

ENTREPRENEUR'S EXPERIENCE IN IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATION

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Abstract: *Innovation is a necessity for organizations to ensure survival. However, innovation itself is a big investment and has a high risk. The study explores the practice of innovation based on case studies of entrepreneurs who has experience in implementing innovation in the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Interviews were conducted on six entrepreneurs. It was found that many entrepreneurs failed in implementing innovation. However, owing to their patience, they succeeded in creating innovation. They have been supported by the government agencies in creating the innovation in SMEs. The study suggests that entrepreneurs to work closely with the related agencies in order to implement innovations and to reduce the risk of failure.*

Keywords: Entrepreneur's, Experience and Innovation, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Introduction

The role of SMEs in the global economy has long been recognized. SMEs are considered as a backbone of the national economy (Muhammad Khalique, Abu Hassan Md. Isa, Jamal Abdul Nassir Shaari, & Adel Ageel, 2011) and to strengthen the performance, growth and long-term survival, SMEs need to enhance their innovative capabilities. One of the major issues for most SMEs that are in existence for some years is how to survive by maintaining or increasing market share through innovation.

It is vital not only to ensure long term survival and sustain over time of SMEs (Singh, Garg, & Deshmukh, 2010) but also to encourage the emergence of new SMEs in particular relating to manufacturing industries. SMEs have been proven to be a very large part of Malaysia's economy where SMEs constitute 99.2% of total business establishments in Malaysia of total 548,267 enterprises. SMEs contribute 32% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 59% of employment and 19% of exports (Council, 2012). Therefore, issues of innovation by SMEs are very important to be given a highest priority.

Malaysian government supports the SME sector through the establishment of a government agency such as the National SME Development Council and SME Corp Malaysia. The Malaysian government has spent a total of RM26 billion in SME development programs, which represents about 11.6% of the total development expenditure in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010)(Council, 2012). The launch of SME Masterplan (2010-2012) signifies Malaysia government's desire to comprehensively develop SMEs to help achieve a developed nation by 2020. The main three objectives are to increase SME contribution to GDP from 32% in 2010 to 41%, increase the employment share from 59-62% and increase the export share from 19% to 25% by 2020. The ultimate goal of the Masterplan is to create globally competitive SMEs through innovation-led and productivity-driven growths for wealth creation and social well-being of the nation (Council, 2012).

In the Industrial Malaysian Plan 2006-2020 (IMP3) period, the food processing industry's investment target have been set at RM24.6 billion or RM1.6 billion per annum (Industry, 2006). In terms of the business environment, the Malaysian food industry is dominated by small and medium scale firms. Currently, the industry's key growth areas are functional food, health food, convenience food, food ingredients and halal food. In terms of external environment, the industry is also undergoing numerous changes brought about by factors such as rising production costs, technological developments, shifting demand patterns, changes in competitive groupings.

Innovation in Malaysia SMEs

In Malaysia, level of innovation among SMEs is still not encouraging. According to Lee & Lee (2007), in his analyses of two cycles of National Survey of Innovation (NSI) carried out by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Malaysia (MOSTI), the majority of small and medium enterprises are non-innovating firms. In the NSI-1 (covering the period 1990-1994), 88.8% from 233 small enterprises and 81.2% from 526 of medium-sized enterprises are non-innovating. In the NSI-2 (covering 1997-1999), the percentage of non-innovating small enterprises remain high at 74.1% from 482 small enterprises and 48.9% from 141 medium-sized enterprises (Lee & Ging, 2007). These statistics indicate an important demand to identify what make innovative SMEs especially when it continues to be the major driving force for the Malaysian economic growth. Innovative SMEs are more flexible, adaptable and responsive to market changes. Since the significant link between innovation and SMEs performance has been substantiated in various studies (M.Mohd Rosli & Syamsuriana, 2013), more researchers and practitioners continue to dwell on factors affecting company to innovate. Studies on innovation among SMEs in Malaysia are still limited.

