Demographic Characteristics Differences and Sales Performance among Night Market Traders in Malaysia

Fauzilah Salleh

Faculty of Business Management and Accountancy, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin

Kampus Gong Badak, Kuala Terengganu 21300, Terengganu, Malaysia

E-mail: fauzilah@unisza.edu.my

Noryati Yaakub

Faculty of Business Management and Accountancy, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin

Kampus Gong Badak, Kuala Terengganu 21300, Terengganu, Malaysia

E-mail: noryati@unisza.edu.my

Mahani Mohamad

Faculty of Languages and Communication, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin

Kampus Gong Badak, Kuala Terengganu 21300, Terengganu, Malaysia

E-mail: mahani@unisza.edu.my

Mazuri Abd. Ghani

Faculty of Business Management and Accountancy, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin

Kampus Gong Badak, Kuala Terengganu 21300, Terengganu, Malaysia

E-mail: mazuri@unisza.edu.my

Wan Kuntom Wan Sulong

Faculty of Contemporary Islam, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin

Kampus Gong Badak, Kuala Terengganu 21300, Terengganu, Malaysia

E-mail: wkuntom@unisza.edu.my

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the different demographic characteristics and the sales performance among Night Market Traders in Malaysia. The study was conducted in the East Coast region of Peninsular Malaysia on night market traders. A total of 350 night market traders were interviewed. Demographic Characteristics considered were gender, age and education level and business experience. The study concludes that there are no significant differences between sales performance and business traders' demographic characteristics such as gender, age and education level but business experience do show significant difference.

Keywords: Performance, Demographic characteristics, Night market

1. Introduction

Oxford University Press Dictionary defines Night Market as a group of night market stalls selling food items or places the needs of trade at night. The night markets are usually operated as early as 5.00 pm and lasting until 12:00 pm. Night market is a place of retail business which is categorized as a market / stall on the move, order desk, which extends down the road and using public or private site (Ibrahim & Leng, 2003). Night market business is also defined

as hawking activities although it is semi-static or seasonal. This business markets a wide range of consumer commodities from food and non food items that operates once or twice a week in different places. The existence of the night market is due to the availability of supply and demand from the night market traders that give them the opportunity to increase income and also for buyers to help them acquire diverse needs with everyday low prices. Among the variety of daily necessities in the night market that makes the night market favored by all segments of society are essential kitchen items (wet and dry goods), clothing, fruit, food, drinks and a few other items (www.hbp.usm.my).

Night market trader activity is contributing to the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) that have economic value. The role played by the night market traders in the economy is huge. According to the Dictionary of the House economy means to provide, produce, and create wealth or material of a country. Halvorson and Raundi (1992) in their study to state the business of micro-economic values; income and output, provide employment opportunities for the cheap, using domestic inputs and products / services cheaper.

MSMEs in Malaysia are regarded as a rapidly growing industry. It also stimulate sand contributes to the achievement of national economic development objectives. The industry produces a variety of jobs that require skills and education, strengthens the family ties in the community, prevents the loss of population, attracts expertise and investment in the community and creates lasting stability (Minoo & Charles, 2003). According to the Census of Establishment and Company Foundation (Baseline Census of Establishments and Enterprises), launched in March 2005, on agriculture, manufacturing (including agro-based) and services, from 523 132 companies and enterprises that responded, it was found that 99.2 % or 518 996 of business is MSMEs that contribute to the total output of 38 %. In terms of employment, the MSMEs accounted for 65.1 % of total employment come from agriculture, manufacturing and services. The census also found that the majority of MSMEs are small in which 79 % or 411 849 companies are micro enterprises with full-time employees who work less than 5 people (BNM, 2006).

Several factors, directly and indirectly identified as stimulants to the development of MSMEs in Malaysia. Assistance by the government is an important factor in promoting MSMEs. For example, the government has allocated RM 1.1 billion through the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP) as provisions to support this industry. Prime Minister in his presentation of the 9MP suggested that implementing the product and process innovation, building a far-sighted and uses a sophisticated and affordable technology. Besides state aid, environmental changes such as globalization and technology development will also stimulate the development of MSMEs in Malaysia. Under the 9MP, all the MSMEs are urged to look ahead and invest in innovation, technology, human capital and the innovation process to ensure that development of new products and services continued to compete in the global market.

