

A COMPARISON OF THE MOTIVATIONS OF MALAY AND CHINESE ENTREPRENEURS IN URBAN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: This study sets out to investigate the motivation of entering into a business amongst urban Malaysian entrepreneurs. In addition, this empirical research was undertaken to compare the motivations of the Malay entrepreneurs and Chinese entrepreneurs. Data was collected using a questionnaire that was conducted through face to face approach. Thirteen Likert-style questions were used to determine start-up motivations. The mean score were calculated and compared to test for significant differences. Results revealed that the primary motivators across ethnics were the opportunity to increase income and to prove they could do it. No significant differences were found while comparing the motivators between the Malay and Chinese entrepreneurs. A factor analysis was conducted to determine whether the thirteen motivational items could be synthesized into distinct factors. Three motivation factors were found: a family factor, an independence factor, and an intrinsic factor. Some limitation and potential future research are discussed.

Keywords: Cross-cultural comparison, Empirical Study, Entrepreneurs, Motivations, Small and medium enterprises.

INTRODUCTION

In most countries, Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) dominate the economic landscape based on sheer numbers. According to the SME annual report 2009/2010, about 99 % of the total business

establishments in Malaysia are SMEs. They contribute about 31% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Furthermore, SME's shares 56% of the country total employment and 19% of the country exports. Hence, Malaysia government has long recognized the contribution and important of SMEs in generating employment opportunity and GDP growth.

In Malaysia, various programs and agencies are available to support and promote the growth of SMEs sector. A better understanding of the motivations for business ownership would undoubtedly contribute to a better understanding of entrepreneurial behavior. The definition of SMEs used in this study is based on the definition provided by SME Corp Malaysia. The following table will define SMEs enterprise in each of the respective sectors based on the Annual Sales Turnover or Number of Full-Time Employees.

As shown in figure 2, distribution of SMEs in Malaysia falls into 3 sectors: service, manufacturing, and agriculture. In terms of the total number of SMEs in the country, the census of establishments & enterprises 2005 conducted by the Department of Statistics Malaysia showed there was a total of 548267 SMEs. The largest sector, services sectors, accounted for 474706 establishments or 87% of the total, followed by manufacturing with 39373 establishments or 7% and the agriculture accounted for 34188 establishments or 6%.

	Micro-enterprise	Small enterprise	Medium enterprise
Manufacturing, Manufacturing-Related Services and Agro-based industries	Sales turnover of less than RM250,000 OR full time employees less than 5	Sales turnover between RM250,000 and less than RM10 million OR full time employees between 5 and 50	Sales turnover between RM10 million and RM25 million OR full time employees between 51 and 150
Services, Primary Agriculture and Information & Communication Technology (ICT)	Sales turnover of less than RM200,000 OR full time employees less than 5	Sales turnover between RM200,000 and less than RM1 million OR full time employees between 5 and 19	Sales turnover between RM1 million and RM5 million OR full time employees between 20 and 50

Figure 1: Definition of SMEs (Source: SME Corp Malaysia)

