

Information needs of Malaysian Bumiputera would-be entrepreneurs

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the findings of a part of a study that aims to investigate the information needs of Malaysian Bumiputera entrepreneurs. The study adopted a quantitative approach and questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 400 Bumiputera would-be entrepreneurs who had attended entrepreneurial development courses. It was found that the types of business information needed by the respondents were preparation of business plan, followed by planning of cash flow, examination of business opportunities, and profit planning. The results indicated that the types of business information considered very important were information related to planning of cash flow, followed by preparation of business plan, profit planning, communications with clients, business opportunities, courses on entrepreneurship, and creativeness and innovativeness in business. The study found that respondents obtained most of their business information by talking to other entrepreneurs, followed by sharing experience with other entrepreneurs, discussing with friends/relatives, reading newspaper and magazines, and asking clients. The results revealed that the sources from which respondents obtained their business information were courses, followed by business exhibitions, Internet/e-mail, business premises, government agencies, and technical training. The respondents considered clients and other entrepreneurs as very important sources of business information. The study had a profound impact on making recommendations to business supporting agencies concerning entrepreneurs' and business sectors' information needs in Malaysia.

Keywords: Business information; Information needs; Information sources; Bumiputera entrepreneurs; Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Business information is seen as business asset to entrepreneurs who know the importance of using business information. The awareness and knowing that business enterprise has economic value will therefore persuade entrepreneurs to use business information so that they can continue to survive in the future.

Entrepreneurs "would-be" are prospective entrepreneurs who aspire to do business for a living. In order to do so, they need to acquire business information and possess skills in gathering information. The information required will enable them to identify business opportunities, determine current market trends, seek assistance in finance, find quality

vendors, identify services provided by governments and find other kinds of business-related information. They also need timely and relevant information to make informed business decisions. However, the business information that currently exists are not organised to facilitate easy access and retrieval. Furthermore, the information is not relevant enough to meet the growing demands of the would-be entrepreneurs. Information can be very valuable to business people if it is provided at the right time, using the right channels, and is reliable. Such information will guide would-be entrepreneurs in decision-making processes. However, information relevant to the information needs is scarce, thus hindering effective business decision-making.

This paper attempts to reveal the types of business information needed by Bumiputera would-be entrepreneurs in Malaysia, their methods of obtaining the information and the sources they used in getting the business information. The term "Bumiputera" originally meant "child of the earth". It refers to ethnic Malays and other indigenous people, and Bumiputeras comprise 65% of Malaysia's population (Fukunaga 2010).

LITERATURE REVIEW

All business enterprises need business information for different business activities. Lavrin and Zelko (2003) pointed out information that are most needed by the business enterprises include: (a) business contacts i.e. information on business and marketing partners, technology providers and public incentives bodies; (b) available market opportunities such as procurement and marketing opportunities; (c) markets for products or goods; and (d) services and research information.

In determining the key business information needs of Aboriginal entrepreneurs and service providers, Vodden, Miller, and McBride's (2001) study revealed that the most important types of information content for Aboriginal entrepreneurs include: financing options, business planning, information that is specific to Aboriginal business, accounting and financial management, information about government programs, markets and marketing. Entrepreneurs prefer to get information in person and/or in seminars and most often sought out information from familiar "safe" environments at home and in their communities.

A study by Norliya (2010) on the types of information needed by new managers of small and medium-sized enterprises in Shah Alam, Malaysia found that the most common types of information required by business managers are business information/opportunities, financial sources, current marketing trends, location, survey/research and sources of raw materials or intermediate products, information on customers, government regulations and policies, competitors, business registration, method/equipment/technology, risk, and labour availability, profitability, networking methods and travels. Knowledge of business information and types of business concepts are the two most common specific information needs under business information/opportunities, while information on the availability of borrowed capital is the single most common specific information need under financial sources. Respondents are generally most concerned with the sources of their capital requirement.

A survey by COMPAS Inc. (2001) found that in terms of information sources, entrepreneurs look most often to 'informal' sources from their clients, suppliers and colleagues. That this should be so points to the informal nature of the information itself that business seems to

value most. Information and learning from clients, suppliers and colleagues often comes through personal contact, whether by phone, in person, or e-mail. Such sources are less known for offering access to articles, reports or “information documents” in other form.

