

# Effect of Innovation, Market Knowledge, and Social Capital on Dayak Women Entrepreneurship in Kuching, Samarahan and Serian Divisions of Sarawak

Rowena Clifton, Norizan Jaafar

Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Malaysia Sarawak

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## Abstract

Women entrepreneurship is considered an effective instrument for the economic development and empowerment of women. The importance of entrepreneurship growth in Malaysia is supported by the vast amount of supporting mechanisms and business policies created by the policy maker to support the industry growth. As the focus on Sarawak itself, many entrepreneurship activities seem to become more and more important in supporting the people and state economy. Considering the importance of the issue, this study seeks to investigate the effect of innovation, social capital and market knowledge on Dayak women entrepreneurs in Kuching, Samarahan and Serian divisions of Sarawak. Since the Dayak community is the largest in Sarawak which is 33.4% of the population of Sarawak (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020), more research is needed to understand the Dayak women because they represent an important aspect of the state's cultural and economic diversity. The efforts to support their development and empowerment are essential for promoting inclusive and sustainable growth in the region. The sample population included 300 Dayak women entrepreneurs in Kuching, Samarahan and Serian divisions of Sarawak. Using questionnaire as the main means of data collection, the correlation among variables of entrepreneurship, innovation, social capital and market knowledge will be evaluated. Data analysis will be conducted using structural equation modelling (SEM). Overall, the findings will highlight and explain further on the concept of social capital, innovation and market knowledge that will be both beneficial to Dayak women entrepreneurs and government as well as contributing to the knowledge of studies related to entrepreneurship. Further studies are recommended to explore more on the market opportunities available to Dayak women entrepreneurs, including both local and global markets. This could help identify potential areas for growth and development of women entrepreneurs in Sarawak.

**Keywords:** Innovation, Market Knowledge, Social Capital, Dayak Women, Entrepreneurship

**Introduction**

In Malaysia, women who manage their own business are widely active in consumer oriented and service business activities, for examples, activities related to health, social, or education. According to a report by the Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre (MaGIC), as of 2018, only 19.2% of entrepreneurs in Malaysia were women. This is lower than the global average of 42%. The report also found that women entrepreneurs in Malaysia face several challenges, including limited access to financing and business networks, as well as societal and cultural barriers.

In Sarawak specifically, a 2019 report by the Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) found that out of the 6,118 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Sarawak, 26.8% were owned by women. The report also noted that the majority of these businesses were in the services sector, followed by retail and food and beverage. These activities take mostly place at the local level and therefore need generally relatively less resources. Women entrepreneurs are therefore under-represented in the transformational industry and in business-to-business activities. The Malaysian Statistic Department (2016) reports that women's participation in business is relatively low compared to that of men. The census showed that only 187,264 companies of the 920,624 active establishments nationwide were owned by women. In general, women entrepreneurs in Malaysia still dominate service sector areas such as education, retail trade, childcare, beauty and healthcare (NAWEM, 2016).

Nevertheless, for Sarawak, more measures were being made to encourage women in small and medium businesses to empower their economic status. Women in Sarawak have begun to empower themselves by starting businesses of their own. Many women are driven towards entrepreneurship because they intend to be self-sufficient, especially after being dismissed from their jobs in these trying times.

The government's initiative in supporting women's entrepreneurship is very enlightening. It was reported that the Sarawak government increased the seed capital for the Sarawak Department of Women and Family to RM1 million in 2020, following RM500,000.00 as seed capital to scale up women's businesses through the Ministry. This initiative had benefitted some 100 women entrepreneurs in 2019 (Teo, 2020). The empowerment of women must be done through the economic approach and the Sarawak government would continue to provide the ecosystem, where spaces were being created for women to use the new technology to empower themselves. For instance, the Women Economic Development (WEDA) programme under the Department of Agriculture, Sarikei Division of Sarawak was established to strengthen the entrepreneurial potential of local women (Man, 2010) are among the entrepreneurship empowering tools in Sarawak.