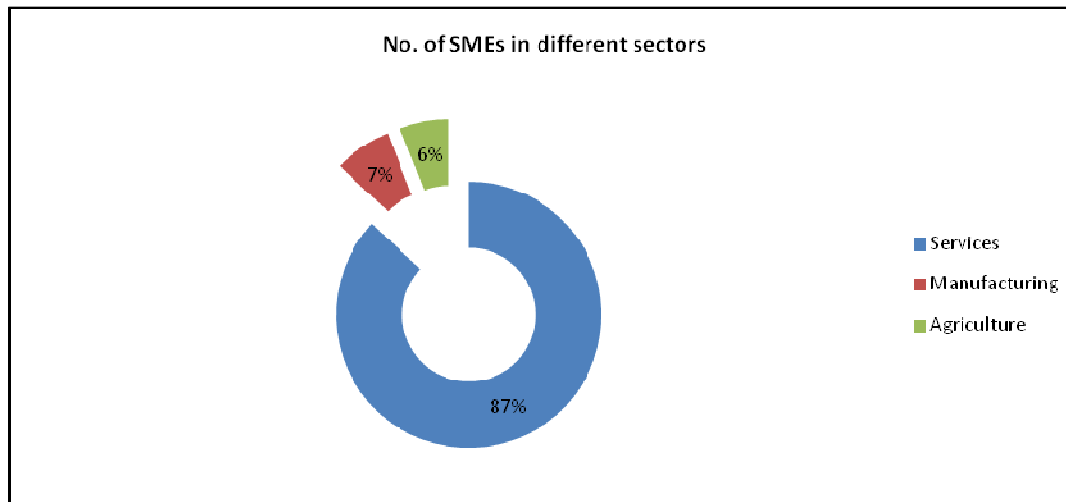


Figure 2: Number of SMEs in different sectors (Source: the census of establishment & enterprise 2005)

The aim of this study is to better understand what motivate urban Malaysian entrepreneurs to start and maintain SMEs in Malaysia. Specifically, this study endeavors to achieve the following objectives: 1) to examine the motivations for urban Malaysian entering into a business, and 2) to identify any significant motivational difference amongst Malay and Chinese entrepreneurs. However, psychological aspects such as the different gender roles, family and age were not considered which may in fact play an important role on understanding the differences.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

A number of studies attempted to provide an insight into the various motivational aspects of people entering into a business (Benzing, Chu, & Kara, 2009; Kuratko, Hornsby, & Naffziger, 1997; Peterson, 1995; Yves Robichaud, McGraw, & Roger, 2001). The literature indicates that people can either be pulled or pushed into business. Cultural dimensions can exert influence on the legitimating of entrepreneurship. This paper concentrates on reviewing the situational and environmental motivations for starting a business, which are more easily influenced by policy-makers. These 'push-pull' factors are consonant to the objective of this paper.

Motivations for entering business

Various approaches have been taken to explain individual motivation to start and stay in a business. Advocates of personality traits (Collins, Hanges, & Locke, 2004; McClelland, 1976; Rauch & Frese, 2007; Zhao & Seibert, 2006) believe that traits such as need to achieve, a propensity for risk taking, a tolerance for ambiguity, and a preference for locus of control are the primary business motivators.

While, other researchers (Curran & Blackburn, 2001; Hughes, 2003; Ozdemir & Karadeniz, 2009; Shapero & Sokol, 1982; Williams, Round, & Rodgers, 2009) believe that push-pull factors are more important. According to them, individual can be "pushed" into business because all other options for work are unsatisfactory or absent (Levesque & Minniti, 2006; Moore & Buttner, 1997). In other words, they are driven by necessity. On the other hand, individual can be 'pulled' into business because of choices such as desire for achievement, increase wealth or opportunities to exploit a new business (Birley & Westhead, 1994; Burke, FitzRoy, & Nolan, 2002). This group of people is driven by opportunities.

Cross-country studies have found that individuals in developing countries which has experienced erratic performance are more likely to pushed into business (Benzing & Chu, 2009; Benzing, et al., 2009), economic (additional source of income) driven them to start and stay in a business. While those in developed countries are more likely driven by non-

economic factors (ex: independence or family) (Peterson, 1995; Yves. Robichaud, Cachon, & Haq, 2010). Malaysia is a developing country. Thus, we would expect that a high percentage of Malaysians are driven by economic factors to start a business.

H1: The most important motivation for starting a business is to increase income.

According to Kuratko, Hornsby and Naffziger (1997) and Robichaud, Y., McGraw, E., & Roger, A. (2001), motivation items can condensed into 4 factors: extrinsic rewards, family security, independence, and intrinsic rewards. Hence, we hypothesize that the thirteen motivation items can condensed into 4 factors.

H2: The thirteen motivation items can be condensed into four factors: extrinsic, independence, intrinsic and family security.