According to the definition of Micro Small and Medium Enterprise Development Council (MSMEs) Malaysia, micro company is based on total annual sales of less than RM 200 000.00 (current exchange rate 1 USD = RM 3.05) and has full-time workers less than 5 people as in Table 1. From the definition, among the sectors identified under this category are hawkers covering public and private markets, the group stalls, and night market traders. The Government has recognized the hawking and the night market as one of the most important economic activities carried on in many places in Malaysia. It is also a sector that has proven capable of providing retail services to the users and channels the supply of goods and services from producers.

In the report of SME Annual Report (2011), 99 % of the companies are the majority of SMEs (79 %) come from micro companies. This industry accounted for only 6 % of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 7.7 % of employment. This contribution is significantly lower than the global average of 80 % of SMEs contributing to 50 % of GDP. Given the level of SME contribution to GDP is 31.9 %, indicating that it has a low performance.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the differences between demographic characteristics and sales performance of Malaysian Night Market traders. The study would enhance the understanding of whether, and if so, how demographic characteristics can affect owners of Night Market performance.

This study is important to be executed based on several reasons. First, the performance of the night market traders is significant factors in MSMEs because they help business development. The results of this study will help the night market traders in particular and generally MSME entrepreneurs to obtain information and direction of their role in developing the business and contribute to GDP. Second, results from this study are important to help government institutions such as SIRIM, Entrepreneur Development Foundation and SMIDEC in providing guidance in the form of research to the MSME entrepreneurs to meet future needs, providing financial assistance, providing awareness and sales of retail and ongoing research to innovation can be implemented so that the MSMEs can keep pace with the activities of the Malaysian economy. Finally, this study is important to identify the factors that contribute to the success of SMEs and thus to the economy.

2. Literature Review

Sharma, Miller, and Reeder (1990) in their study define micro-business is characterized by companies such as: i) implemented and managed one or two employees; ii) established by family and; iii) the functions are in the informal sector. Factors which develops micro-businesses, including the sources of innovation, opportunities for new products and services of a market place and support private infrastructure and public companies.

There are many ways to measure the success of a micro business. Minoo and Charles (2003) measure the performance of micro-industry through sales, profit, market share and future stability in the study of micro-businesses. According to Brown and Eisenhardt (1995) success was measured based on financial performance including profitability, sales and market share. For Wasilczuk (2000) to measure progress and success of small businessmen was difficult, and it can be measured objectively and subjectively. Objective measurements are difficult to obtain information that could impact the achievement of an organization. The result can be measured in terms of quantity and quality and is usually measured by profitability and sales. While the subjective measure is the information that is not so easy to gather, include information on assessment and behavior business.

Knowles and White (1995) found that revenue and profit are two factors to develop a small business where the revenue in question is the amount of cash received from sales or services rendered (Gaber, Davidson, Stickney and Weil, 1993). Meanwhile, Worms (1998) use sales as a performance measure that can be easily understood by the respondent.

Research on gender differences in small business ownership is still a taboo (Minoo & Charles, 2003). However, this study provides a significant impact on business performance micro-focus after by several researchers (Coleman, 2000; Minoo & Charles 2003). Similarly, studies conducted to determine gender differences of annual sales and profit performance (Orser & Foster, 1992; Heck, Rowe & Owen, 1995; Coleman, 2000). The study found that there were significant differences on the performance of small scales industries run by men and women. The test results showed that gender is not a problem for women entrepreneurs than men in getting critical resources. A study by Minoo, and Charles (2003) on expertise in business such as marketing, strategic planning and technical, financial categories (resources that are critical to success) has found that women entrepreneurs are not having problems than do men manage their critical resources. However, a study conducted by Sonfield, Lussier, Corman and Mc Kinney (2001) found no difference between genders in terms of innovation, risk acceptance and the strategic approach used.

