

INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURS AND THE MAINSTREAM TOURISM INDUSTRY RELATED BUSINESSES: A CASE OF ORANG ASLI IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The Malaysian government has made continuous efforts in stimulating the Malaysian Orang Asli involvement as entrepreneurs, specifically in tourism related businesses. This paper reports an empirical investigation on the attributes that support the success of Orang Asli entrepreneurs in tourism businesses. Using a qualitative approach this research interviewed ten Orang Asli established entrepreneurs. Through a thematic analysis some useful insights significantly obtained. Attitudes, role model, encouragement, knowledge, skill and competency, interest, patience and persistence are the attributes that support them in venturing into mainstream tourism industry business. In addition, the government support, involvement in the community and social networking somewhat aids in creating more business opportunity and increased confidence in expanding their business.

Keywords: indigenous; entrepreneurs; tourism; Orang Asli; Malaysia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that entrepreneurial is part of the business mechanism that involved millions of people socially and economically [1]. It is a process of starting one's own business to



broader conceptualizations relating to work attitude that emphasizes oneself-reliance, initiative, innovativeness and risk-taking about its businesses. Scholars unanimously agreed that entrepreneurship not only uplifting the self-economy, financial stability, creating new businesses and job opportunity but crucially important in contributing to industry and one nation wealth [2-4]. The availability of business opportunities and infrastructural facilities, effective policy formulation and government implementation, and accessibility to factors of production of a particular industries need to be in place to promote entrepreneurship in a nation [5].

Entrepreneurship manifest individual or a group of people ability to create new opportunities in economic and it is considered a way to alleviate poverty among the community and develop the less utilize areas [6]. In this manner, novel products, production modalities, organizational schemes and product market combination are created. In the context of the individual entrepreneurs, they are in fact seeking to introduce their newly crafted ideas in the existing market and put them into effect in fostering economic growth and nation development.

In Malaysia, the growth and development of small businesses and entrepreneurship have been shaped by the historical and socioeconomic forces [2]. Looking at the benefit and contribution of it toward the country economy, the government has made continuous efforts in stimulating the Malaysian small businesses and entrepreneurs to involve in the various sectors including tourism through different channels. In this context, besides other major ethnics, the development of Orang Asli as one of the important indigenous groups in this country together with other minority groups has also been given special attention by the government for their social and economic needs [7]. Structured settlements development program, education, rural roads, provision of electricity and water supply, social amenities are the examples of the initiatives undertaken [8-9].

The seriousness of the government in uplifting the Orang Asli social, economic and entrepreneurship is evidence through the formation of the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) under the Minister of Urban and Rural Development [7, 10]. The JAKOA or this government agency, on the other hand, acts as a body and responsible for

ensuring the overall policies and programs for the development and advancement of the wellbeing of the Orang Asli in the country. In eleventh Malaysia Plan, for the Orang Asli and Bumiputera in Sabah and Sarawak, customary native right (NCR) will be granted to encourage the development of their land by using modern technology through relevant government agencies [11]. Regarding entrepreneurial development among the Orang Asli, JAKOA implements the entrepreneurial training and courses in various fields ranging from clothing design, automotive technology, motorcycle mechanical, painting, etc.

According to JAKOA, in attracting Orang Asli community interest, various incentives are provided such business tools, assistance and others business inputs. Among the types of entrepreneurs' premises set up are craft shops, retail stores, workshop, restaurants, tailor shops, grocery stores, repair shops, cyber cafes, construction and other businesses. On the tourism perspective, handicraft, cultural and traditional identity products such as music instruments (Siol, (*Seruling Buluh*), Gooh (*Buluh Centong*), Genggong (Ranggog), Bateq (Drum) and Kerep (Bamboo Guitar), traditional herbs for medication such as *Raja Kayu*, products from variety of art, carvings (rattan, reed, roots and so on), weaving and famous unique wood carving are some of the examples of the Orang Asli products [12].

To date, there are around 800 of Orang Asli entrepreneurs in the whole country with few hundreds directly involved in tourism-related businesses such as retailing, transportation and handicrafts, either as an individual, partnership or through association. Despite this, only a few of them have reached into the mainstream business [13-14]. In this context, the mainstream is referring to a large and broad type of businesses which products and services are readily available and appealing to the general public as opposed to being of interest only to very small public and able to compete with other people business. The issue of small proportion of Orang Asli entrepreneur's that reached the mainstream business, in fact, remained elusive and still questionable despite various financial and non-financial assistance, training, courses and encouragements provided especially by the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development and JAKOA [14]. With this, besides revealing the inhibit factors the understanding the attributes that contribute toward reaching the mainstream businesses is also considered vital. Thus, this paper is qualitatively diagnosing the characteristics that support

the success of Orang Asli entrepreneurs entering the mainstream tourism-related businesses.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

An indigenous person is regarded as an individual who is an original owner of a country's resources or a descendant of such a person and the individual regards himself or herself as Indigenous and the Indigenous community [15]. Meanwhile, Indigenous entrepreneurship can be understood by the creation of a new business venture that is managed and developed by the Indigenous people for the benefit of their ethnic [16-17]. These benefits may extend from economic profits for the individual to the multiple social and economic advantages for the entire communities. Underpinning these benefits are strong desires for self-determination without jeopardizing the preservation of their heritage [18-20].