Dayak community is the largest community in Sarawak comprises majority ethnic groups namely Iban, Bidayuh and Orang Ulu (Tateh et al., 2014). According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, as of 2020, the Dayak community makes up about 33.4% of the population of Sarawak, which is one of the two Malaysian states located on the island of Borneo. The largest Dayak subgroup in Sarawak is the Iban, who make up about 29.3% of the population of the state. The other major Dayak subgroups in Sarawak include the Bidayuh, Kenyah, and Kayan. Since the Dayak community is the largest in Sarawak, more research is needed to understand the Dayak women as well because they represent an important aspect of the state's cultural and economic diversity, and efforts to support their development and empowerment are essential for promoting inclusive and sustainable growth in the region.

**Problem Statement**

In Malaysia, women have been given significant contributions to their participation in entrepreneurship activities. However, the economic potentials of woman entrepreneurs remain to be tapped. Although women entrepreneurs have become more important players in the entrepreneurial landscape, the number is still small as compared to businesses owned by men. The percentage of women involved in entrepreneurial jobs is still consider small (Syed et al., 2011). Reported in Malaysia, of 10.8 million workforces, only 37% are women (cited by Tan, 2009) and in regard to entrepreneurial jobs, women are less than the men. According to Rozy (2009) women make 50% of the total population, but only 15% of them own business enterprises in Malaysia (Syed et al., 2012).

Dayak women in Sarawak face various challenges, including limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, as well as discrimination based on their ethnicity and gender. However, there are also efforts to support the development and empowerment of Dayak women in Sarawak, including initiatives to promote education, health, and economic participation. As a multicultural state, the role of the indigenous people of Sarawak is not to be forgotten in contributing to the state entrepreneurship growth even though some believed that businesses are meant for certain ethnics but not the Dayaks (due to the identification of race with economic activity). They also said that their lack of knowledge and training on entrepreneurship is one of their disadvantages as compared with other ethnics (Tateh et al., 2014).

Some populations of Dayak community in Sarawak still live on the poverty line and they are living near rivers and jungles. As a result, the Dayaks society is still engaged in basic employment. This locus makes the Dayak community is still lagging and become vague, according to statistics released by the Malaysian Government (Negin, 2021). In addition, the pandemic put the very survival of many women entrepreneurs in jeopardy. Out of this turmoil sprang a superpower to reimagine new business models, reach new customers and reinvent the workplace. It is often a challenge for successful women founders to accept help. By tapping into networks and sharing expertise and experience, women business owners can have a profound effect on each other's success. Women have been denied access to the capital they sought to launch, sustain and grow their businesses. It should also be noted that social capital is central to entrepreneurial success (Lindvert, Patel, & Wincent, 2017). Nevertheless, the contribution of Dayak women entrepreneur has not really discussed thoroughly and to the best of knowledge, the improvement of business performance has not tested well because of some issues and challenges in the marketplace. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the effect of innovation, social capital and market knowledge on Dayak women entrepreneurs in Sarawak. The empirical findings from this investigation will be both beneficial to entrepreneurs and government as well as contributing to the knowledge of studies related to entrepreneurship.

**Objectives****General Objective**

To investigate the effect of innovation, social capital and market knowledge on Dayak women entrepreneurs in Kuching, Samarahan and Serian divisions of Sarawak.

### **Specific Objective**

- I. To develop the knowledge of women entrepreneurship development through the explanation of role of innovation, social capital and market knowledge on Dayak Women entrepreneurship.
- II. To demonstrate a conceptual model which demonstrates the relationship between innovation, social capital, and market knowledge on Dayak women entrepreneurship.
- III. To empirically test the proposed conceptual model, for investigation of the effect between innovation, social capital, and market knowledge on Dayak women entrepreneurship.
- IV. To investigate contribution of innovation, social capital and market knowledge to the success in businesses operated by Dayak women entrepreneurs in Sarawak.
- V. To make recommendations for Dayak women entrepreneurship, government, and future researchers in the field of entrepreneurship development.