Inmyxai and Takahashi (2010), conducted a study of the 840 MSMEs in Lao to examines and compare the performance contrast of male and female headed firms. This research discovered that, the differences exist between male and female headed firms in terms of determinants factors of firm performance.

MSME business entrepreneurs are comprised of all ages. Several studies have been carried out to see the relationship between age and successful business owners. A study by Heck et al. (1995) concluded that more business owners and educated age showed a better performance. Another study by Orser and Foster (1992) also yields the same result of a business owner, 40 years and has a chance to earn more than those younger than 40 years.

Academic level of the business owners also plays an equally important role in developing the business. This business owner has the only level of education until the end of primary school graduates. Heck et al. (1995) states that a well-educated business owners to continue business operations and get a good income. Similarly, a study by Wasilczuk (2000) supports the finding from the study above. He concluded those who are educated to manage the company towards a better development than those less educated.

3. Research Design and Methodology

The study was conducted in the East Coast region of Peninsular Malaysia on night market traders. A total of 350 night market traders were interviewed.

3.1 Study Area

This study was conducted to identify demographic characteristics that influence the performance of the night market traders in the state. Studies was conducted in all seven districts comprise of three (3) areas classified as urban, agriculture and fisheries. The selection area based on the following justifications: i) Urban areas selected according to the night market business conducted in urban areas. ii) The business of agriculture as the night market conducted in agricultural areas such as at the confluence of age and rural areas where agricultural activities are focused on. iii) The business of fishing as the night market conducted in coastal areas where the majority of people carrying out activities related to fishing or fisheries.

3.2 Firm Performance

Minoo and Charles (2003) measure the performance of micro-industry through sales, profit, market share and future stability in the study of micro-businesses. Brown and Eisenhardt (1995) measured success based on financial

performance including profitability, sales and market share. For Wasilczuk (2000), it is difficult to measure progress and success of small businessmen, because it can be measured objectively and subjectively. Objective measurements are difficult to obtain information that could impact the achievement of an organization. The result can be measured in terms of quantity and quality and is usually measured by profitability and sales. The subjective measure is the information to include information on assessment and behavior business.

Knowles and White (1995) found that revenue and profit are two factors to develop a small business where the revenue in question is the amount of cash received from sales or services rendered (Gaber et al. 1993). Meanwhile, Worms (1998) use sales as a performance measure that can be easily understood by the respondent. Since there is no consensus the best for performance measurement in business research, a measure must be selected for this study. Researchers will use the annual sales as a measure of success.

3.3 Night Market Traders

This study involved field studies of the night market traders who were interviewed using a convenience sampling method. This task is performed by the researchers themselves. A total of four researchers went to interview the night market traders and the answers were recorded to ensure correct answers. Researchers visited the area by regions according to a schedule provided by district councils throughout the state. A total of 350 night market traders were interviewed. During the conducted interviews, a set of questionnaires was also used to record the information. The developed questionnaire for this study is used to obtain demographic information, and annual sales.

4. Findings

A total of 350 questionnaires were processed and only 286 (81.7 %) can be used for analysis because the questions were only partly answered. This section presents findings on the profile of night market traders and the type of business carried on, sex, age, education level, business experience and annual sales.

4.1 Analysis of Demographic Profiles of Respondents

The first objective of the study is to file a demographic factors (gender, age, academic level and business experience) night market traders with their annual sales. Referring to Table 2, a total of 286 questionnaires analyzed, there were 53.1 % and 46.9 % male traders female traders, the majority (93 %) consists of the Malay race. The remaining 0.7 % consists of Chinese and 6.3 % are from other nations, especially the people of Cambodia. In terms of age, the majority (85 %) is in middle age, i.e. 26-55 years and 8 % in the age group above 55 years old and the oldest was 70 years old. This indicates that the need to continue to do business is only to continue their living. In terms of education, most of the low-educated businessmen with primary school education (33.6 %), lower secondary education (22.7 %), SPM (O-Level equivalence) (36.7 %) and STPM (A-Level equivalence) (4.5 %). There is only 2.4 % diploma and degree-educated traders.