This paper attempts to address the entrepreneur's experience in implementation of innovation. Keeping in view the importance of innovation for entrepreneur experience because of innovation is risky and high investment, the present study focuses on SMEs in food and beverages located in Rural Transformation Centre (RTC), Perak. In order to obtain this, the following research questions were posed and explored:

1. What are the innovation experiences of entrepreneurs in food and beverages sectors?
2. What are the types of innovation implemented by entrepreneurs?
3. How entrepreneurs define innovation in their SMEs?

The study aims to accomplish the following research objectives:

1. To explicate entrepreneurs experience food and beverages sectors.
2. To identify how entrepreneurs define innovation in their SMEs.
3. To identify types of innovation implemented by entrepreneurs.

Literature review

Entrepreneur

Malaysia government has realized that the significant role of entrepreneurship in creating a new form of economy, where knowledge has become a significant pre-condition, particularly for Malaysia to achieve the developed nation status by 2020 (Cheng, Chan, & Mahmood, 2009). The entrepreneur or founder of the business directs the company, and acts as both manager and worker, leading to the term owner-managers (Ikävalko, Pihkala, & Jussila, 2008). As evident from the discussion on the characteristics of small business, the owner-managers are the 'heart' and the 'brain' of the SMEs.

Entrepreneurship has become one of the major topics of discussion in the literature and it continues to grow as a distinct academic discipline and have been the subject of numerous research studies, books, and journal articles (Alstete, 2008). The development of entrepreneurs SME's has become a major contributor towards economic development in countries such as Malaysia (Hilmi, Ramayah, Mustapha, & Pawanchik, 2010). Entrepreneurship has been emphasized aggressively in the extant literature due to its importance in enhancing the nation competitiveness in the economic regions, especially in the form of constantly renewing business processes and innovating new products, services and strategies ("Promoting entrepreneurship education: the role of the teacher?," 2010).

Entrepreneur refers to "one who reforms or revolutionizes the pattern or production by exploiting an invention or more generally an untried technological possibility for producing a new commodity or producing an old one in a new way, by opening up a new source of supply of material or new outlet for products, by recognizing an industry and so on (Schumpeter, 1934; Xavier, Ahmad, Perumal, Nor, & Mohan, 2011). In early studied by Schumpeter stated that entrepreneur act as an innovator and it is very important for economic growth. (Hussain, Afzal, Asif, Ahmad, & Bilal, 2011; Schumpeter, 1965).

The focus on entrepreneurs is particularly justified when investigating innovation in the context of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), where the role of entrepreneurs in fostering innovation is important, since the innovation related research has consistently shown that entrepreneurs are the main locus and driver of innovation in their enterprise.

One of the various definitions of opportunity recognition given by Lumpkin and Lichtenstein is "the ability to identify a good idea and transform it into business concepts that add value and generate revenue" (Lumpkin & Lichtenstein, 2004). This definition makes an emphasis that opportunity recognition is an inseparable part of entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurs get their opportunity from their past experience whether they had success or failure in implementing innovation.

Experience

Experience is an important aspect for the performance of entrepreneurs (Murphy, Kickul, Barbosa, & Titu, 2007; Riquelme & Rickards, 1992). According to Lamont, the advantage of experience factors will developed entrepreneur over time because experience is a key contributor to the development of entrepreneurial knowledge (Lamont, 1972). MacMillan argued that habitual entrepreneurs possess an experience curve of entrepreneuring (MacMillan, 1986). Entrepreneurial experience permits entrepreneurial learning on areas such as one-self, business, the environment, entrepreneurial network, and how to manage relationships to succeed in SME

survival(Cope, 2005). As a consequence, multiple entrepreneurial experience help to detect and pursue more opportunities with a stronger personal fit and to learn more about how manage a business (Amaral, Baptista, & Lima, 2011). The United Nation Industrial Development Organization (2002) has put emphasis that this experience can be used for the development and the sustainability of the SME sectors in developing countries. Due to this changing business environment, SMEs are experiencing increased competition as foreign firms has gained access to local markets, and it is therefore crucial for SMEs to respond efficiently and sustain their competitiveness against both the local and international competitors (Huu. L. N & Nhu. D, 2009).