### **Significance of Study**

This study is an in-depth analysis of the effects of social capital, innovation and market knowledge on women entrepreneurs, and it is a contribution to the entrepreneurship development literature while answering the call for research by various scholars in the field of entrepreneurs. Innovation, market knowledge, and social capital can have a significant impact on Dayak women entrepreneurship in Sarawak.

The possible impacts of understanding innovative ideas, products, and services can set Dayak women entrepreneurs apart from competitors and help them meet the changing demands of customers. By developing new or improved products or services, they can capture new markets and increase their revenue. Innovation can also help them reduce costs, improve efficiency, and enhance the quality of their offerings. Therefore, understanding further in innovative thinking and creativity can give Dayak women entrepreneurs a competitive edge and help them succeed in their businesses.

Market knowledge give in-depth understanding of the needs, preferences, and behavior of customers that is essential for Dayak women entrepreneurs to create value for them. Dayak women can identify potential opportunities and tailor their offerings accordingly. Market knowledge also help them determine the right price for their products or services and develop effective marketing strategies to reach their target audience. Therefore, market knowledge is crucial for Dayak women entrepreneurs to create a sustainable and profitable business for the economics growth in Sarawak.

On the other hand, building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders, such as suppliers, customers, and other entrepreneurs, can provide Dayak women entrepreneurs with access to valuable resources, information, and support. Social capital can help them establish a reputation, gain trust, and foster collaboration, which can lead to new business opportunities and partnerships. It also provide emotional support and a sense of belonging to a community, which can help them overcome challenges and maintain their motivation. Therefore, social capital can play a critical role in the success of Dayak women entrepreneurship in Sarawak.

Overall, Dayak women entrepreneurs can benefit from developing their innovation, market knowledge, and social capital to achieve their business goals and contribute to the local economy of Sarawak.

**Literature Review****The Relationship between Innovation, Market Knowledge, Social Capital and Women Entrepreneurship**

Women's entrepreneurship is recognized as the primary job creation and innovation distributor. Their participation in economic activities compatible with ownership and control of productive assets accelerates development processes and reduces poverty and inequality while improving the overall well-being of children. Entrepreneurs as individuals will always try to develop their abilities to adapt to working together in an organization. The pattern of organized cooperation, which is ordered by specific goals related to each other, is determined by the depth of the relationship. Research Aristanto (2017) states that the quality and quantity of individual work becomes better when the individual can innovate. Unique innovation abilities will allow the initiative to effectively and efficiently produce work methods. Osman et al (2016) state that the three types of innovation (product, process, technology, and organization) affect team member performance (Sukaatmadjaa et al., 2021)

Innovation strategies may have a positive impact on women business performance. The knowledge, ideas, interpretations, and insights added to the marketplace from external networks serve as primary drivers for innovation strategies and offer means for companies to innovate successfully even when they do not have a strong entrepreneurial culture (Baker et al., 2016). Other researchers supported the importance of innovation strategies for increasing revenue and sustaining business performance, arguing that innovation is a creative process of introducing new technologies, designs, or processes into the marketplace (Demirkan & Spohrer, 2016; Fernandes & Solimun, 2017; Karabulut, 2015; Rahman et al., 2015; Taneja et al., 2016). These findings suggest that companies promote the culture of innovation and use innovation strategies to launch new products and services that may have an impact on business performance.