4.2 Analysis of the Sales Performance

Some night market traders (42 %) earn less than sales of RM50 000.00 per annum. 33.6 % traders earn annual sales between RM50 000.00 to RM99 999.00 followed by the annual sales of RM100 000.00-RM149 999.00 annual sales with 5.6 %. Annual sales gain exceeding RM200 000.00 and from the findings of the study. One trader's annual sales were RM546 000.00. These show that the night market traders are able to generate very high sales.

4.3 Night Market Traders' Performance

Next discussion is to look into the night market traders' demographic characteristics and their sales performance in terms of the annual sales. Several factors were considered such as gender, age, education level, business experience using cross-table analysis to see the performance of the night market traders in general. A summary profile of demographic differences and of their sales performance is display in Table 3.

4.4 Demographic Characteristics and Sales Performance

4.4.1 Gender and Sales Performance

Table 3 shows that 42.0 % of business acquired annual sales less than RM50 000.00. 22 % are business women and 19.9 % were males. While traders have high annual sales and more than RM200 000.00 was 3.1 % and 2.4 % women are men. This shows that there is no significant difference in terms of annual sales by women and men.

4.4.2 Age and Sales Performance

In terms of age as compared to annual sales, it is found that the traders of 36 to 45 years of age are the most numerous (26.6 %) to make annual sales of less than RM100 000.00. This was followed by the traders aged between 26 to 35 years with 19.2 %. Similarly, the achievement of annual sales turnover exceeding RM200 000.00 are from the same

age category. This shows that the age category of 25 to 45 year old make up the majority of the night market traders which is by 56.3 %.

4.4.3 Education Level and Sales Performance

The Educational level showed no difference between the night market traders with diploma / degree and night market traders who complete education up to secondary school in terms of annual sales across different types of businesses. Whether the night market traders have high school education or diplomas / degrees, both obtained annual sales of less than RM50 000.00. The most interesting thing is that night market traders who have no formal education / primary school (1.4 %) could make annual sales exceeding RM200 000.00.

4.4.4 Business Experience and Sales Performance

Table 3 also shows that the number of years in business does not always translate to higher sales revenue. This can be seen from the number of years in the business over 25 years (0.3 %) is only able to generate the annual sales of up to RM100 000.00 compared with number of years in business under 5 years (0.3 %) which have been able to generate sales of more than RM200 000.00.

This section makes hypothesis testing involves four criteria demographic of the traders covering gender, age, academic level and business experience. Therefore, the t-test was used to examine the significant difference between genders with sales performance. Meanwhile, analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be used to compare differences between age groups, levels of academic and business experience with the sales performance.

● Gender

Hypothesis 1: There are significant differences based on sales performance and the gender night market traders.

Result of the t-test is to compare between genders with sales performance. Table 4 below showed there was no significant difference on sales performance between male and female traders. So, hypothesis 1 was failed to be accepted. T-test showed t (286) = 1.16, p > 0001. The study describes the businessmen and women are equally able to achieve higher sales results or have the potential to succeed in this field.

● Age

Hypothesis 2: There are significant differences based on sales performance and the age of the night market traders.

Results from the analysis of variance displayed in Table 5, shows the mean sales for the traders in the category of less than 25 years of age was 0.88, 26 to 35 years (2:01), 36 to 45 years (2:08) and 1.73 for the category exceeds 56 years. However, the mean difference shown insignificant at 12:05 with a confidence level F (286) = 0585, p > 0.05. These findings show there is no significant difference between the annual sales based on age of traders. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was failed to be accepted.

● Education Level

Hypothesis 3: There are significant differences based on sales performance and the academic level of the night market traders.

Table 6 shows the results of analysis of mean differences between the educational levels of sales performance. Mean difference is displayed is found to be significant at the confidence level of F 00:05 (286) = 0.49, p > 0.05. Based on the findings, there is no significant difference between the education levels of traders to their sales performance. Thus hypothesis 3 also failed to be accepted.

● Business Experience

Hypothesis 4: There are significant differences based on sales performance and the business experience of night markets traders.