The library is the least significant source of information to would-be entrepreneurs. A study by Norliya, Masitah and Siti Zahrah (2009) showed that a library is the least significant source of information both in terms of the percentage of respondents identifying it as one, and their perceived level of importance of it being a source of business information. There are several reasons why would-be entrepreneurs are not using libraries that much. These are ICT related problems (23.9%), poor library services (17.4%), non up-to-date library collection (16.1%), respondents’ own attitude towards library use (16.1%), locations of libraries (probably inconveniently located) (16.1%), and laziness on the part of respondents themselves (10.3%). For those who obtain business information from libraries, there is no difference in such preponderance between graduate and non-graduate respondents, but on the average, female respondents are more likely to use libraries to obtain business information than male respondents.

Empirical research shows a great reliance of entrepreneurs on their personal networks in venture development and maintenance. Dodd (1997) discovered that entrepreneurs spend a significant amount of time developing and maintaining contacts and talking to other people about business. The entrepreneurs in the study spend over 40 percent of their time making external contacts.

According to Johannisson (1996), entrepreneurs, in order to overcome the liabilities of newness, must focus on building personal networks. He found that entrepreneurs invest a significant amount of time in network building and maintenance activities. Similarly, the entrepreneurship literature also suggests that successful entrepreneurs are more externally oriented (Jarillo 1989). This might be especially true of entrepreneurs engaging in high technology businesses.

In another study by Norliya, Masitah and Siti Zahrah (2010) on information needs of would-be entrepreneurs in Malaysia, respondents were also asked on their perceived knowledge on gathering business information. The finding revealed that on the average, the respondents perceive themselves to be skillful in gathering business information as a whole. They also perceive themselves to be skillful in all the four components (identifying information needed, searching information, retrieving information, and compiling information) of information gathering, but are relatively more skillful in compiling information than in searching information, retrieving information, and identifying information needs.

A review of literature shows a scarcity of studies on information needs of indigenous or native would-be entrepreneurs that have been reported in the literature. Thus, this study aims to investigate the information needs of Bumiputera would-be entrepreneurs in starting a new business venture.

OBJECTIVES AND METHOD

The purpose of the study is to investigate the information needs of Malaysian Bumiputera would-be entrepreneurs. Specific objectives are to:

- a) identify the types of business information needed by the Bumiputera would-be entrepreneurs;
- b) examine the level of importance of business information to their business needs;
- c) find out their methods of obtaining the information;
- d) determine their sources of business information;
- e) ascertain the level of importance of their various sources of information.

This study employed a quantitative research approach using survey to collect data. The populations for the study were Bumiputera government staff who had attended entrepreneurial development courses jointly organised by the Malaysian Entrepreneurship Development Center (MEDEC) of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Shah Alam and the Ministry of Entrepreneur and Corporative Development (MECD). MEDEC provides training programmes aimed to provide crucial skills and business information for budding and experience entrepreneurs who realize the need to face challenges in the world of business and industry. The government employees were those who were currently working with government agencies/institutions and were approaching mandatory retirement or contemplating optional retirement. They were interested to become entrepreneur and had attended the entrepreneurial development course at MEDEC as a preparation to become one. The unpublished lists of 600 potential respondents were taken from MECD and respondents were selected using random sampling. Questionnaires were distributed to 400 would-be entrepreneurs (from the population as stated above) throughout the country, who had taken entrepreneurship development courses conducted at MEDEC, UiTM. The response rate was 72% or 288 respondents. Descriptive statistics using frequency distributions, percentages, mean, median and standard deviation were performed to analyse the data.