The indigenous entrepreneurship as a field of inquiry has been considered in a growing stage [20-22]. Several studies have been conducted to specifically understand the indigenous entrepreneurship as a unique field of research as well as to further uncover themes and the underpinning issues particularly on their societal rebuilding and economic development. Not to exaggerate that the indigenous peoples are regarded amongst the most disadvantaged and marginalized segments of a population and are usually distinct from the dominant groups in their national societies [23-24]. For instance, Indigenous peoples are seen as having a lesser economic status [25-27], endemic poverty [27-28] and social deprivation like lower levels of education, poor health and higher rates of unemployment [21, 28-29]. This scenario is similar happening in many countries in the world including Malaysia, which is dealing with Orang Asli as one of the indigenous groups in the nation [30].

Local community or the indigenous acts as an entrepreneur when its members acting as owners, managers and employees collaboratively create or identify a market opportunity and organize themselves to respond into it [31]. However, development activities in the local or indigenous community are led by development agencies rather than the community members and this, in fact, will lead to a lack of sense of ownership and losing interest in becoming as an entrepreneur [17, 19]. A great deal of research has been conducted in different segments of the indigenous entrepreneur ranging from general businesses to the tourism industry related

entrepreneurship [5, 20, 32].

The literature suggests that local communities and indigenous entrepreneurs act as a fundamental element of the modern rural tourism development [33-34]. Some studies highlight the contribution and capability of the tourism business entrepreneurship in the rural area toward job creation and economic rejuvenation [35]. Many scholars contended that out of many, there two types of tourism business entrepreneurs concerning the local communities and indigenous groups and that are classic and premier entrepreneurs [36-38]. Classic entrepreneur is dealing with individuals who are ambitious for business growth and profitability, while the premier entrepreneurs concern on the other type of businesses which is pursuing for an autonomy and an appealing lifestyle [38].

The second form of entrepreneurship is much more prominent. tourism development in the rural area is seen as the path to enhance the economies and deliver more appropriate development to marginal and peripheral social, cultural and physical environments [39]. In Malaysia, the community-based tourism through the homestay business and other related activities becomes an agenda to increase income level and reduces the level of poverty in the rural and indigenous community [40].

The indigenous entrepreneurial characteristics revolved around several unique criteria and the most revealing features are their socio-cultural background [20]. Since most of the indigenous tribe has their special crafts and ornaments, knowledge and skill are also necessary to become an entrepreneur [28, 39]. Also, personality traits and being active in the community not only create a kinship and togetherness but projecting the individuals' activities including business entrepreneurial [41].

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sampling and Instrument

As this study aims to understand, recognizing and unveil matters relating to human behaviour rather than describing their behaviour through arithmetic or statistical analysis, a qualitative approach through interview was applied for information gathering. The population and the unit of analysis were among the individual Orang Asli entrepreneurs who had been already

reached into the mainstream tourism-related businesses. These peoples are believed to be knowledgeable and well experienced thus able to provide relevant information on a particular subject. Based on information gathered from the main office of the JAKOA, around 40 Orang Asli entrepreneurs in Malaysia had reached that level and met the criteria.

3.2. Research Instrument

A series of semi-structured interview questions or open-ended questions were developed with the intention to obtain in-depth and detailed information on the investigated matters related to the attributes that support the success of Orang Asli entrepreneurs reaching the mainstream tourism-related businesses. These open-ended questions were used to avoid any potentially biased responses and with the idea to discover rather than prescribed. The questions were designed interactively to elicit and develop a relaxing and friendly atmosphere during the interview. All the items were created by the researchers in addressing the objectives of the study [42]. Five questions were probed to solicit the information ranging from demographic data, attributes that support, main difficulties faced, other factors to encourage other entrepreneurs to go for mainstream tourism-related businesses. Owing to the different educational level among the Orang Asli entrepreneurs, *Bahasa Malaysia* version of the semi-structured questions is used after translating made from the English version of the language expert. The English version of the developed questions is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Semi-structured interview questions

No.	Questions
1	Demographic: Age, gender, type of business/ product, experience and income
2	What are the attributes that support your success in venturing into the mainstream business?
3	Could you elaborate the main difficulties that you faced before reaching the mainstream business?
4	Are there any other factors that aid your mainstream business journey?
5	How your success could encourage others entrepreneur to go for mainstream business?