Motivation and Ethnicity

In a multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual country like Malaysia, one may wonder whether different ethnic groups would exhibit different motivation toward starting a business. Previous research have found that the motivating factors may differ across culture, religion and gender (Gray, Foster, & Howard, 2006; Yves. Robichaud, et al., 2010; Turan & Kara, 2007). According to Gray, Foster, & Howard (2006), culture is pervasive and entrenched in all societies. Our identities as individuals evolve around our upbringing, the people we meet, the knowledge, skills and experiences we acquired. All of this plays a role in our personal values and decision-making (Chu & Katsioloudes, 2001; Deal & Kennedy, 2000; Peters & Austin, 2010).

The Malay culture is very hierarchical and lack of individual decision-making. They respect those in positions of authority and expect their superiors to act autocratically. They believe in formal ceremonies and strict tradition (Lim, 1998; Mohamad, 2010). They have, by tradition, learnt to depend on each other, to be integrated in a larger human unit. Malay's society are accustomed to a high collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, high power distance, and low masculinity (Idris, 2008).

As mention earlier, Malays score high in uncertainty avoidance. The idea of entrepreneurship is not appearing and even social discourage in Malay society due to the uncertainty nature of entrepreneurship (Busenitz & Lau, 1996; Mueller & Thomas, 2001). Furthermore, Malay as Muslim believe that the definition of success are not associate with only wealth (Al-Omar & Abdel-Haq, 1996). The Malay society stress a high importance in the social justice and communal well being as business goals

(Ismail, 2007). The comparison studies done by Turan and Kara (2007) illustrated that Muslim are more likely to be 'pulled' into business than non-Muslim.

The Chinese are very similar to Malay in term of high collectivism and high power distance (Idris, 2008). However, Chinese scores high on Hofstede's Masculinity Index (Idris, 2008) indicate that they are expected to being tough, individualistic, decisive and have stronger desire for individual advancement and leadership. There certainly no dearth of evidence of the high value place on competition, winning and getting ahead in Chinese society.

Chinese have positive association with power and wealth. They place high value on materialism and are less averse of risk uncertainty (Chong, Dr Syed Azizi Wafa, & Dr Roselina A Saufi, 2003). The important business goal is profit, and; achievement is defined in terms of recognition and wealth. Hence, monetary rewards will be a great motivator for Chinese to enter into a business.

Based on the literature discussed above, there are much dissimilarity between Malay entrepreneurs and Chinese entrepreneurs in terms of cultural background. Hence, we expect there is a significant difference between ethnic groups with respect to the motivations of entering business.

H3: There is a significant difference in the motivation between the Malay entrepreneurs and Chinese entrepreneurs with respect of entering a business

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in the study is outlined in this section. First, a description of the design of the research instrument is presented. Next, the sampling procedure, and the data collection method are discussed. The face-to-face survey approached was adopted for this study.

Research Instruments

A three-page questionnaire adapted from the questionnaire used by Benzing, Chu, and Kara (2009) was used. This questionnaire has been proven reliable under various contexts of economic development. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section measures the motivations for entrepreneurs entering into a business. This section consisted of 13 items. The respondents were asked to indicate the level of agreement of each of the statement, from 1 "Unimportant" to 5 "Extremely important".

In section II, personal and demographical data of the respondents were collected. Questions covered age, ethnicity, gender, highest completed level of education, position before starting business, how the business was established, age of business, number of full-time/part-time employees, type of business and yearly sales turnover.

Since Malaysia is a multilingual society, the questionnaire was produce in to three languages: English, Chinese and Malay. A back-to-back method (Zikmund, 2003) was used to translate the original English version of the questionnaire into Malay and Chinese. Translation into Malay language is vital since it is the national language of Malaysia. Furthermore, Malay is the medium of instruction for education. Translation into Chinese language is vital because many Chinese businessman especially small business owners are fluent in neither English nor Malay. Translation into Chinese will greatly increase their response rate. Nevertheless, English version of the questionnaire is needed as well. As a former British colony, English is still the popular language among some older generation Malaysian and the highly educated Malaysians.

Sampling Procedures and Data Collection Method

Data on this research will be based on convenient sampling and snowball sampling. A total of 108 urban entrepreneurs from the Klang Valley were contacted over a period of six months.

