

**INFORMATION NEEDS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISE
(SME) MANAGERS: A STUDY IN SHAH ALAM, MALAYSIA**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the information needs of small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) managers in Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia. It identifies their information needs when they were in the early stages of their business experience. The study adopted a mixed method of study which were: quantitative and qualitative approach of study. Questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 110 managers of SMEs located in Shah Alam, Selangor. Twenty-six respondents from the samples were interviewed. The findings from the survey using the questionnaire revealed that the identified kinds of business information needed by respondents included information on business opportunities, followed by preparing business plans, planning cash flow, and profit planning. The results indicated that the kinds of business information considered very important were information related to planning cash flow, followed by communications with clients, business opportunities, preparing business plans, courses on entrepreneurship, profit planning, and latest technology. The study found that respondents obtained most of their business information by sharing experience with other entrepreneurs, followed by talking to other entrepreneurs, using the Internet/email, reading newspapers and magazines, discussions with friends and relatives, getting advice from government agency officers, asking clients, and talking to experts/business consultants. The results revealed that the sources from which respondents obtained their business information were courses, followed by business exhibitions, the Internet/e-mail, government agencies, business premises, technical training, and practical training. Clients and other entrepreneurs were considered as very important sources of business information, while the librarian was perceived as only moderately important.

Results from the interview revealed that the most common kinds of information required by SME managers were business information/opportunities, followed by financial sources, current marketing trends, location, survey/research, sources of raw materials/intermediate products, information on customers, government regulations/policies, competitors, method/equipment/technology, business registration, risk, labour availability, profitability, networking methods and travels. The most common kinds of information required for decision-making were business opportunities/competitors, followed by finance, methods of analysis, market, data, suppliers (of raw materials/immediate products), innovation/technology, consultancy/advice, society, risk, profitability, government policies, and entrepreneurship training. The results of the interview also revealed that the most common types of sources of information were the Internet, followed by reading materials, surveys, information directories, associations/agencies, courses on entrepreneurship, experts/business consultants, media, networks, exhibitions, advertisements, visits, analytical reports, social events, neighbourhoods, market players, politics and biography.

Keywords: information needs, business information, SME managers, small and medium-sized enterprise (SME)