expansion” as the highest percent; Besut (77.8%), Kuala Terengganu (100%), and Pasir Mas (95.6%). The findings of the aggregate (overall) analysis showed the highest percent of 90.71% is documented as experiencing ‘Expansion’; the following 21.8% documented an "Unchanged" or Status Quo performance, while the next 0.36% reported a "Decline". Based on these findings, the next analysis put specific focus on the pulling (Strength) and the pushing (Weakness) factors.

The Swot Analyses

The findings of the SWOT analyses are divided into four parts, namely; the Strength analysis, the Weakness analysis, the Opportunity analysis, and finally the Threat analysis. The results obtained are assessed based on the following method; (3.5 < mean < 4.5) moderately agree, (mean > 4.5) strongly agree, (2.5 < mean < 3.5) Undecided while (mean score of < 2.5) is Disagree.

The Strength Analysis

The results summary for the Strength analysis is displayed in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Strength Analysis

Items for Strength Factor	Mean			
	Besut	K. Trg	P. Mas	Overall
1. Strategic location	4.40	4.47	4.58	4.48
2. The right type of business	4.40	4.31	4.44	4.38
3. Low rental cost	3.10	4.17	3.62	3.63
4. Variety and authentic products	4.03	4.27	4.46	4.25
5. Regular customers	4.37	4.02	4.47	4.29
6. Good suppliers and buyers network	4.24	4.16	4.53	4.31
7. Good business culture (entrepreneurship spirit).	4.22	4.30	4.60	4.37
8. Easy access to source of capital	3.70	2.30	4.28	3.43
9. Prudent financial management	3.99	2.69	4.53	3.74
10. Best buy and low price	3.99	4.23	4.11	4.11
11.gain tourist attractions	3.54	4.85	4.14	4.18
12. Good public service	3.71	2.70	4.32	3.58
13. Customer friendly	4.43	4.34	4.52	4.43
14. Independent and risk taker	4.43	4.09	4.59	4.37
15. Self confidence	4.49	4.73	4.73	4.65
16. High interest in business	4.49	4.17	4.56	4.41
17. Good education background	3.92	2.12	4.16	3.40
18. Effective decision making	4.12	4.00	4.06	4.06
Average Mean	4.09	3.88	4.37	
Aggregate Mean	4.11			

The Besut district documented the highest mean score (4.49) for items 15 (Self-confidence) and 16 (High interest in business). For Kuala Terengganu district, the highest mean score is documented in items 11 (Gain tourists attraction) and 15 (Self-confidence). For Pasir Mas district, the highest score (> 4.5) is documented in items 15 (Self-confidence), 14 (Independent and risk taker), 1 (Strategic business location), 16 (High interests in business), 6 (Good suppliers and buyers network), 9 (Prudent financial management), and 13 (Customer friendly).

The lowest mean score (3.10) for Besut is observed in items 3 (Rental cost is low), item 17 (Education background educated) which values 2.12 in Kuala Terengganu; and item 3 (Rental cost is low) that values 3.62 in Pasir Mas. The overall (aggregate) result documents the highest score of (> 4.4) in items 15, 1, 13 and 16. The results for the lowest mean score (<3.5) are documented in items 8, 14 and 17.

The Weakness Analysis

The results summary for the Weakness analysis are displayed in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Weakness Factors

Items For Weakness	Mean			
	Besut	K. Trg	P. Mas	Overall
1. Insufficient capital	3.89	4.20	3.10	3.73
2. Lack of promotion	3.99	2.81	2.80	3.20
3. Risk averse	3.01	2.20	2.51	2.57
4. High competition	4.33	4.20	2.93	3.82
5. Difficulty to find skill labor	3.49	4.11	2.21	3.27
6. Negative attitudes	2.52	3.55	1.90	2.66
7. Communication problem with customers	2.48	4.20	1.88	2.85
8. Communication problem with workers	2.47	3.60	1.80	2.62
9. Weak network amongst the entrepreneurs	2.52	3.08	1.98	2.53
10. Not friendly with technology	2.38	3.67	2.16	2.74
11. Selling similar products with other entrepreneurs	3.18	4.61	2.57	3.45
12. Business is not in a conducive environment	3.38	4.35	2.38	3.37
13. Inexperience and little knowledge and in business	2.89	3.01	1.92	2.61
14. Little knowledge in business management	2.93	2.26	1.78	2.32
15. Poor in optimum business decision making	2.92	2.74	1.64	2.43
16. Have little education and training in operating a business	2.93	2.95	1.73	2.54
17. Stress from family	2.38	2.11	1.71	2.07
18. Lack of knowledge and information on type of business involved	2.89	2.72	1.80	2.47
19. Not skillful in identifying and solving problems	2.91	2.58	2.06	2.52
20. Does not understand the market requirements (and techniques in attracting the customers)	2.94	2.10	2.09	2.38
21. Does not carry out the general business practice e.g. Budgeting, record of financial flows etc.	3.07	3.45	2.49	3.00