3.3. Procedure for Data Collection

Before the interview process, 40 identified Orang Asli entrepreneurs were contacted seeking

permission to be interviewed. At the same time, the introduction and the consent letter along with the cover letter were also mailed. As this study requires the involvement of the entrepreneurs itself, some were claimed too busy with business matters and barely available to be interviewed or in other words refused or reluctant to share the information. In the end, only 10 were willing to be involved in the interview. The dates, times for the interview session to be carried out were then prearranged based on the convenience and wishes of the entrepreneurs, which required unlimited flexibility on the part of the researcher. All of the dates arranged with those 10 entrepreneurs were within the time frame that had been planned by the researchers. Thus, the progress of the whole research process was not interrupted.

In actual interview session, each entrepreneur was first asked for permission to tape-record the interview and the researchers were allowed to do so by all of them [42]. During the interview, a predetermined set of semi-structured questions based on the objectives of the study was posed. The researchers ensured that did not ask leading questions which could lead the entrepreneurs to answer in a certain direction and provide a greater chance of biased answers. All of the interviews that were carried out with the respective entrepreneur lasted between 30 minutes and one hour on average. Overall, the researcher was fully satisfied with the answers provided and was grateful for the commitment and the cooperation given by all of them towards the interviews. The name and location of each however were not revealed to preserve confidentiality and anonymity.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Due to its flexibility of capturing something important about the data about the research issue and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the information gathered, thematic analysis is used in the interpretation of the interview information in this study. It is worth mentioning that their names and company could not be disclosed to ensure and preserved the confidentiality thus throughout the analysis they are known or used as “*INFORMANT*”.

4.1. Informant Profile

The ten Orang Asli entrepreneurs who were interviewed in this study are having around 10 to

20 years' business experiences and involved with various tourism-related businesses such as retailing, transportation, accommodation, tourism agencies. The ages are ranging from 42 to 56 years old and on average their income is more than RM10,000 per month. All of these entrepreneurs received recognition from the JAKOA for their achievement.

4.2. Attributes that Support the Success in Venturing into the Mainstream Business

The first question is intended to reveal attributes that support the success in venturing into the mainstream business among the 10 Orang Asli entrepreneurs'. Responding to this question, the majority of the Orang Asli entrepreneurs' that involved in the interview had almost the same views and the overall information obtained can be divided into three themes. The themes are a) attitudes, role model and encouragement, b) knowledge, skill and competency and c) interest, patience and persistence.

4.2.1. Attitudes, Role model and Encouragement

No doubt that attitude besides others is one of the essential elements that take individual toward achieving their highest potential in business. Attitude in fact has a strong relationship with the work performance and having a positive attitude a person is in control, confident and will perform at their best when they are entering into a businessman or entrepreneurship. Besides this, undeniable that it is useful to have examples of other people who have created their own strong and successful before starting or involving in business. In this sense, role model could provide an opportunity for new entrepreneurs to learn from the experience of others not just from what went right but seeing what went wrong and mistakes made before prospering in their business. Also, support and encouragement from the family and friends also cannot be ignored as they are sources of inspiration for them to achieve the business destination. Some of the information gathered from the interview and below are some of the verbatim quotations;

“Personally... someone has told me a lesson that I will never forget and always keep reminding me. When you want to be rich and change your life and your family, you should have right attitudes support with effort and perseverance. What I meant is that a positive mental attitude. Well... in my experience, I initially do not have the confidence and courage to take a risk to jump into the business. But my motivation and attitude change through the

encouragement of my family. Through their support I continually bring my family legacy and brave to take a risk and since then no turning back for me. I could say is that positive mindset

and courage are the utmost importance to succeed in business” (Informant 5)

“..... no doubt... venturing into business is a high risk but to me taking risk is the best gateway to be as a successful person. With my positive attitudes, I pushed myself to be hardworking and never stop acquiring knowledge of business activities. Besides this, someone who has succeeded in business is a mentor or an example that urge my desire to go further. Definitely they were also struggling before reaching the peak... If they can do..... surely I also am able to do it. I think these elements are the most important criteria to be in the mainstream business. (Informant 2)