Social capital gives opportunity for entrepreneurs to gain economic benefits by compensating for asymmetrical information and by reducing transaction cost through social and 7 economic interaction (Svendsen, 2003). Entrepreneurs are needed to have some prior knowledge, information, and resources such as capital, skills, and labour to start their entrepreneurial venture (Gabbay and Leenders, 1999). These resources are polished through access to contacts, by joining groups and networks, and meeting people who could later contribute to the growth of the venture (Cooper et al. 1995; Hansen, 1995). Apart from that, social capital facilitates the access to financial suppliers. It serves as a platform where resources exchange, particularly knowledge, triggers value creation (Brush et al., 2002). Social capital serves a high purpose for entrepreneurs and it is a particularly crucial capital for women entrepreneurs. Formal and informal social capital not only determines but also enhances the expansion and growth of women-owned businesses (Kickul, Gundry, and Sampson, 2007). Social capital is the answer to challenges faced by women entrepreneurs such as obtaining initial business capital, issues pertaining to financial management, and to develop an effective marketing and advertising campaign (Hisrich and Brush, 1983; Pellegrino and Reece, 1982). Social capital is indeed an important factor contributing to the growth of women entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurial women are expected to continue to build and expand social capital because social capital is a network expansion for women entrepreneurs in expanding their product marketing (Maheasy and Lestari, 2016). Social capital is one of the factors supporting the sustainability of a small and medium business. Social capital is a relational resource that is inherent in cross-sectoral personal relationships. This is very useful for individual



development in the social community organization (Tsai and Ghoshal, 2007). This will create beneficial social capital for entrepreneurs. From an entrepreneurial perspective, social capital provides a network that enables opportunity discovery and the identification, collection, and allocation of scarce resources (in Davidsson and Honig, 2003).

The relationship between market knowledge and a product's competitive advantage can be grounded in Narver and Slater's (1990) concept of market orientation. These authors posit that market orientation provides an understanding of customers' expressed and latent needs; competitors' strengths and weaknesses, capabilities, and strategies; and other market aspects, such as market trends and mechanisms. This understanding is a source of market knowledge (Ozkaya et al., 2015) that leads to the creation of superior value for customers. Therefore, extensive market knowledge should result in a product with distinct competitive advantage, in that the firm can develop a new product that provides greater value for customers than its competitors. This can be accomplished by increasing the product's benefits for customers, for instance, by offering greater functionality or higher performance for some attributes (e.g. quality or appearance), or by decreasing the cost to the customer.

The relationship between market knowledge and a new product's commercial performance, is supported by the belief that a product's commercial success depends on the product itself, but simultaneously on other actions associated with this product, such as its marketing campaign during the commercialisation stage. Currently, marketing support under typically intense global competition to convince customers to switch to something new is seemingly equally important as the new product itself. R. Ginevičius, Podvezko and A. Ginevičius (2013) demonstrated that marketing activities related to price, promotion or place have nearly the same importance as the product.

Previous study posits that, aside from direct relationships, indirect effects are derived from the following sequence: market knowledge scope affects product innovation, which subsequently affects new product outcomes. This sequence occurs due to the following reasons: First, the relationship between market knowledge and product innovation is based on the model of innovation as proposed by Amabile and Pratt (2016), which notes three crucial determinants of innovation: the intrinsic motivation to do the task, innovation-relevant processes, and the skills required for the task.

The last factor is of interest in previous study, and means "one's expertise or factual knowledge about the domain, technical skills for doing work and advancing one's knowledge in the domain, and special domain-relevant talents" (Amabile & Pratt, 2016, p. 160). Specifically, market knowledge is one type of expertise that serves as an input for the creative processes or activities in NPD (Kim et al., 2013). Individual or group knowledge about prospective customers, competitors, and other market aspects in the new product category provides the crucial understanding required in launching meaningful and novel products. This reasoning parallels the RBV theory, as innovation is considered a dynamic, firm-specific capability. Therefore, it is assumed that greater market knowledge results in greater new product innovation and is expressed in the product's novelty and meaningfulness. Second, greater new product innovation should lead to better product outcomes.

Hence, market knowledge is necessary in NPD to develop superior new products and different operations that support them. Both elements relate to the product's commercial success; therefore, a direct link is likely to exist between market knowledge and the product's commercial success. De Luca and Atua-hene-Gima (2007) have discovered that dimensions of market knowledge – such as breadth, depth, and specificity – were positively linked to new product performance.