FINDINGS

Profile of Respondents

a) Distribution of Respondents by Age and Gender

Table 1 shows those older than 50 years account for the largest proportion (167; 58.2%) of the sample, followed by those below 30 (68; 23.7%) and those in the 31-50 age group (52; 18.1%). It is quite interesting that a course designed to develop entrepreneurs, at least in terms of initial preparation, has attracted substantial participations from those considered already in their twilight years. This may have to do with the fact that in the past, the participants of MEDEC's entrepreneurship courses were mainly government servants approaching mandatory retirement and those contemplating optional retirement. The latter group may have accounted for the largest percentage among the 31-50 age grouping. The distribution of respondents by gender shows that more than two-thirds (199; 69.8%) are male respondents, while less than one third (86; 30.2%) constitutes female respondents.

b) Distribution of Respondents by Business to Start With

First and foremost, the respondents have not actually started their business ventures, but a high proportion (267; 92.7%) are planning to do so at the time of survey. Figure 1 shows that the largest proportion (102; 38.2%) wants to start with food/agro-based businesses. This is followed a distant second by those planning to go into trading (62; 23.2%). Other businesses being considered, in descending order of the percentage of respondents, are clothing/fashion (35; 13.1%); electronics (20; 7.5%) and ICT (20; 7.5%); hotel/travel (13;

4.9%); construction/building (8; 3.0%); automobile related businesses (5; 1.9%); and multi-level marketing (2; 0.7%).

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age and Gender

Age (n= 287)	Frequency	Percent of Sample
<30	68	23.7
>31-50	52	18.1
>50	167	58.2
Total	287	100.0
Gender (n=285)	Frequency	Percent of Sample
Male	199	69.8
Female	86	30.2
Total	285	100.0

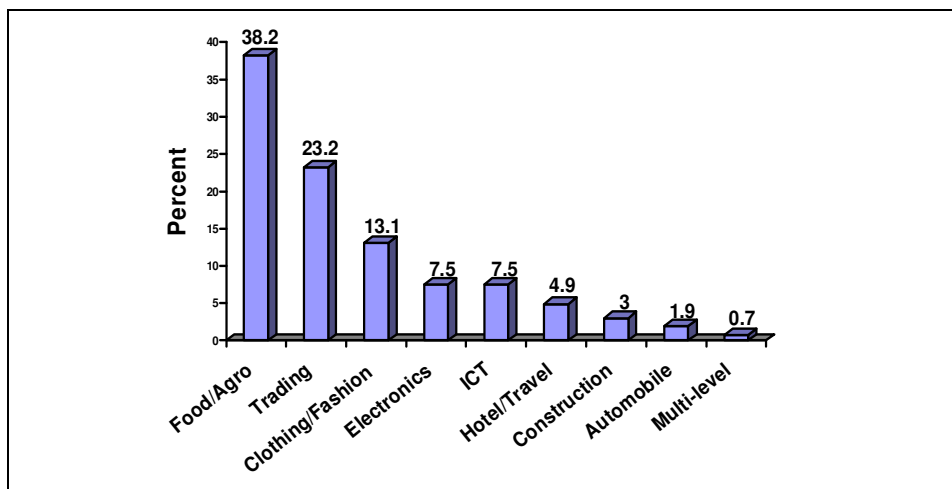


Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Start-up Business Planned

Information Needs of Would-Be Bumiputera Entrepreneurs

a) Types of Information Needed

The myriad of business information needs of the respondents are shown in Table 2, arranged in descending order of percentage size. Four types of information have more than 80.0 per cent of the respondents identifying them as such. These are information needed to prepare business plan (253; 87.7%), plan cash flow (252; 87.5%), examine business opportunities (243; 84.3%), and help in profit planning (242; 84.0%). At the extreme end, four types of information are relatively the least commonly needed ones. These are: difference between businesses and companies (168; 58.5%); innovations that have been developed (155; 53.9%); sales of products overseas (145; 50.5%); and research grant (145; 50.5%).

Table 2: Information Required and Percentage of Respondents ($n=288$)