4.2.2. Knowledge, Skill and Competency

Undoubtedly, running a business or be an entrepreneur is one of the demanding and difficult tasks. Whether big or small the business, understanding the customer needs in this challenges environment is utmost and crucially important. Thus, acquiring knowledge, developing skills and competence is necessary as it will provide businessman and entrepreneurs with the foundation and guides to deal with the natty gritty of the overall business operation. Knowledge, skills and competency are the components and elements that aid the businessmen and entrepreneurs in running businesses more effectively. These elements are valuable in exploiting business opportunities and lessening the business risks and vulnerability. Knowledge, skills and competency in fact, not only useful in maintaining the existing and producing the new products or services but way of enhancing of selling the products. These three elements can also derive from the experience of selling goods and services. The majority of the informants revealed that they possessed the knowledge, skills and competency, both through tertiary education and continuous experience since actively involved in the specific business. Some of them claimed that those three elements are the hidden gurus that always give them the impetus idea to further maintain and expanding their businesses. The following are a few responses eloquently expressed by the informants.

“To me.... the degree obtained which combining the knowledge, skill and competency directly helped develop the courage to operate and manage my business. You know that these

elements support the experience creates confidence in venturing into the mainstream business.

Even people with no tertiary education, knowledge, skill and competency is gradually obtained through experience from others. I initially absorbed knowledge, skill and competency through my previous working experience in the business organization. It is not easy to manage the income and revenue if you don't know. In this sense, combining knowledge, skill and competency not only benefit in managing business operation but lead you to eye for other business opportunity. Thus, I urged young people of my community to equip themselves with these three components together with a positive attitude before moving forward in business. Nothing is impossible for my community to be in the mainstream business as long they acquire these three important elements" (Informant 1)

"I consider myself a driven person who works hard to achieve the goals. The ability to overcome the obstacles and follow things through has always been a strong point of mine. However, I am aware that possessing sufficient and correct skills, knowledge and ability could hastily improve my business plan. In the years of my career as businessman, knowledge, skills and ability are the important aspects that are succeeding my business. For instance, even though my nature of business may not need any computer skills, but I can't ignore the importance of this technology. In fact, it proven improved my business contact. To tell you honestly, compare to other ethnics, Orang Asli as the indigenous group in this country is still far behind in business and the majority of my people is confined to self-sustained business.

With that, I am aware of my dedication to the development my ethnic business thus it is important for me to impacting the knowledge, sharing the skill and competency to them. By doing that, sooner or later many of my people obviously could reach the highest level of the business entity. I pray for that" (Informant 8)

4.2.3. Interest, Patience and Persistence

Besides attitudes, role model, encouragement, knowledge, skill and competency, the interest of the individuals, patience and persistence are another important criterion not only to be as an entrepreneur but beyond the self-sustained the business. This is the information gathered from the interview session pertaining the interest, patience and persistence hence they are now discussed. In this sense, to be an entrepreneur and even to go beyond that someone must be

versatile and have some sought of hallmarks or business characteristics. That characteristic is lying on the long-term interest, patience and persistence. In this sense, interest is referring the state of wanting to know and to go further or learn about something that is a businessman or entrepreneur in the context of the study. If interest is something associate with the learning process, patience is the state or level of endurance or being steadfast that businessman or entrepreneur needs to or ready to face to be succeeded in the business while persistence is dealing with the firm or obstinate continuance in the course of action in spite of difficulty or the drawbacks encounter during the business period.

Many of the Orang Asli entrepreneurs in the interview in addition to the above notion posited that the idea of running a business and reaching a mainstream business is like creating systems and procedures that relate to servicing the customers, thrive on, creating and managing the extra responsibilities. With that, long-term interest, patience and persistence possess in the survival of the mainstream business, entrepreneurship and the rewards of it is well worth despite the obstacles faced along the journey to success. These attributes are classified by Orang Asli entrepreneurs as a building block for business destiny or to cater to much broader customers.

“I must tell you that going large and broad in term of business products and services offered too many open customers are my long-term interest. As I considered myself having a very strong work ethic, through my interest, together with patience, persistence and perseverance despite many difficulties I have been able to break the wall by marketing the decoration products to many customers. Now, my clients not only among the Orang Asli but other ethnic, especially the Malays and tourists. To me.... any Orang Asli entrepreneur could do the same or market their products in the much huge market as long as these three attributes are blended and used them to execute in their business” (Informant 3)

“As I mentioned to you in my background, I did not expect to be able to operate the homestay business. But my interest starts to develop after attended the homestay courses. Since then and with the continuous demand from the local and international tourists the interest of expanding the homestay business is never faded in fact increase every day. But mind you that the interest alone is not enough without my endurance and perseverance. To my family and me, these

determinants act as a catalyst that boosts our spirit to go bigger. Sincerely, I will never look back in this business, in fact, one day I hope that my children can run a resort in this area. In sum, I would say interest, endurance and perseverance are the ingredients to reach our higher target in business” (Informant 10)

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4.3. Main Difficulties Faced Before Reaching the Mainstream Business

The second question is to reveal the main obstacles faced by the Orang Asli entrepreneurs before reaching the mainstream business. This question is important as it indirectly provides information to the potential Orang Asli entrepreneurs and the government authority’s particularly the JAKOA in taking further action of encouraging, especially those who are intent and currently undertaking a small or self- sustained business activities. Information is drawn from this question also would become a guideline and directions to the young Orang Asli who are interested in venturing into business entrepreneurship. Digesting from what has been gathered, two themes can be identified and they are target markets and resources.