Table 7 shows the results of analysis of the mean difference between business experience and sales performance of the traders. Mean difference is displayed is significant at the confidence level of F 00:05 (286) = 4182, p > 0.05. Based on the findings, there is significant difference between the business experience and sales performance. Thus Hypothesis 4 is accepted.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Gender

The first hypothesis of the study is "There is no significant difference between the traders' demographic factors, particularly gender with sales performance." After testing this hypothesis, the findings have proven there is no significant difference between gender with sales performance and shows the trader's sales performance is the same man and woman. The study is contrary to the studies carried out to identify gender differences in the performance of

annual sales and profits by Orser and Foster (1992); Heck et al. (1995) and Coleman (2000) found that there were significant differences on performance of small industry run by men and women. Similarly, a study by Coleman, (2000); Minoo and Charles (2003) have a significant impact on the performance of micro-businesses. However, Minoo and Charles (2003) who conducted the study of gender differences in small business ownership, his findings were ambiguous.

5.2 Age

"There was no significant difference between the traders of demographic factors, particularly age of traders' sales performance" is the second hypothesis in the demographic factors for this study does not prove the existence of significant differences between the age of the performance of traders' sales and it shows age cannot determine sales performance. Traders, young and old can each play a role in determining the success of a business based on sales. The results of this study once again are contrary to the study by Heck et al. (1995) which concluded that more business owners' age and education showed a better performance. Similarly, another study by Orser and Foster (1992) who also produced the same results that a business owner of 40 years and older have a chance to earn more than those younger than 40 years old.

5.3 Education Level

Education level of the traders is said to play an equally important role in developing the business. As with other businesses, traders at the night market also have a level of education only until the end of primary school graduates. However, the results of this study also found that the education level did not provide significant differences on the sales performance. Again, these results contradict the results of a study conducted by Heck et al. (1995) who found that highly educated business owners to continue business operations and get a good income. Similarly, a study by Wasilczuk (2000) supports the finding from the study above. He concluded that those who are educated to manage the company towards a better development than those less educated.

5.4 Business Experience

Experience increased in parallel with the age of traders. If a business can continue operations beyond the initial period and growing business within five years, it could be said that the business has been successful (Gray & Gray, 1994). Orser and James (1992) found that the longer a business operates, more and more workers are employed and thus the annual income increases. The findings of this study also proved the age of the business have significant differences with the sales performance.

Conflicting findings of demographic factors in this study with previous studies is possibly due to different respondents, or differences in or under one category of micro-businesses. This study focuses on the night market traders which are also defined as hawking activities even though it is semi-static or seasonal. This business markets a wide range of consumer commodities from food and non food items that operate once or twice a week in different places. In Malaysia, the business conducted on a regular night markets across the country, while in countries where previous studies carried out, the micro-industry business made more formal and permanent place.

Given the differences between the night market traders against the respondent micro business elsewhere, contradictions found between this study and previous studies may be accepted. Because this study supports existing theory and other related studies, it is very important to examine in detail how the business practices, in contrast to other micro industries. The study will come to see the same thing on an ongoing basis and compared with the findings from this study. Studies have consistently useful to look at changes to business practices so that there will be improvement.

Given this research tool using independent variables derived from previous studies and self-evaluation by the subjects performed outside the country have different customs and culture, follow-up studies on new subjects to be done to see how far the consistency of the findings from the study. The proposed studies are based on such qualitative study of work culture night market traders will be able to help you understand the aspects and business patterns that can generate high annual sales. This will help researchers to make comparisons in terms of values and beliefs to evaluate aspects of the similarities and differences compared to quantitative measurement.