Information	Frequency	% of total sample
1. Prepare business plan	253	87.8
2. Plan cash flow	252	87.5
3. Business opportunities	243	84.3
4. Profit planning	242	84.0
5. Course on entrepreneurship	226	78.6
6. Methods to apply loan	218	75.8
7. Current marketing trends	217	75.4
8. Communications with clients	217	75.4
9. EPF Registration for employers and workers	214	74.5
10. Counseling services	214	74.4
11. Help on finance	213	74.1
12. Loan funds	211	73.3
13. Quality vendors	211	73.3
14. Creativeness and innovativeness in business	211	73.3
15. Wage rates for workers	210	73.0
16. Services provided by the government	210	73.0
17. Strength and weakness of competitors	209	72.6
18. Help on marketing	207	71.9
19. Process of setting up business/company	206	71.7
20. Registration with Ministry of Finance	206	71.6
21. Registration with PERKESO	205	71.3
22. Advance courses	202	70.2
23. Latest technology	201	69.8
24. Technical courses	200	69.5
25. Cheap vendors	197	68.4
26. Location of quality raw materials	193	67.0
27. Government rules and regulations	190	66.0
28. Bidding for tenders	184	64.0
29. Registration for Bumiputera status	179	62.0
30. Technical help	179	62.0
31. Registration with <i>e-perolehan</i> (e-procurement)	177	61.3
32. Difference between businesses and companies	168	58.5
33. Innovations that have been developed	155	53.9
34. Sales of products overseas	145	50.5
35. Research grants	145	50.5

The following conclusions can be made from the above statistics. The information needs in starting business is wide-ranging. However, the respondents, having undergone MEDEC course designed to develop entrepreneurs, appear to have learned well the most important things to do when starting a business venture. These are preparing business plan, planning cash flow, looking for business opportunities and profit planning. It must be pointed out that the percentage figures of these four types of information needs merely point to the commonality of information requirement by the majority of the respondents, not which of the four activities come first. Scrutinising business opportunity is ranked third in terms of respondents' percentage, but one certainly needs to identify business opportunities first before actually embarking on a business venture. Nevertheless, a business plan normally contains all these four elements. The conclusion has to be that the

respondents consider the above four elements equally critical in starting business, hence the need for information related to them.

In the case of the difference between businesses and companies, innovations that have been developed, sales of products overseas and research grant, these are not critical at least at the initial stage of a business venture, hence their lower requirement for information on these aspects. In particular, the entrepreneurs would-be in this study would probably be little interested in the difference between businesses and companies, are less likely to be thinking about exporting overseas, are less likely to concern themselves with the latest innovations, and are less likely to do in-house research for them to have to know about research grants. However, it comes as surprise that more than half of the respondents require information on these four elements in starting a business venture. It is highly plausible that many of them are familiar with such issues in a larger business context, and believe that they would require such information if they ever will be venturing into business later.

In between the above eight, there are 27 other types of information needed by more than 60.0 per cent of the respondents. These information ranges from those related to registration with *e-perolehan* (online procurement) (177; 61.3%), registration for Bumiputera status and technical help (179; 62.0% each) to methods of applying for loan (218; 75.8%) and courses on entrepreneurship (226; 78.6%).

(b) Level of Importance of Business Information

The level of importance of the various types of information as perceived by the respondents is measured on a scale from 1 to 5 as follows: 1 = not important; 2 = slightly important; 3 = moderately important; 4 = important; and 5 = very important. Table 3 shows the mean scores of perceived importance by type of information, listed in descending order of size (decreasing level of importance).

Following the interpretation of the scoring system, seven types of information are perceived by the average respondents to be very important to their business needs. In descending order, these are information related to planning cash flow (mean = 4.77); preparing business plan (mean = 4.75); profit planning (mean = 4.67); communications with clients (mean = 4.63); business opportunities (mean = 4.58); course on entrepreneurship (mean = 4.53); and creativeness and innovativeness in business (mean = 4.52). Recall earlier that more than 80.0 per cent of the respondents require information for business plan preparation, cash flow planning, business opportunities identification and profit planning. Now, these four information groups or types occupy the top five positions in terms of level of importance, albeit with business opportunities being perceived as relatively less important than communications with clients, where in terms of percentage respondents, the latter ranked seventh (Table 3).

Information related to overseas sales, difference between businesses and companies, research grants, registration with *e-perolehan*, and registration for Bumiputera status, although perceived by the respondents as being important (mean scores ranging from 3.70 to 4.12), these occupy the bottom of the table. In relative terms, these information are the least important vis-à-vis other types of information. It is noted that the first four of the above information groups also occupy the bottom five in the ranking by percentage of respondents (Table 3). This draws us to an important conclusion that the respondents are consistent in their perceptions of what constitute important information to their business

needs. Moreover, there are other types of information that the respondents consider important to their business needs, ranging from those related to help on marketing (mean = 4.49) and latest technologies (mean = 4.47) down to those concerning wage rates for workers (mean = 4.18) and bidding for tenders (mean = 4.17).