4.3.1. Target Markets

Undeniable that undertaking any businesses, the identifying of the target market is the vital element that directly determines the business survival. Many business people associated a well-defined target market is the first element of a marketing strategy. In layman term, a target market is a group of customers that the businessman or entrepreneurs have decided to aim its marketing efforts and ultimately selling its products and services or customers who are most likely to buy their products. In line with above notion, the majority of the Orang Asli entrepreneurs expressed that as a minority group or being a small indigenous with a small

market, penetrating the major ethnic markets especially the Malays are the major concern or difficulties faced by them before reaching the mainstream business.

The mainstream business to them is the ability to penetrate the bigger market besides their ethnicity. Thus, admitted that there quite some Orang Asli undertaking business but most of them are only dealing with a small type business selling the homemade crafts and jungle resources and confined to self- sustained. They claimed that the difficulties in penetrating the major ethnic markets are mainly dealing with services, quality and most importantly the acceptability of the products. In other words, the concern is much relating to whether they be able to render good services, the quality of the products selling and the acceptability of the products by the general public. Despite this, some of the entrepreneurs accentuate that the education, cross culturing, social integration, religion and networking are the other important elements that are narrowing the gaps or breaking the obstacles. Below are two of the direct quotations made by Orang Asli entrepreneurs:

“In going far in business, you need a huge market. You knew that how many Orang Asli in this country and where do they live. Small and quite far from the urban area except a few. So finding the target market is the constraint that I ever experienced. If I live in my community, I never expand my business. With less experienced in the art, wood and furniture making and taking products from my fellow ethnic, I have moved myself to a town and find the bigger opportunity for business prosperity. In town, other issues arose in my mind..... that is services, quality of the products and how the public especially the Malays perceived my products.

Being mingle with Malay friends, I am fortunate that my furniture is well accepted by the local public. Thus, I would say there are ways to break the obstacles” (Informant 8)

“I still remembered what my father told me.....once you completed the degree I want you to break the wall that Orang Asli business can be expanded and getting more market. Thus, penetrating the bigger market and making sure that our products are well accepted by the public is the drawback experienced by us before reaching this stage. With the knowledge gained from the university, prompt service, customer satisfaction was given priority and great attention. Things held true. Although slight pain and involved efforts and money in the initial stage my business gradually getting more customers from all races. Once customers trust is

developed you are pretty much confident thus moving forward is your ultimate goal”

(Informant 9)

4.3.2. Resources

About resource, what can be drawn from the interview is that the majority of the Orang Asli entrepreneurs claimed that going bigger or go beyond the normal practice in business or entrepreneurship with no guarantee for success seems like a daunting task. This undoubtedly is dealing with many factors and processes. Whether a small or big the business, sufficient or appropriate physical resources are needed to survive. In this sense, operating a small business is not just about working in improving a lifestyle but it is also about having the necessary management skills, technical skills, financial and importantly a long-term vision to grow and succeed. No doubt, an entrepreneur requires some skills to run a business and succeed in day-to-day business operations. Being able to critically and effectively managing all those mentioned elements aids business profit and protect the financial investment. It is also important effectively promoting products or services to generate sales. Also, knowing how to manage the resources including time effectively, money and employees will gradually push to achieve your goals. Failure to delegate is a trap to many entrepreneurs.

Despite the above notion, managing a proper management skill, technical skills, marketing skill, money, efforts and many others are one of the costliest thus consider as the main obstacles that slightly inhibit the intention and motivation of going the mainstream business.

