University Technology MARA

E-Commerce :
The Opportunities and Challenges for Women at Home

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ABSTRACT

Unless you are living in a high mountain without any electricity supply and cannot be reached by any printed media, you must have heard about the term e-commerce. The word e-commerce has been used again and again from various media whether it is from radio, television or printed materials. When the computer was first introduced in 1946, nobody can ever imagine that this machine will extensively change the way human beings lead their lives. A few decades later the Internet was introduced by the US Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency network. It has changed the way people work, study and even the way they live. With the growth of the Internet, e-commerce has become an important part of today's businesses. E-commerce is a growing aspect of the business community. This formally is the use of digital transactions between and among businesses and individuals. The year 1994 saw the starts of the Internet connection in Malaysia. In just less than ten years after that, the Internet has experienced a rapid growth in terms of the network infrastructure, the number of the Internet users, etc. There have been reports on some successes, particularly in technology, business-to-business and niche markets. The potential for businesses to prosper in the world of e-commerce will certainly continue to grow. The questions now: How does this new phenomenon affect women at home in Malaysia? Can e-commerce create opportunities for this group? What are the challenges they need to face? As we know in Malaysia, women have the same social, political and economic status as men. They can even participate in the decision and economy development. This paper is trying to provide answers to the above questions by looking at the applications of e-commerce in Malaysia and consequently identifying possible opportunities and challenges for those women who especially at home.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Research

The recent development of the Internet has created a technological and commercial revolution throughout the world. Unlike the industrial revolution brought by the steam engine and the electricity that has enhanced the physical power, the Internet breakthrough is enhancing the brainpower. Virtually it could crosses continents faster than the speed of sound. It is a wave that is affecting everyone. According to IBM Executive's report to Women's Economic Summit of Americas, it took 50 years before 30% of the population had electricity, 26 years before 30% of the population had a television and it took 13 years before 30% of the population had a PC but only 7 years for 30% of the population to have access to the Internet. In 1998 $38 billion worth of business was transacted over the Internet. In 2001 it was estimated to grow $381 billion.

The development of ICTs has brought about a rise in global electronic commerce. E-commerce means doing business over the Internet. Much of the attention given by the public and the media to e-commerce over the last few years is due to the phenomenal growth of the transactions between enterprises and individuals, generally known as business-to-consumer (BtoC). The rapid growth of the Internet as a consumer technology led to the accelerated use of e-commerce globally as well as nationally. The e-commerce market was estimated to have increased from USD1 billion in 1998 to USD6 billion in the Asia Pasific region. E-commerce not only affected business and individual consumers, but it also reshaped market places, trading relationships and even international trading boundaries.

In Malaysia the rapid use of communication technologies is very much supported by the government's various projects and programs such as the Multimedia Super Corridor(MSC) and the cyber city (Cyberjaya). MSC was designated as a world test-bed for ICT development. In addition, a set of world-leading cyber laws was enacted to provide an enabling environment for the development of ICT. According to 8th

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