Innovation

Innovation has been defined in many ways by authors. The early concept of innovation in economic development and entrepreneurship was popularized by Joseph Schumpeter, a German economist. Cumming looks at the term innovation as the creation of new product or process (Cumming, 1998), whereas Knox refers to it as a new way of delivering quality or better value (Knox, 2002). It is important for organizations to adopt innovation and innovative thinking in their decision makings in order to achieve superior customer value (Knox, 2002). To Kuratko and Hodgetts, innovation is the creation of new wealth or the alteration and enhancement of existing resources to create new wealth (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2004). Innovation is also seen as a process of idea creation, a development of an invention and ultimately the introduction of a new product, process or service to the market (Thornhill, 2006).

Types of innovation

There are many types of innovation introduced by various authors and researchers. In today's rapidly changing environment, creating value is not just about rationalizing uneconomic business and improvement current activities which it is increasingly about innovation. Authors such as (Baregheh, Rowley, Sambrook, & Davies, 2012; Bessant, 2007) which identifies four types of innovation in which they refer to as "4P"s of innovation namely position, process, product, and paradigm innovation. These are defined, as:

- i. Product innovation, changes in the things (products/services) which an organization offers,
- ii. Process innovation, changes in the way in which things (products/services) are created and delivered,
- iii. Position innovation, changes in the context in which products/services are introduced,
- iv. Paradigm Innovation, changes in the underlying mental models adopted by company

In previous study, (Nasution, Mavondo, Matanda, & Ndubisi, 2011) define innovation as product or service, process and administrative innovation. Innovation also can take the form of a new service or product, a new structure, a new production process, or a new administrative system (Bilgihan, Okumus, & Kwun, 2011). In Oslo Manual, 3rd Edition, innovation has been defined as introduction of new product (goods and services), a new marketing plan, a new process, or a new organizational method for business practice relating to internal or external relations of business. Innovation could be distinguished into four types such as product, process, organizational and marketing innovation (OECD, 2005). For instance, (Oke, 2007) study on British firms revealed that developing formal implementation processes was necessary to pursue incremental product or service innovations, implying that the improvement of the processes is a driving force for the success of the output innovations.

Table 1 Summaries types of innovation by different authors

Nasution et al. (2011)	Oke et al. (2007)	Francis and Bessant (2005)	OECD, (2005), Bigliardi and Dormio (2009)
Product/ Service Process Administrative	Service Product Process	Paradigm Product Process Position	Organizational Product Process Marketing

Of the various types of innovation mentioned, three dimensions are relevant and of interest to this study, namely product innovation, process innovation and marketing innovation.

Product innovation

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines product innovation as the introduction of a good or service that is new or substantially improved. Success for product innovation will happen when entrepreneurs are able to register their products to intellectual property (OECD, 2005). According to Lager, the product innovation as development is driven by a desire to improve the properties and performance of finished product (Lager, 2002). Product innovation can develop new products, improve product properties and improve product quality. Hart define product innovation as the pursue to improve and radically changed products as particularly important for long term business growth (Hart, 1996). Heidt refers product innovation as a changes in new product introduction, technical and technological aspect, market response, product quality, product introduction, development time, profitability and market share (Heidt, 2008). Henard and Szymanski mentioned that product innovation is most often referred to as perceived newness, novelty, originality or uniqueness of product (Henard & Szymanski, 2001). Moreover, Andres and Smith (1996) consider appropriateness, which is the extent to which a new product is viewed as useful or beneficial to some consumers as an important feature of product innovativeness. Lovelock presents six categories of new products namely major innovations, start-up business, new product for currently served markets, product line extensions or additions, improvements to existing product and style changes (Lovelock, 1996).

Process innovation

Lager defines process innovation as a development driven by internal production objectives such as reduction of costs production, higher production yields, improvement of production volumes and product recoveries and environment-friendly production (Lager, 2002). OECD defines process innovation as introduction of a new or significantly improved production or delivery method (OECD, 2005). In order to improve the efficiency and productivity, SMEs are encouraged to undertake various measures to modernize and upgrade their machineries, equipment and operation procedures, as well as utilize energy-saving devices (Muhammad, Abdul Kamal Char, Yaso', & Hassan, 2010). In general, these innovative processes develop informally in SMEs, whose strategy is based on incremental innovation that, involve the introduction of new machinery (Rochina-Barrachina, Mañez, & Sanchis-Llopis, 2011). According to (Gopalakrishnan & Damanpour, 1997), process innovation is defined as tools, devices and knowledge in through technology that mediate between inputs and outputs. From inputs or raw material to output or finished goods, one product must undergo process whether

using traditional method or modern method to make a product. But when discussing process innovation, it actually uses the modern method such as modern machine, equipment and tools for reduce the time and cost and finally can increase the productivity.