“It is lying if we don’t face the difficulties before reaching this level. Besides penetrating the huge market, lack of budget and money in expanding a business is the main difficulty. Not only that, marketing the products, management and train the staffs to be skillful are also part of it. You know, managing and getting sufficient of these resources which are expensive is hard and struggling. I have to find ways and be extroverts. Always and continually examine my business performance through those elements. As the business environment like a living organism which subjected to expansion, thus after a few years of trying to overcome those difficulties and gathering the sufficient resources through a bank, courses and training

attended I finally come to this level. Thank god” (Informant 7)

“..... Started with a small business I am too afraid to go far. Always thought that to expand

or to go mainstream requires preparedness in term of resources like knowledge, skill, money, competence human, marketing, investment and others. These are the drawbacks. It took years for me crawling and gathered and obtaining resources ...what I could say it is bit and piece's work. Luckily, through contact, developing networks and learning processes plus perseverance, things are gradually getting better. What I could say to Orang Asli entrepreneurs who intent or making way to the mainstream business undoubtedly getting adequate physical resources are the difficulties as they are needed for business survival" (Informant 6)

4.4. Other Attributes that Aids the Mainstream Business Journey

The third question is intended to look at other attributes that aid Orang Asli entrepreneurs into the mainstream business journey. In response to this, the Orang Asli entrepreneurs' that involved in the interview have given various answered however after filtering, the information can be divided into two main themes and each main theme is represented by the sub-themes. The themes are government support, involvement in the community and social capital.

Based on the literature, in addition to huge or multinational companies, small and medium-sized or enterprises and entrepreneurs also undeniably play a key role in shaping the economy of the country. In line with this, the government assistance or support is one of the key incentives used to encourage the innovation performance of particular small enterprises and entrepreneurs. Government support on most occasions has boosted the employment growth and positively increased the productivity, survival and performance of the small enterprises and entrepreneurs. In this study, the Orang Asli entrepreneurs claimed that the government support is received through the financial and non- financial assistance.

4.4.1. Financial Assistance

By ignoring the other ethnics, the indigenous group particularly Orang Asli based on JAKOA reports claimed that owing to their minority status in this country and living either in the original place or resettlement areas continuously requires support from the central and the local government. With this report and besides others, one of the government agenda through the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development particularly JAKOA is to intensify and encourage more participation of Orang Asli in the business activities. With that, more business premises, stalls, shops and workshops are built and apparent in the strategic areas.

Based on the information gathered from the interview and evidently support the report, the Orang Asli entrepreneurs explicitly admitted that their road to the mainstream business could not be reached without the government financial support. This financial support is crucially important during the initial or infant stage of their business. Most of them stressed that in the initial stage, the micro-credit scheme is one financial support introduced by the government through JAKOA. Although the grant awarded is subjected to the criteria, but it helps them to gradually execute their small business, economic development and improve their socio-economic outcomes. The grant assistance is given in one-off form with the purpose to implement projects such as business buildings/premise; purchase of equipment or machinery; economic project/program and human capital development program. In other words, the government financial support provides start-up and expansion financing for small- and medium-sized indigenous businesses. The continuous government financial support together with self-effort significantly giving a positive impact on Orang Asli business development. Some direct quotations are as follows:

“There is no denying the fact that the financial aid from the government through the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) in particular is very helpful to me in starting a small business. This financial support truly enables my small business to stir and executed. With that, efforts and slowly saving the income plus continuous learning processes I can climb the ladder although facing a lot difficulty along the journey. The only thing is that I have to move from confining myself within my ethnic market and getting more toward open market. That's what I did, and it works” (Informant 7)

“.....I would neither start nor expand my business without the government financial support. Honestly..... It is not easy for me as Orang Asli to venturing into business or to think out of the box. Although with many criteria to comply with the government financial assistance, I am crawling myself in business. Once I move my business location to a strategic place I got more government financial assistance and other offers from the commercial banks to move forward. Whatever it is, I appreciate the financial support from the government” (Informant 2)

4.4.2. Non-Financial Assistance

Besides financial, almost all Orang Asli entrepreneurs in the interview revealed that the

success and survival of their current business activities are also well depending on the government's non-financial assistance. The government's non-financial assistance to Orang Asli entrepreneurs is referring to the processes or activities, particularly dealing with the early stage of business ranging from planning, organizing, implementing, advising and monitoring provided by the government agencies. The Ministry of Rural and Regional Development through JAKOA and related agencies have its role and responsibility in providing directions, policies, guidelines and skills for the development of the indigenous business. These are undertaken through a various mechanism including courses, skill training and seminars.

The Orang Asli entrepreneurs further revealed the non-financial support has seen increased access to training opportunities in the entrepreneurial activities. The Ministry of Rural and Regional Development and JAKOA in collaboration with other agencies through the seminars and courses have provided the explanation sessions and exposure to the beginner and those who already in the business to further seeking business opportunities in the broader scope. Most of them claimed that results from the training and courses attended in the various centers not only increased knowledge towards improving the skills of the Orang Asli entrepreneurs but opening their eyes beyond and to the forefront their business. It is interesting to note that through such efforts or the government non-financial assistance not only the number of the indigenous businesses are growing, but the entrepreneurs like them are braver and able to break the tips of the iceberg.