Table 3: Perceived Importance of Business Information

Information	Mean	Median	Std. deviation
1. Planning cash flow	4.77	5.00	0.512
2. Preparing business plan	4.75	5.00	0.534
3. Profit planning	4.67	5.00	0.588
4. Communications with clients	4.63	5.00	0.639
5. Business opportunities	4.58	5.00	0.602
6. Course on entrepreneurship	4.53	5.00	0.661
7. Creativeness and innovativeness in business	4.52	5.00	0.693
8. Help on marketing	4.49	5.00	0.701
9. Latest technology	4.47	5.00	0.717
10. Help on finance	4.46	5.00	0.702
11. Strength and weakness of competitors	4.43	5.00	0.709
12. Quality vendors	4.43	5.00	0.773
13. Current marketing trends	4.41	5.00	0.754
14. Technical courses	4.39	5.00	0.712
15. Methods to apply loan	4.36	5.00	0.792
16. Counseling services	4.34	5.00	0.696
17. Cheap vendors	4.33	5.00	0.837
18. Location of quality raw materials	4.33	5.00	0.916
19. Services provided by the government	4.32	4.00	0.759
20. Loan funds	4.31	4.00	0.831
21. Advance courses	4.27	4.00	0.716
22. Technical help	4.26	4.00	0.746
23. Government rules and regulations	4.25	4.00	0.793
24. EPF Registration for employers and workers	4.25	4.00	0.875
25. Process of setting up business/company	4.24	4.00	0.862
26. Registration with PERKESO	4.23	4.00	0.908
27. Registration with Ministry of Finance	4.23	4.00	0.914
28. Innovations that have been developed	4.22	4.00	0.792
29. Wage rates for workers	4.18	4.00	0.830
30. Bidding for tenders	4.17	4.00	1.013
31. Registration for Bumiputera status	4.12	4.00	0.945
32. Registration with e-perolehan	4.05	4.00	0.979
33. Research grants	3.96	4.00	0.939
34. Difference between businesses and companies	3.89	4.00	0.952
35. Sales of products overseas	3.70	4.00	1.160

c) Methods of Obtaining Information

There are myriad ways of obtaining one's business information needs. In this section, the interest is at the individual level, where the respondents are free to seek information from whatever sources, formally or informally. It is an important point to bear in mind that these respondents are individuals about to start their own business and need vital

information. The interest of this section is not on what should be the sources of information and how to get them from business or organisational point of view, but on the actual experience of the respondents, i.e., how actually did they get the information. Table 4 shows the list of twelve methods by which respondents obtain their business information and the percentage of respondents for each method, in decreasing order of percentage respondents.

The largest portion (252; 87.4%) of the respondents obtains information by talking with other entrepreneurs. This is followed by those who did it by sharing experience with other entrepreneurs (247; 85.6%), although it is arguable what kind of experience a new entrepreneur could exchange in the two-way communication. There are several other methods, either through conversation or through reading. In descending order of percentage respondents, these are discussion with friends/relatives (223; 77.6%); reading newspaper and magazines (222; 77.3%); asking clients (221; 76.9%); using Internet/email (218; 75.8); getting advice from government agency officers (204; 70.9%); reading books (185; 65.0%); reading brochures and pamphlets (176; 61.0); and talking with experts/business consultants (170; 59.2%). Two other methods, namely, discussion with members of *Dewan Perniagaan Melayu* (Malay Chamber of Commerce) and asking librarians do not feature that much, with only 41.2 (119) and 24.4 (70) per cent of the respondents, respectively.