22.Does not make evaluation on the performance of the business.	3.07	3.43	2.91	3.14
Average mean	3.03	3.27	2.20	
Aggregate mean				2.80

Results by region showed the highest mean scores for Besut are recorded in items 4 (High competition), 2 (Lack of promotion) and 1 (Insufficient capital), and items 11 (Selling similar products with other entrepreneurs), 12 (Selling similar products with other entrepreneurs), 1 (Insufficient capital), 4 (High competition), and 7 (problem with customers) in Kuala Terengganu. No mean score by the value of (> 3.5) is recorded in any item of Pasir Mas district. The average mean score values for the Pasir Mas stretching from (1.64 - 3.10). These scores denote all factor items are not significant to negatively influence the business operations. The overall mean score for Besut is 3:03, followed by mean values of 3:27 and 2:20 for Kuala Terengganu and Pasir Mas.

The results of the aggregate analysis provide indication that the highest mean score (> 3.5) is recorded in items 1 and 4; while the lowest mean score value (< 2.5) is recorded in items 17 (Stress from family), 20 (Do not understand the market requirements and techniques to attract customers), 15 (Poor in optimum business decisions making) and 18 (Lack of knowledge and information about the underlying business). The overall mean score for the Weakness analysis is 2.83.

The Opportunity Analysis

Results in Tables 6 below display the findings of the Opportunity analysis for the three districts.

Table 6: The Opportunity Analyses

No.	OPPORTUNITY ITEMS	MEAN			
		BESU T	K. TRG.	P. MAS	OVERALL (by item)
1	Financial aid from various institutions and agencies	3.77	3.38	3.99	3.71
2	Government support and assistance	3.91	3.5	4.13	3.85
3	Training opportunities and skills in business	3.93	3.31	4.11	3.78
4	Coaching services from various parties and organizations.	3.81	2.27	4.14	3.41
5	The existence of a business	3.62	4.1	4.17	3.96



	association that monitors the progress				
6	Broad consumer market	4.00	4.07	4.28	4.12
7	People whose habits are like buying	3.96	3.51	4.71	4.06
8	Cheap labor costs	3.08	3.52	4.11	3.57
9	The use of machinery and machinery helps production	3.77	3.68	4.03	3.83
10	The information network between traders and entrepreneurs helps operations.	4.2	4.39	4.27	4.29
	Average Mean	3.81	3.57	4.19	
	Overall mean (avg.)				3.86

The results for Besut show the highest mean score in obtained in items 10 and 6 (mean score values ≥ 4). This provide an explanation that the Opportunity factors are mainly contributed by the existence of information networks between traders and entrepreneurs, as well as a broad consumer market. These two items are complementary to each other. Broad market is no longer a problem when the information network system is effective. The next highest score is identified in items 2, 3 and 7. Most respondents agree with government support and assistance, training opportunities and skills in business, and consumers' buying habits create an opportunity for a business to continue operating and growing; and mean value for each items are 3.91, 3.93 and 3.96 respectively. Item 8 shows the lowest mean score of 3.08 and indicates that respondents relatively disagree with the cheap labor costs factor, because in reality they have to pay a high cost for each hiring. Average mean value for business Opportunity analysis is 3.81.

For Kuala Terengganu district, majority of respondents relatively agree with item 10 (Information network between entrepreneurs and operators assisting operations) is giving them opportunities while conducting business. The mean score value for this item is 4.39. In specific, out of 100 respondents, 61 respondents (61%) agreed and 39 (39%) strongly agreed on this item. In addition to item 10, items 5 and 6 also recorded a relatively high mean score of 4.1 and 4.07 respectively. This finding shows that respondents agree with the statement, "Information requirement by the entrepreneur is very important", and it is considered as an Opportunity factor in conducting their business. The lowest mean score (2.27) is identified in item 4 involving the statement; "Coaching from various parties and organizations". A total of 2 respondents (2%) respondents agreed and the rest disagreed with this item. The aggregate mean score for Opportunity analysis is 3.57.

Referring to Pasir Mas, the highest mean score of 4.71 is identified in item 7. This confirms that the expenditure habit of the public help increases business performance. However, there is also a lower mean value of 3.99 recorded by item 1 in which the Opportunity item is also contributed by financial aid factors from various government institutions and agencies. Majority of the business operators say that there are a lot of financial assistance provided by the government in assisting women entrepreneurs. However, there are too many procedures or steps that need to be followed to obtain the financial assistance and the time taken for the process is lengthy. The average mean score for Opportunity factor is 4.19. The aggregate mean score value for the Threat analysis is 3.86.