“For me, apart from financial assistance, the government non-financial assistance in the form advisory services are too important in exposing our minority business community to recognize the opportunities and ways in executing further of the existing small business to a greater extent. Mind you...if did not follow the training and courses organized by those government agencies like TEKUN, USAHANIAGA and many others I don't think that I can make this performance so far. This is not to praise the government, but the efforts and the moved make helped me and others in developing the business to a higher level. I should thank the government especially the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) for their sincere efforts” (Informant 4)

“I will consider myself as an ungrateful person if I deny the government non-financial aid

which is benefited to my business progression. Indeed, the government non-financial aid through training and courses attended has allowed me to learn the basic ins and outs of the business. Honestly, knowledge obtained through courses and seminars I slowly climb the ladder towards reaching the wider destination of business perspectives” (Informant 9)

4.4.3. Involvement in the Community

A healthy sense of community ideally not only creates nourishment of the ethnic identity, values, peace but good business culture as well. The healthy sense of community made the members feel respected, acknowledged, safe and welcome that reflects their hopes and dreams to move forward in life including the business. The strong connection among the members of the community will give an individual to share their experience in whatever they do. In line with this notion, some of the successful Orang Asli entrepreneurs during the interview stressed that being part of the community is one of the important elements that to be engaged and cannot be ignored by any individual who is interested in developing themselves in many areas including business. They claimed that information on new opportunities, government and other agency projects including business and chances to go further in various fields is normally channeled through the community leaders. The information received commonly will be disseminated and shared with the member of the community, and the individual member will get the benefit from it.

It is interesting to note that the majority of the success Orang Asli entrepreneurs in this study admitted that being active in the community not only sparked their long-term interest to be involved in the business but making them progress, development or growth in this field. This is the resulted from the sharing knowledge with fellow ethnic that are actively involved in their community and community-level efforts also stimulate a greater number of healthy businesses. In short, undeniably active in the ethnic communities’ activities by disregard few negative parts creates a conducive environment of sharing an interest in many aspects, developing the individual interests of certain traits and most importantly materializing their intention to execute and to go farther including the mainstream business.

“As a small ethnic in this country, we are lagging behind in many areas. With that, I think the power and the strength of our ethnic are lying in the sense of community. Thus, each

involvement in the community activities not only enable them to learn but share an interest in a particular field such as business. Undeniably, any support from the government and other agencies are channeled through community leaders. So, actively involved in community activities will enable my ethnic to know more clearly about the business opportunity. That's what I'm doing then and even now. Besides other sources, honestly, I expand my business knowledge and interest through friends who actively involved in the community activities. Throw the negatives aspect but taking the positive ones in the communities. What could I conclude is that community directly helped me to go far in the business” (Informant 6)

“To be honest, my engagement in business started through sharing similar interest with friends who are active in the community. Regular meeting through community activities allows us to discuss and exchange the ideas on what types of business to be explored. Really... sharing similar interest with the encouragement from the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) through community events sparked me to venture into small-scale business in the initial stage. Yes, it works for me. With that, I so much appreciate and grateful that I actively involved in my community. Without them, I don't know where my interest would be” (Informant 1)

4.4.4. Social Capital or Networking

As networking is the part and associated with social capital, hence it's repeatedly highlighted in the literature as a critical element to business success, and the same note was expressed by most of the Orang Asli entrepreneurs in the interview. They classified business networking that is dealing with other business associates, knowing the individual that was already successful, being part in business trade and association besides other attributes is the important element to them and being part of the larger mainstream network is their ultimate goals. Most importantly, majority of the Orang Asli entrepreneurs undoubtedly agree that networking as a valuable way to expand knowledge, learn from the success of others and attain new clients and these elements in sum creating more business opportunity for them. In this sense, knowing highly influential business people not only a great source of connections but gives them the opportunity to get advice in all sorts of things related to their business hence expand their business knowledge and increased access to more suppliers and

customers. This is considered by a few of the Orang Asli entrepreneurs as an effective, low-cost knowledge seeking and marketing. Besides knowing new business associate, networking through business trade and association creating or bringing the added value of recommendation and a personal introduction which are always very helpful in creating more business opportunities. Some of the Orang Asli entrepreneurs admitted their business is growing through networking created by the trade association. In addition to individual efforts, friends, JAKOA with the assistance of other agencies undeniably triggers and open the way to more linkages on the networking by organizing business fairs and this opportunity is taken by them not only to introduce their products but meeting with successful people in business among their own and other ethnic. This effort directly creates more business opportunity for them. Verbatim quotations from two selected Orang Asli entrepreneurs are then highlighted.