Marketing innovation

OECD defines market innovation as the implementation of a new marketing method involving significant changes in product design, packaging, product promotion or pricing (OECD, 2005). Axel Johne defines market innovation is to identify better or new potential market and ways to serve target markets (Johne, 1999). The innovative marketing with a focus on term such as newness and opportunity, creative, novel or usual solutions to problem and need including the development of new product and services and new process for performing organization function (Knight, 1995). According to (O'Dwyer, Gilmore, & Carson, 2009), the elements that form the basis of innovative marketing are categorised in term of marketing variable (product enhancement, alteration of the marketing mix), modification (pro action and change), customer focus, integrated marketing (marketing integrated and permeation of marketing), market focus (vision and market centres) and unique proposition (new, unique and conventional). There are new opportunities for companies to promote their product using marketing innovation when a growth of new media such as the internet (e.g. search engine marketing, email, e-newsletters, online communities) and mobile marketing (e.g. M-Commerce, M-CRM, SMS) with the low cost and more effective (Karjaluo & Leinonen, 2009).

Methodology

The aim of this study is to explore the entrepreneur's experience in implementation of innovation. In order to have a deeper and better understanding of the entrepreneur's experience in implementation of innovation, the use of qualitative approach would be appropriate (Patton, 2002).

Personal in-depth interviews were used to elicit information from the entrepreneurs of SME establishments in Malaysia. The data were gathered from six respondents involve in the manufacturing of food and beverages. All of them were recruited from a database of enterprises obtained from FAMA (Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority) directory in Perak especially in RTC Perak. Initially, they were 10 respondents that have been contacted to participate in this survey. An invitation email was sent out to each of them explaining the purpose of conducting the interview and requesting to schedule for an interview. A follow-up telephone call was also made in order to increase to response rate amongst the participant. Of these, three did not responded to the invitation, one of them declined and the rest of 6 respondents agreed to participate and schedule for an interview.

In practice, the number of required respondents usually becomes obvious as the study progresses, as new categories, themes or explanations stop emerging from the data (Marshall, 1996). According to (Adams, 2008), through an in-depth interviews, the researcher is able to obtain more detailed and thorough information on a topic that might be gathered from a questionnaire. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the participants. Each interview lasted between one and half hour to 3 hours was conducted with each of the respondents (Creswell, 2007). The approach suggested by (Miles & Huberman, 1984) guided the data analysis. All interviews were recorded. The use of recorded interviews provides a rich source of verbatim materials. Recorded interview not only eliminates the omissions, distortions, elaborations, condensations and other modifications of data usually occurred in written interviews, it also provides an objective basis for assessing the adequacy of the interview data in relation to the performance of the interviewer

(Bucher & Quarantelli, 1956). The use of mechanically recorded data also is one of the strategies used to increase validity in the qualitative research paradigm (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The common responses were then categorized accordingly based on the above research questions and the results are summarized in the following section. To protect the identity of each respondent, their quotes are identified with an interview identification number. Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of the participants.

Result

This study identified experience in implement innovation in their business by entrepreneurs in RTC Perak. As the scope of study focuses in experience entrepreneur in implement innovation, themes were developed on types on innovation such as product innovation, process innovation and marketing innovation in table 3.