**Research Methodology**

This study identifies innovation, social capital and market knowledge as factors that influence Dayak women's entrepreneurship in Sarawak. Thus, the study sample consists of Dayak women entrepreneurs localities in three divisions namely Kuching, Samarahan and Serian which have the bigger number of Dayak women entrepreneurs. A total of 300 respondents will be involved in this study which consists of Dayak women entrepreneurs. Quantitative method will be used to collect primary data using survey questionnaire. Survey questionnaire will be distributed through online using web-based version via social media, email, mobile apps, as well as through physical contact. The questionnaire, which is divided in 3 sections, will be distributed to the entire population of Dayak women entrepreneurs in Kuching, Samarahan and Serian divisions of Sarawak. The first part focuses on population demographic characteristics such as age, business name, length of business, number of employees, business sector, marital status, education level, source of capital, initial capital, sales (years) and the second part are a question of variables used in this research, namely, innovation, market knowledge, social capital, and women entrepreneurs in Sarawak. A Likert scale of 1 and 5 is used to measure (from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree"). The third part is a question or opinion section, which gives freedom to the respondent to provide information on what other factors are supporting and inhibiting their business performance. Data analysis will be conducted using structural equation modelling (SEM). Data will be obtained through SmartPLS with variance-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) techniques known as the Partial Least Square (PLS) method and the testing for significance of the paths were performed using the bootstrapping resampling procedure.

**Expected Outcome**

The study of Dayak women entrepreneurship in Sarawak is likely to generate several important outcomes that could inform policies, programs, and initiatives aimed at supporting the development and growth of women-led businesses in the region. Some expected outcomes of the study may include the identification of key factors that contribute to the success of Dayak women entrepreneurs in the region, including the role of innovation, market knowledge, and social capital.

Other expected outcome may include in the assessment of the challenges and barriers that Dayak women entrepreneurs face in accessing capital, markets, and information, as well as cultural and social barriers that may affect their ability to participate in business activities. Besides, the study helps to analysed the impact of Dayak women entrepreneurship on the local economy, including its contribution to employment creation, poverty reduction, and gender equality. It is believe that the ideas from this study give the identification of best practices and success stories of Dayak women entrepreneurs that could serve as role models for other women entrepreneurs in the region.

In addition, this study able to give recommendations for policies, programs, and initiatives that could improve the support and resources available to Dayak women entrepreneurs in the region, including measures to improve access to finance, training, and market opportunities.

Overall, the study of Dayak women entrepreneurship in Sarawak has the potential to generate valuable insights and information that could contribute to the development of a more inclusive and sustainable economy in the region. It will then motivate Dayak women to unite and step up to support each other, encourage one another to take on leadership in economic, business and decision-making roles and give support to the government,

businesses, and society as a whole to create an enabling environment for women to reach to the top.

### **Conclusion**

Innovation, social capital, and market knowledge are critical components of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs who possess these qualities are more likely to succeed in starting and growing their businesses. By leveraging these factors, entrepreneurs can create innovative solutions, build strong relationships with stakeholders, and develop effective strategies to reach their target market. The success of Dayak women entrepreneurs is a testament to their resilience, determination, and hard work. Despite facing numerous challenges such as limited access to finance, lack of education, and cultural barriers, these women have managed to overcome these obstacles and succeed in various business ventures. Their success not only contributes to the growth of their businesses but also helps to empower other women in their communities. By serving as role models and mentors, Dayak women entrepreneurs inspire others to pursue their dreams and achieve success. The success of Dayak women entrepreneurs also has a positive impact on the economy and society as a whole. It creates jobs, generates income, and contributes to the overall development of their communities. In conclusion, the success of Dayak women entrepreneurs is a remarkable achievement that highlights the potential of women in business. It demonstrates that with the right support and resources, women can overcome any obstacle and achieve their goals.

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