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Table 1. Definition of Micro Enterprises (MEs)

Sectors	i) Annual Sales Turnover or	ii) No. of Full time Employees
Manufacturing, Manufacturing-Related Services, & Agro-based Industries	Less than RM250 000 OR	Less than 5
Services, Primary Agriculture, Information & Communication Technology (ICT)	Less than RM200 000 OR	Less than 5

Table 2. Demographic Profiles of the Respondents (n = 286)

Respondents'	Characteristics	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	53.1
	Female	46.9
Age	Below 25 years	7.0
	26 – 35 years	20.6
	36 – 45 years	35.7
	46 – 55 years	28.7
	56 and above	8.0
Education Level	No formal education	33.6
	SRP / PMR (lower Secondary)	22.7
	SPM (equivalent to O level)	36.7
	STPM (equivalent to A level)	4.5
	Diploma / Degree and above	2.4
Business Experience	Below 5 years	34.3
	5 – 14 years	38.1
	15 – 24 years	23.8
	25 – 34 years	2.8
	More than 35 years	1.0
*Annual Sales	Less than RM49 999	42.0
	RM50 000 – RM99 999	33.6
	RM100 000 – RM149 999	14.0
	RM150 000 – RM199 999	4.9
	More than RM200 000	5.6

Note: * Current Exchange Rate: 1USD = RM3.05.

Table 3. Crosstabulation between Sales Performance and Demografic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics	*Sales Performance									
	Less than RM49 999		RM 50 000 - RM99 999		RM100 000 - RM149 999		RM150 000 - RM199 999		More than RM200 000	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender										
Male	57	19.9	59	20.6	21	7.3	8	2.8	7	2.4
Female	63	22.0	37	12.9	19	6.6	6	2.1	9	3.1
Age										
Below 25 years	13	4.5	13	4.5	4	1.4	2	0.7	0	0.0
26 – 35 years	30	10.5	25	8.7	7	2.4	3	1.0	6	2.1
36 – 45 years	40	14.0	36	12.6	18	6.3	5	1.7	7	2.4
46 – 55 years	26	9.1	21	7.3	11	3.8	2	0.7	2	0.7
56 and above	11	3.8	1	0.3	0	0.0	2	0.7	1	0.3
Education Level										
No formal education	41	14.3	33	11.5	14	4.9	4	1.4	4	1.4
SRP / PMR	28	9.8	21	7.3	11	3.8	3	1.0	2	0.7
SPM	45	15.7	36	12.6	11	3.8	6	2.1	7	2.4
STPM	4	1.4	4	1.4	2	0.7	0	0.0	3	1.0
Diploma / Degree and above	2	0.6	2	0.6	2	0.6	1	0.3	0	0.0
Business Experience										
Below 5 years	52	18.2	35	12.2	8	2.8	2	0.7	1	0.3
5 – 14 years	40	14.0	30	10.5	25	8.7	6	2.1	8	2.8
15 – 24 years	23	8.0	29	10.1	6	2.1	3	1.0	7	2.4
25 – 34 years	2	0.7	2	0.7	1	0.3	3	1.0	0	0.0
More than 35 years	3	1.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

Note: * Current Exchange Rate: 1USD = RM3.05.

Table 4. Sales Performance Based on Gender

	Male		Female		t	Sig-t
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Sales Performance	2.54	.6588	2.43	.6563	1.16	.266

Note: Not significant at confidence level 0.05 (two-tailed).

Table 5. Sales Performance Based on Age

Age	Less than 25		26 - 35		36 - 45		46 - 55		More than 56		F	Sig.F
(year)	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Sales Performance	1.80	0.88	2.01	1.21	2.08	1.16	1.92	1.01	1.73	1.12	.585	.674

Note: Not significant at confidence level 0.05 (two-tailed).

Table 6. Sales Performance Based on Education Level

Education level	No formal education		SRP / PMR		SPM		STPM		Diploma / Degree and above		F	Sig.F
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Sales Performance	1.92	1.06	1.92	1.04	1.99	1.17	2.54	1.56	2.00	1.00	0.888	.490

Note: Not significant at confidence level 0.05 (two-tailed).

Table 7. Sales Performance Based on Business Experience

Business Experience	Below 5 years		6 – 14 years		15 – 24 years		25 -34 years		35 years and above		F	Sig.F
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Sales Performance	1.62	0.81	2.13	1.22	2.21	1.09	2.25	1.30	2.17	1.34	4.182	.003[*]

Note: [*] Significant at confidence level 0.05 (two-tailed).