Klang Valley was chosen for the survey because of its active economic growth through the development of small and medium businesses. Klang Valley comprises Kuala Lumpur and its adjoining cities, ex. Petaling Jaya, in the state of Selangor. As the capital of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur is the most active commercial center of the country. With up-to-date infrastructure and modern amenities, Klang Valley attracts large number of migrants from other state within Malaysia and foreign workers. A sizable domestic market for services and products is created to cater this region's population.

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country. About sixty Three per cent of the population is Malay and twenty five per cent of the population is Chinese (Department of Statistics, 2011). These two ethnics are the predominant ethnic and have made up eighty eight per cent of the population. Thus, only the Malays and Chinese were included in this study.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics of Small and Medium-sized Entrepreneurs in Malaysia

	Frequency	Percent
Entrepreneurial Characteristics		
Gender		
Male	61	56.5
Female	47	43.5
Ethnic		
Chinese	59	54.6
Malay	49	45.4
Average Age of Entrepreneur (years)	44	
Level of Education		
No formal Education	1	0.9
Primary School	8	7.4
Secondary School	38	35.2
Diploma	24	22.2
Bachelor Degree	29	26.9
Post Graduate Degree	8	7.4
Enterprise Characteristics		
How the Business Was Established		
Established by you	71	65.7
Bought from others	18	16.7
Inherited	15	13.9
Others	4	3.7
Average Age of Business	11	
Average No. of Full-Time Employees	11	
Average No. of Part-Time Employees	3	
Type of Business		
Manufacturing	5	4.6
Manufacturing Related Services	8	7.4
Services	95	88

Table 2: Motivation Factors - Mean Score

Motivational Factors	Mean			Sig*
	Malay	Chinese	Total	
To increase my income	4.54	4.24	4.41	0.016
To prove I can do it	4.37	4.04	4.22	0.038
For my own satisfaction and growth	4.19	4.12	4.16	0.671
To maintain my personal freedom	4.15	3.84	4.01	0.073
To be my own boss	4.08	3.88	3.99	0.217
To be able to use my pass experience and training	4.15	3.63	3.92	0.003
So I will always have job security	4.07	3.55	3.83	0.008
To be closer to my family	3.81	3.31	3.58	0.017
To build a businesses to pass on	3.78	3.16	3.5	0.014
To provide jobs for family members	3.78	3.06	3.44	0.005
Dissatisfaction with previous employment	3.44	2.82	3.16	0.002
To have fun	3.24	2.94	3.1	0.243
Family tradition	3.2	2.53	2.9	0.006

*5= Extremely important, 4 = very important, 3=mildly important, 2=not very important, 1=unimportant

* Level of significance using t-tests.

Table 3: Factor Analysis

	Factor 1 Family Security	Factor 2 Independence	Factor 3 Intrinsic	Factor 4 Income
To be my own boss	0.167	0.579	0.004	0.341
To be able to use my pass experience and training	-0.036	0.613	0.146	0.437
Dissatisfaction with previous employment	0.144	0.060	-0.015	0.718
To I prove can do it	0.456	0.508	-0.135	0.304
To increase my income	0.062	0.637	0.032	0.030
To provide jobs for family members	0.813	0.256	0.125	0.079
For my own satisfaction and growth	0.099	0.724	0.29	-0.175
So I will always have job security	0.194	0.298	0.348	0.572
To build a business to pass on	0.864	0.049	0.150	0.076
To maintain my personal freedom	-0.017	0.108	0.810	0.142
To be closer to my family	0.352	-0.093	0.638	0.460
Family Tradition	0.846	0.025	0.170	0.225
To have fun	0.319	0.199	0.698	-0.159
Eigenvalue	4.28	1.580	1.323	1.052
Percentage of variance explained	0.329	0.122	0.102	0.081
Cronbach Alpha	0.86	0.689	0.619	0.354

In terms of the data collection technique, this study utilized a face-to-face questionnaire approach. Questionnaires were filled out in the author's presence, instead of being collected by mails in. The latter advantage may be noteworthy, in that the usual statement of those businessman requesting the author let them be filled out later and mailed in was, "I will get my assistant to do that tomorrow", or "my secretary always does things like that for me." Respondents are selected first based on judgmental sampling and then snowball sampling. This is because only entrepreneurs are the appropriate candidates for the survey and candidates might be more cooperative through referral program.