Threat Analysis

Results in Tables 7 below display the findings of the Opportunity analysis for the three districts. The results for Besut shows the highest score is documented in item 1 (The sudden rise in raw material supply prices) with mean value of 4.73. This explains that traders are having trouble getting raw material supplies because they have to pay a high price. The second highest score is obtained by item 9 (Facing competition in terms of quality) with mean value of 4.42. Here we may imply, customers are very concerned about the quality of a product and this situation is a threat to traders, who has to compete in producing high quality goods. The lowest score was recorded by item 11 (Sluggish or inactive market) with mean value of 3.33. Most respondents disagree with item 11 (Inactive market) being a threat to his business. The average mean value of the Threat analysis for Besut is 3.92.

Table 7: The Threat Analyses

No	THREAT ITEMS	MEAN			
		BESUT	K. Trg.	P. MAS	OVER ALL (by item)
1	The sudden increase in raw material prices	4.73	4.1	3.99	4.27
2	High shop rental rates	4.39	2.96	3.66	3.67
3	Non-strategic business location	3.36	2.35	3.66	3.12
4	Frequent criminal activity	4.1	2.48	3.66	3.41



5	Difficult to get financial support	3.58	3.52	3.51	3.54
6	Bureaucratic red tape in applying for a loan	3.88	4.07	3.63	3.86
7	Changes in users' tastes	4.3	4.08	3.71	4.03
8	Rapid market growth	3.52	4.1	3.73	3.78
9	Facing competition in terms of quality	4.42	4.22	3.51	4.05
10	Trapped in a less productive business.	3.56	4.13	2.96	3.55
11	Inactive market	3.33	2.43	2.6	2.79
	Avg. Mean	3.92	3.49	3.51	3.64
	Overall Average Mean				3.64

For Kuala Terengganu, the majority of respondents Agree on item 9 (Facing competition in quality) is a threat to their business. In specific, a total of 78 respondents (78%) choose Agree and 22 (22%) responded Strongly Agree on this subject matter. The input from the respondent also states; "Often when buying something, customers are especially concerned with quality factor while making choices". This situation is a threat to the entrepreneurs and they have to put effort producing quality goods. Item 3 (location is not strategic) documented the lowest mean score (2.35). This finding indicates that this statement is generally are not agreed by the majority of respondents to accept the fact that their business location is strategically located in the city centre and is a tourist destination. The average mean value of the Threat analysis for Kuala Terengganu is 3.49.

For Pasir Mas, the highest score is recorded for item 1 (3.99). This confirms that, sudden rise in raw material prices is one of the Threat factors to the business operators. On the contrary, the lowest mean value is recorded in item 11(2.69). The result provides an indication that the majority of respondents disagree with the statement that concludes inactive market contributes to the Threat factor. The average mean score value is 3.51 and the overall mean score value for the Threat analysis is 3.64.

Conclusion

This study aims to identify the performance of the business operation of the female entrepreneurs in the East Coast region and to identify the influence of the SWOT factors to its operations. The study is conducted in three selected areas, namely in Besut, Kuala Terengganu and Pasir Mas. Site selection is made based on public recognition of these

districts as female business concentration areas. The findings from the performance analysis show a majority (90.71%) of the entrepreneurs experience “Expansion” while the following 21.8% did not experience any changes (Status Quo) in the business performance and finally, the last 0.36% claimed to have suffered a “Decline”. The success achieved by most entrepreneurs bring this study to the Strength and Weakness analyses. For the SWOT analyses, the overall summary is portrayed in Table 8 below.

Table 8: SWOT Summary

Areas \ Analyses	STRENGTH	WEAKNESS	OPPORTUNITY	THREAT
Besut	4.09	3.03	3.81	3.92
Kuala Terengganu	3.88	3.27	3.57	3.49
Pasir Mas	4.37	2.20	4.19	3.51
Overall (Aggregate)	4.11	3.86	3.86	3.34

The aggregate mean score for the Strength analysis is 4.11. The main contributing factor is divided into two; the internal factors and the External factors. The Internal factor consists of items 14 (Independent and risk taker), 15 (Self-confidence), 16 (High interests in business) while the External / Environmental factors consist of items 1 (Strategic business location), 2 (The right type of business), 6 (Good suppliers and buyers network), and 7 (Good business culture). The results for the Weakness analysis documented the highest mean score values (> 3.5) in items 4 (High competition) and 1 (Insufficient capital), while other items have otherwise recorded the min score values of less than 3.5. The aggregate mean score value is 2.83, which provides indication that the items listed in the table are relatively not significant in functioning as the pushing (Weakness) factors to the business operations. The results for the Opportunity factor documented an average mean score of >5.3 - <4.5 for all items except for item 4 (Coaching services from various parties and organizations.). The aggregate mean score value of 3.86 provide indication in general, the respondents relatively Agree the items in the list do contribute as the opportunity factor to their business operation. The aggregate mean score value for the Threat factor is 3.64. Observing the means score value per item, on average all items recorded mean score values more than 3.5 except for items 3 and 11.



These findings lead us to conclude that, the majority of the items in the list do contribute significantly to the business operations except for the Threat items. The Threat items lowest aggregate mean score with value of less than 3.5 indicates that the respondents do not agree that these items contribute a threat to their business operations.

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