Table 2 Characteristics of participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Education level	Types of product	Business establish
Participant 1	Male	35	SPM	Pau	6 years
Participant 2	Female	57	SPM	Traditional cake, biscuit and cookies	10 years
Participant 3	Female	52	PMR	Juice, cordial	5 years
Participant 4	Female	39	SPM	Roselle Cordial	5 years
Participant 5	Female	37	SPM	Putu Perak	7 years
Participant 6	Female	42	Diploma	Cookies	7 years

Table 3 Experience in implementation of innovation

Experiences	Category	Benefit of innovation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of flavor of product • Variety of shape of product • Variety of types of product • Apply certification such Halal, GMP • Increasing product quality • Increasing the product shelf life period 	Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer satisfaction • Increasing the profit • Increasing the sale • Increasing production speed • Increasing the delivery speed • Reduce production cost
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with other company • Using modern machine to change the traditional ways • Using logistics process to increase speed delivery • Cut non needed activities when using new techniques 	Process	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using different channel of distribution • Using new packaging • Using new promoting strategy in web site, blog, media social • Focused market in Perak • Market product using other brand company name • Join exhibition to introduction company product 	Marketing	

Product innovation

All of the participants have experienced in product innovation and are already with Halal certification because this certification ensures the quality of product. The respondents highlighted several experiences in implementation of product innovation. For example, Participant 1 produces variety of filling which is the main ingredient for their food product such as beef, chicken, chocolate and kaya. This strategy will increase different types of their focus customer such as vegetarian. He also sells a hot and frozen pau in their factory. Participant 2 introduces variety of flavors and shapes such as chocolate and vanilla flavor and their product

shape such as gold fish shape. Participant 3 introduces a new and easy-to-drink packaging. She also introduces variety of product types such as juices, cordials and drinking water. Participant 4 plan to produce Roselle powder. In the future, participant 5 plan to produce their own 'putu perak' flour (a type of local delicacy) for customers make 'putu perak' at home. Lastly, participant 6 has experience in developing variety of flavors and shapes for their cookies. Participant 6 also introduced new packaging during her participation with the government agencies such as SIRIM and MITI under the Groom Big Program.

Process innovation

Participant 1 had experienced in implementing proses innovation. When he started the business, he failed to find new technology to speed up their production. Because of lack of knowledge, he bought the wrong machine. Now, he buys a machine that can produce their product about 1200 pau per hours. Participant 2 had experienced in proses innovation when she bought an oven and mixer. The machines help to reduce their time and cost to produce their product. Participant 3 had experienced in using machines to help fill their products into the bottles and to cook their juice. These machines which can be operated by just one worker overcome the manual processes she had had before. Participant 4 experienced proses innovation when their company collaborated with other manufacturer that has brought in new technology which is beneficial to their production. Finally, participant 5 experienced process innovation by using new technology while still maintains the old, secret recipe of theirs. In order to cope with the amount of orders from overseas and hypermarkets around, respondent 5 has used a special type of machines which can be operated by minimal number of workers and produces maximum number of product faster than the manual and tedious processes before.

Marketing innovation

All of the participants have experienced in marketing innovation by using web site, blog and media social. Some of the participants had experienced in marketing innovation by using the different channel of distribution such as night market, mini market, hypermarket and kiosk in Rest & Relaxation (R&R). Participant 1 shares their experience in marketing innovation where he developed the model of entrepreneur development which gives opportunity to new entrepreneurs who are interested to sell their company products. Participant 1 also introduces new packaging to ensure their product not damage and increasing the product shelf life period. Participant 4 has using marketing innovation when focus their market in Perak. Lastly, participant 5 shares her experience in new potential market but using the other company brand name for their product. All of the respondents reported on having experience with programs that allow them to participate and join big exhibitions to promote their product.

Discussion & Conclusion

In other words, the experienced entrepreneur in implementation of types of innovation such as product innovation, process innovation and marketing innovation were successful by join with government agencies. It is because government agencies such as MARA and TEKUN can give funds and grants for entrepreneur to buy their new technologies. Collaboration with government agencies such as SIRIM and MARDI provide opportunity to the SMEs to conduct collaborative research and development (R&D) and tap into current technological changes as entrepreneurs are lacking of facilities and experts. As recommended by (Sumathisri, 2012), from collaboration, SMEs can reduce cost of research and development (R&D), improve innovative performance, reduce time to market and search for new technological opportunities. The entrepreneurs also must join with government agency program such as Groom Big Program

because the program can not only develop entrepreneur's product packaging to become more attractive but also provides entrepreneurs with business and management skills. From the results, respondents agreed that product innovation is the first priority, followed by the process innovation and finally the marketing innovation. Understanding the types of innovation is very important because each type of innovation has their own risk and high cost to be implemented.

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