“To me.... networking is about building relationships, sharing information and finding sources of support. Often people play it safe, staying inside their industry walls-failing to pop that comfort zone bubble and venture into new territory of new faces and new ideas. As a businessman, it’s time to go beyond the familiar to expand your network and knowledge and meet more contacts who could help get you that much closer to your goals. That’s what I did and mind you its work, and most importantly the result is that I managed to reach and get more business opportunity” (Informant 2)

“I think most businessmen agree that networking is not just a matter of knowing someone who has been successful in business. But it’s more than that. Developing networking through other means like engagement in trade and business association also helps us to acquire new knowledge, and new customers and the most valuable thing is that the overall networking made produce opportunity to go far in the business. It is important to note that the networking for an indigenous businessman like us can also be expanded or obtained through some government agencies that always assist us through the business expo and many other activities. Honestly, networking in a way aid us to reach a mainstream business” (Informant 4)

4.5. Encouragement to Others

The last question probed is to reveal how the successful Orang Asli entrepreneurs could encourage the individuals who are currently engaged in small business activity to go far or

reaching the mainstream business. The question is asked with the intention to see their contributions after having reached that stage. After listening to the answer obtained, the majority of the Orang Asli entrepreneurs who have been successfully reaching the mainstream business are given almost the same views and with that one main theme is derived from there; In dealing with this, the majority of the successful Orang Asli entrepreneurs flashback of their early experience or at the crawling stage of their business. They claimed that similar to the initial stage, a great deal of work has to be faced again by them when further expands their business. Some quoted the famous saying of “no pain, no gain”. Realizing the fact that the indigenous minority Orang Asli is still far behind than the other ethnic regarding education, economy and business, hence it is directly creating motivation, awareness and encourage them to share their success with people in their community in particular. To some, it no denies the fact that the key to success in anything including business is the hard work, skill, knowledge and networking but the key to prosperity and nourishing in business is also to share the knowledge with people or help others to enhance their business skills.

On that note, with the intention of imparting and sharing the knowledge and skill, sincerely the successful Orang Asli entrepreneurs took the initiative by registering themselves with the state Department of Orang Asli. This effort evidently enables them to contribute by sharing experiences, giving an impetus business management idea and advise individuals Orang Asli entrepreneurs’ who are currently engaged with small business to expand and to go further and be more competitive and at the same time attracting or trained the new comers. Some entrepreneurs strongly believed that sharing their success with others is one of the ways to inspire and increase someone business personality traits. They also believe the continuous sharing session by different successful entrepreneurs not only create awareness, but able to make a significant improvement on entrepreneurial competencies as aspiration can change Orang Asli entrepreneur’s life in a significant way. The following are few verbatim responses by the informants.

“When starting out the business, there's bound to be some bumps and bruises and similarly stumble through with new situations and experiences. Even as your company develops and begins to take flight, there will be growing pains. Thus, do not let other peoples feel about our

pain. So.... when reaching the mainstream or success in business, find a little time to help others. As for me...I always promise myself to continuously facilitate people especially my ethnic by sharing whatever business knowledge I have for them to go far. Where ever I am now, always back to my root and taking some potential one working with me and train them”

(Informant 6)

“You see, some people have a scarcity mindset that causes them to fear to reveal what they do to achieve success. They are afraid of their competition copying them. They are afraid that what is working for them will stop if everyone starts doing it. To me, this is selfish. Why not we share our knowledge and success with others especially with under developed ethnic like my ethnic. That's what I do with my business as I engaged myself with the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA). They always call me to share my experience with those who are new in the business. Although my contribution is small I it is significant” (Informant

1)

5. CONCLUSION

The overall qualitative result is explicitly showing that attitudes, role model and encouragement, knowledge, skill and competency, interest, patience and persistence are the attributes that support the Orang Asli entrepreneurs in venturing into the mainstream business. Nevertheless, penetrating the major ethnic markets and getting sufficient or appropriate physical resources are the major concern or difficulties faced by them before reaching that level. It is interactive to note that the government support either through financial and non-financial and social networking somewhat aids Orang Asli entrepreneurs in creating more business opportunity and increased confidence in expanding their business. Similarly, active in their community not only flashed their long-term interest to be involved in business but gradually making them progress, develop or growth in entrepreneurial and lastly realizing the indigenous minority Orang Asli is still behind in education, economy and business. Hence, it is directly creating motivation, awareness and encourage the successful ones to share their experience with those who are currently involved in the small business and the potential ones. From the academic perspective, result in this study not only provide the understanding

attributes that directly support the success of Orang Asli entrepreneurs of reaching the mainstream tourism industry-related businesses probably create new documentation on the indigenous research. It also might form a fundamental basis and a platform for other researchers to look and expand into the much broader scope of study particularly regarding the indigenous entrepreneurship.

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