Once all the information is gathered from the completed questionnaires, raw data is transferred into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Data Cleaning is first conducted to check for errors made while key in the data.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The findings of the survey will be discussed in this section. This section begins with a description of the general characteristics of the respondents. Then it examined results on the motivation. Finally, the motivations of the two major ethnic groups, Malay and Chinese, will be comparing.

Characteristics of the respondents

A total of 108 respondents are approached. As is shown in Table 1, 56.5 percent of entrepreneurs surveyed identified themselves as male, and 43.5 percent as female. In terms of ethnic, the sample consisted of 45 per cent Malay respondents. Almost 55 per cent of the respondents were Chinese. The average age of entrepreneurs is around 44 years old.

The level of education was high among entrepreneurs selected for the study. 99% of them were literate with only 7.4% of the respondents completed primary school education. About 35% completed secondary school while 56.5% of the respondents have college and university education. The main reason for the high proportion of graduate was probably due to the characteristics of urban population. The better job opportunities, modern amenities, and economic growth attract graduates resulting in a high concentration of them in and around the urban.

When asked how their businesses were established, 65.7 percent of the respondents indicated that they established the business by themselves. A large percentage of business was in the services sectors. 88% of the total is in services and 8% is in the manufacturing related services. Only 5% is in manufacturing sector. None of them is in the agricultural sector since this survey was conducted in

urban. This finding is consistent with the census of establishments & enterprises 2005 conducted by the Department of Statistics.

Based on the definition of SME Corp Malaysia, the sample is dominated by micro and small-sized enterprise. Since the average number of full-time employees per firm is around 11 people and the average number of part-time employee per firm is about 3. The average age of business is 11.15 years.

Motivation for starting a business

The question on motivations required the respondents to rate their levels of important and unimportant on a five-point Likert scale from 1 indicating "Unimportant" to 5 indicating "Extremely Important". Table 2 summarizes the reasons given by respondents for deciding to enter a business. Based on survey responses, the primary reasons for start up a business were "to increase my income" (4.41), "to prove I can do it" (4.22), "for my own satisfaction and growth"(4.16), and "to maintain my personal freedom"(4.01) while the variable "family tradition"(2.9), "to have fun"(3.1) and "dissatisfaction with previous employment" received relatively less priority.

The motivations for entering business for the Malay and Chinese respondents were analyzed using t-tests. As shown in table 2, the motivation "to increase my income", "To prove I can do it", "To be able to use my pass experience and training", "So I will always have job security", "To be closer to my family", "To build a businesses to pass on", "To provide jobs for family members", "Dissatisfaction with previous employment", and "Family tradition" were found to be significant ($p \leq 0.05$).

An item-by-item comparison showed statistically no significant differences across Malay and Chinese. Both ethnics were motivated primarily by increase income, to prove they can do it and for their own satisfaction and growth.

Finding of this study supported hypothesis H1 as to increase income is the prime motivator. The finding is consistent with survey of entrepreneurs in other developing nations (Benzing & Chu, 2009; Benzing, et al., 2009; Chu & Katsioloudes, 2001; Gray, et al., 2006). In addition, H3 was not supported in that there is no significant difference in the motivation between the Malay and Chinese with respect of entering a business.

Factor Analysis Results

A factor analysis was performed on the 13-item scale to examine for dimensions in the scale. As presented in table 3, using eignvalue ≥ 1 , the analysis produced

four factors, accounting for 63.34 per cent of total variance. As recommended by Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., & Babin, B. J. (2010), a solution of about 60 per cent for social science study is considered satisfactory. Factor 1 explained 32.92 per cent of the total variance. Factor 2, 3 and 4 explained 12.16, 10.18 and 8.09 per cent of total variance, respectively.

The component items for each factor were tested for internal consistency reliability using Cronbach coefficient alpha. The acceptable level of reliability coefficient is 0.50 or greater (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Except for alpha coefficient of factor 4 which had a value lower than 0.50 ($\alpha = 0.354$), the result showed that the alpha coefficients of the other three factors were more than 0.6. The alpha coefficients of Factor 1, 2 and 3 were 0.86, 0.689 and 0.619, respectively. In the subsequent analysis, Factor 4 was dropped from analysis.