Table 4: Methods of Obtaining Information (n=288)

Method	Frequency	Percent of sample
1. Talk with other entrepreneurs	252	87.4
2. Share experience with other entrepreneurs	247	85.6
3. Discuss with friends/relatives	223	77.6
4. Read newspaper and magazines	222	77.3
5. Ask clients	221	76.9
6. Use Internet/email	218	75.8
7. Advice from government agency officers	204	70.9
8. Read books	185	65.0
9. Read brochures and pamphlets	176	61.0
10. Talk with experts/business consultants	170	59.2
11. Discuss with members of <i>Dewan Perniagaan Melayu</i>	119	41.2
12. Ask librarians	70	24.4

What is apparent is the simplicity with which the respondents obtain their information. They did by talking to other entrepreneurs (probably someone they know), exchanging experience with other entrepreneurs (also someone they probably know), discussing with friends/relative, and reading newspaper and magazines. The evident is overwhelming that government agencies/ institutions that are set up to assist entrepreneurs are not popular with the respondents as far as business information is concerned. So is *Dewan Perniagaan Melayu*, whose role is to promote the development of a dynamic, reputable and responsible breed of Bumiputera entrepreneurs of international standards (The role of KLMCC 2010). Libraries and librarians being the least popular source of business information to entrepreneurs is perhaps understandable because seeking information from libraries is often too time consuming. With the advent of the Internet, one could always seek information in the comfort of one's home.

d) Sources of Business Information

The sources from which respondents obtain their business information are shown in Table 5, arranged in descending order of percentage size. By far, the most common source of business information is courses (275; 95.5%). That is, the largest proportion of the respondents obtains its information needs to start business by attending courses. It is not surprising as the respondents are selected from among those who have attended MEDEC's entrepreneurial course which teaches participants everything about how to start a business. Although there are many related courses available in the market, MEDEC's course must have featured prominently and is undoubtedly still fresh in their mind. This is quite evident when business exhibitions which should be an important source of information and are usually replete with tangible evidence of entrepreneurial successes and opportunities come a distant second (221; 76.7%).

The Internet/e-mail (209; 72.6%), business premises (199; 69.1%), government agencies (182; 63.2%), and technical training (151; 52.4%) constitute other common sources of information, in that order. Other sources such as practical trainings, banks, associations/clubs (probably business or trade associations) and libraries are not considered sources of business information that much by the respondents with the percentage figures ranging from 29.5 per cent (libraries) to 48.6 per cent (practical trainings). Perhaps, going to the libraries is too academic to the older participants; joining associations/clubs is not a priority when one is just starting a business venture; and going to banks for business information is not a comfiture to most new entrepreneurs. These are all conjectures, but are highly plausible.

Table 5: Sources of Business Information (n=288)

Type of Sources	Frequency	Percent of sample
1. Courses	275	95.5
2. Business exhibitions	221	76.7
3. Internet/e-mail	209	72.6
4. Business premises	199	69.1
5. Government agencies	182	63.2
6. Technical training	151	52.4
7. Practical training	140	48.6
8. Banks	129	44.8
9. Associations/clubs	108	37.5
10. Libraries	85	29.5

e) Importance of Sources of Information

The level of importance of the various sources of business information as perceived by the respondents is measured on a scale from 1 to 5 as follows: 1 = not important; 2 = slightly important; 3 = moderately important; 4 = important; and 5 = very important. Table 6 shows the mean scores of perceived importance by source of information, listed in descending order of size (decreasing level of importance).

On the average, the respondents consider clients and other entrepreneurs as very important sources of business information (mean scores of 4.71 and 4.51, respectively), while librarian is perceived as only moderately important (mean = 3.22). Other sources of

information ranging from membership of associations (mean = 3.95) and libraries (mean = 3.53) in the bottom portion of the table to experts/business consultants and Internet/e-mail (mean of 4.40 each) in the top section of the table are considered important. It must be pointed out, however, that the sources of information in this analysis are quite different from those discussed in earlier section in that there are nine sources that were not in the earlier analysis (i.e. clients, friends and relatives, other entrepreneurs, experts/business consultants, brochures and pamphlets, newspapers and magazines, librarians, associations, and visits) and that there are two sources which were in the earlier analysis, but are not included in this analysis (i.e. government agencies and banks).

Nevertheless, comparison of Table 5 and Table 6 points to at least two important conclusions with regard to sources of business information. First, in general, the respondents are consistent about what they consider as sources of business information, although consensus on what constitute sources of information may not always translate into equivalent level of perceived importance with respect to these sources of information. Take the case of courses. As was mentioned in Table 5 that the respondents overwhelmingly (221; 76.7%) considered business exhibition as a source of information, but they only considered it important, not very important. On the other hand, Internet/e-mail, which only garnered much lower percentage of respondents (209; 72.6%), is perceived to be very important as a source of information.

Second, the respondents may not identify certain element as their source of information, but would consider it an important one. That is, at the moment, that element is not their source of information, but when it does, it would be an important one. This is only to be expected as the range and types of information an entrepreneur needs would certainly change as the business progresses in complexity. Perhaps, that is why even libraries, which provides information to only 29.5 (85) per cent of the respondents, is perceived by the average respondents to be important (mean = 3.53).

Table 6: Perceived Importance of Sources of Information

Source of Information	Mean	Median	Std. deviation
1. Clients	4.71	5.00	0.606
2. Other entrepreneurs	4.51	5.00	0.620
3. Internet/e-mail	4.40	5.00	0.720
4. Experts/business consultants	4.40	5.00	0.769
5. Course speakers	4.38	4.00	0.706
6. Technical training	4.37	4.00	0.800
7. Business exhibitions	4.30	4.00	0.733
8. Business agencies	4.23	4.00	0.706
9. Visits	4.21	4.00	0.729
10. Practical training	4.18	4.00	0.931
11. Friends/relatives	4.17	4.00	0.764
12. Newspapers and magazines	4.02	4.00	0.817
13. Brochures and pamphlets	4.01	4.00	0.819
14. Associations	3.96	4.00	0.851
15. Members of associations	3.95	4.00	0.830
16. Libraries	3.53	4.00	0.906
17. Librarians	3.22	3.00	1.015

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has identified the information needs of Bumiputera would-be entrepreneurs who aspire to do a business upon retirement from their present job. The types of business information needed by them were information on how to prepare business plan, plan cash flow, examine business opportunities, and profit planning. The types of business information considered very important were information related to planning cash flow, followed by preparing business plan, profit planning, communications with clients, business opportunities, course on entrepreneurship, and creativeness and innovativeness in business. They obtained most of their business information by talking to other entrepreneurs, sharing experience with other entrepreneurs, discussing with friends/relatives, reading newspaper and magazines, and asking clients. The sources from which they obtained their business information were courses, business exhibitions, Internet/e-mail, business premises, government agencies, and technical training. They considered clients and other entrepreneurs as very important sources of business information.

This study has implications for prospective and novice entrepreneurs and business supporting institutions concerned with entrepreneurs and business sectors for meeting entrepreneurs' business information needs in Malaysia. An understanding of the information needs is a crucial requirement to the design of a module on business information needs and setting information services for this category of users. The findings could help in developing a module or an information system on business information needs catered for entrepreneurs and business people to be placed at ministries or government agencies dealing with business. Entrepreneurs and business people can take advantage with the information system to assist decision making in their business.

Findings of the study ought to be of interest to concerned official bodies intent to provide information services to the sector of industry. The study aims at suggesting a service model that would fit in the needs and requirements of business establishments in the context of a specialised information centre. Based on the findings, we can suggest the opening of business information centres and services that would give a profound impact to entrepreneurs and small business enterprises. The government could establish business information centres and services employing state-of-the-art technology to provide a one-stop shop and full range of management and technical assistance to entrepreneurs. An information centre could be established, managed and maintained by professionals in every district and extending it to the rural areas. The findings of the study have been useful in identifying the information needs, and from the identification of the information needs someone should be able to design new and novel information services and products to meet those needs. The service should be extended to groups with unique needs through consultation, networking, funding and information products and services tailored to their unique needs.

The study has revealed that a library is the least significant source of information but would-be entrepreneurs perceived it to be important source of information. The implication is that a library as one of the source of information could play an important role in promoting their services to the business communities. The public libraries could have adequate collections of printed or electronic information sources and well-equipped facilities, computerised, employ state-of-the-art information and communications technologies, facilitate connections with Internet, develop some kind of collaboration with

other libraries of the same type, as well as academic and public libraries in the country, plan and conduct workshops to educate and train customers on how they can make the best use of the library collections and services, and provide customers with advanced, as well as traditional library and information services in a way necessary to encourage their continuous use of service.

This study has provided information on the information needs of would-be entrepreneurs and it is hoped that findings from this study would provide an understanding of the information needs of potential and novice entrepreneurs.

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