The first factor could be called a family security factor since it includes motivations relate "to provide jobs for family members", "to build a business to pass on" and "family tradition". Together these variables explained 32.9 percent of the variance. The second factor could be called an independence factor. It contained five motives: "to be my own boss", "to be able to use my pass experience and training", "to prove I can do it", "to increase my income" and "for my own satisfaction and growth". Grouped together these variables explained 12.2 percent of the variance. Interestingly, "to increase my income" was group in the independence factor even if it is often seen in the literature as a separate motive. It can be argue that some of the respondents had interpreted this motive with an intrinsic perspective whereby financial stability is needed in order to attain personal independence. Finally, the third factor is an intrinsic factor composed of "to maintain my personal freedom", to be closer to my family" and "to have fun", explaining 10.2 percent of the variance. The result of this study does not support hypothesis H2 that four factors would emerge similar to Kuratko *et al.* (1997) and Robichaud *et al.*'s (2001) four factor model.

DISCUSSION

It is widely known that entrepreneurship is a key priority area in stimulate job and wealth for the nation (Hashim, 2007; Hashim & Wafa, 2002). Entrepreneurship means much more than starting a new business. It helps men and women develop skills and experiences that can be applied to many other challenges in life.

This study adds more understanding to the entrepreneurial body of knowledge by revealing facets of the business that are similar and dissimilar

to entrepreneurial pursuits in different ethics of the issues concern by urban Malaysia. If the motivators differ across ethics, then the policies must be specifically designed to meet the goals and needs of the entrepreneurs within each ethic.

Results obtained on this study showed that Malaysian urban entrepreneurs shared several similar motivators as other developing countries, such as increase wealth (Benzing, et al., 2009; Chu & Katsioloudes, 2001) . According to respondents, the variables they rated as most important were in rank order, "to increase my income", "to prove I can do it", "for my own satisfaction and growth", and "to maintain my personal freedom". If entrepreneurs are motivated primarily by economically oriented motivational variables, then increasing the profitability of business ownership should encourage more people to enter into SMEs. However, it is worth to note that Malaysian entrepreneurs perceived and ranked non economic motives as important motivators as well.

In terms of the importance given to each of the factors as defined by the principal component analysis, it is to be noted that factors "Family/security" was ranked first. It suggested that the Malaysian urban entrepreneurs are live in a collectivistic society. They are influence by expectation from their families. They are committed to family honor, loyalties and responsibilities. They are motivated by security and belonging.

LIMITATION AND DISCUSSION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the fact that all survey data is going to be self reported and thus potentially subject to a number of cognitive and motivational biases and errors. The data might prone to the potential problems of self-serving bias, memory distortion, and, social desirability bias. However, it important to bear in mind that this study is intend to elicit the perception of entrepreneurs rather than 'objective' measures of motivations.

A second limitation may result from snowball sampling. One possible bias is that isolated members of the community will be under sampled, whereas others who may have more extensive contacts and acquaintances are oversampled. It is possible that bias was introduced into our sample if the entrepreneurs preferred to refer us to other entrepreneurs who are in the same social class as they are. For example, a male grocer refers us to another male hawker who is his former classmate.

As the sample of this study will be collected only from Klang Valley, author is limited in the area of entrepreneurs author can cover. Therefore, data used in this study may not be directly generalizable to other areas of the country. Instead, it must be

interpreted with an eye to general principles that transcend such specifics. In addition, the study could be improved by expanding the research to cover larger geographical area to include the whole Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

Although not exhaustive and conclusive, the empirical finding has provided some insight into the motivators of urban entrepreneurs. It might be very helpful to owners and managers of SMEs, policy makers, academicians, researchers, as well as small business consultants. Learning more about entrepreneurs could help policy makers examine the priorities and desires of their citizens. A variety of programs can be designed to motivate the creation of new businesses and to generate an environment conducive to economic growth.

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