



UNIVERSITI  
TEKNOLOGI  
MARA

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Pengurusan  
dan Perniagaan

# FBM INSIGHTS

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA CAWANGAN KEDAH

Volume 1

2020

e-ISSN 2716-599X

UiTM *di hatiku*

eISSN 2716-599X



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# **ENCOURAGING STUDENT ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES IN ONLINE BUSINESS: EVIDENCE FROM OF UiTM KEDAH**

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## **Introduction**

Recently, more fresh graduates are showing interest to participate in entrepreneurship activities. One of the benefits of the involvement of fresh graduates in entrepreneurship is it can help the government to overcome the problems of unemployment among graduates. One of the popular entrepreneurship activities among the young businesspeople is online business where they do it as part time or full time work. The reason is because online business is considered as one of the easiest ways for someone particularly young graduates to start up their own business. Online business requires less capital and business transactions are conducted virtually. There is no face-to-face communication between the seller and buyer. All processes and transactions are conducted via social media such as Facebook, Instagram, twitter, WhatsApp, messenger and etc. The aim of this paper is to highlight the initiatives taken by public universities to support government's effort to encourage university students to participate in entrepreneurial activities.

## **Government Initiatives: Entrepreneurial Action Plan for Higher Education**

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education encourages all institute of higher learning (IHL) to include online business component in the entrepreneurship subject. This is in line with Entrepreneurial Action Plan of Institute of Higher Education 2016-2020 (The Ministry of Higher Learning Education, 2015). The government, through its agency Malaysian Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) has come up with a portal named Go-eCommerce Portal which aims to assist and coordinate online business activities by all students. MDEC offers intensive training of trainers to all lecturers who are involved in teaching entrepreneurship subject with the aim to enhance their online business knowledge and competency.

From the training programme, the lecturers are able to implement online business assignment where it provides real life experience to students in conducting online business via Facebook page. This process is consistent with Kolb's experiential learning theory that stated "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38).

### **Evidence of Online Business Activities**

The evidence is taken from the online business activities conducted by 213 UiTM Kedah branch students who underwent the Principles of Entrepreneurship subject for September 2019 semester. The students were required to conduct real online business activities as part of their academic assessment for this subject. They were also required to register their online business with Company Commission of Malaysia (CCM).

The following are the data collected that show their online business activity from the months of September 2019 to November 2019.

Table 1: Category of Registered Businesses by the Students

<b>Category of Business</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Food & Beverages	123	57.7%
Apparel, Health & Beauty	54	25.4%
Household, Hobbies & Lifestyles	23	0.8%
Supplies & Services	7	3.3%
Electronics, IT & Telecommunication	4	1.9%
Others	2	0.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Table 1 shows that 123 out of 213 students or 57% were involved in the food and beverages business followed by apparel, health and beauty 25.4%, household, hobbies and lifestyles 10.8%, supplies and services 3.3%, electronic, IT and telecommunication 1.9% and others 0.9%.

Most students chose food and beverages category to conduct online business as they could come with their own products which were easy to produce such as cookies, snacks, cakes and other types of snack food. These types of food were in high demand among their potential customers namely UiTM Kedah students and teenagers around Sungai Petani and Merbok towns. The marketing strategy employed by the students to promote their product was through their medial social business accounts using only Facebook page. This marketing strategy proved successful where these students recorded high number of sales.

Table 2: Sales Performance based on different Business Categories

<b>Category of Business</b>	<b>Sales Performance (RM)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Food & Beverages	92031	54.5%

Apparel, Health & Beauty	51963	30.8%
Household, Hobbies & Lifestyles	8368	4.9%
Supplies & Services	14529	8.6%
Electronics, IT & Telecommunication	807	0.5%
Null	1239	0.7%
TOTAL	168937	100 %

Based on the total sales of RM168937 from 213 students, the sales performance can be considered as good business performance considering that they only sold their products online for just three months. In general, this sales figure shows the average sales of RM793 per student. Furthermore, this achievement was commendable as they were doing this online business as part time basis since they were still studying full time as university students.

Table 3: Business Role

Category of Business Role	Number of Students	Percentage
Product Owner	78	36.6
Agent	65	30.5
Dropship agent	57	26.8
Stockist / Wholesaler	7	3.3
Service owner	4	1.9
Null	2	0.9
TOTAL	213	100 %

From Table 3 the data show that most students preferred to sell their own product, followed by being an agent and being as a dropship agent. This was due to the fact that selling their own product brought more profit as compared to being an agent or a dropship agent. They could not afford to be a stockist as it required bigger capital and they could not afford to front the huge amount of money as they were still studying.

### Prospects of Online Business

Involvement of students in online business is not going to stop at the university level. The prospect of online business is huge in the market as the business can be conducted 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Potential customers can come from local or even overseas because online business is borderless and products can reach customers all over the world due to availability of international courier service. It is understood that all monetary transactions still have to strictly follow the rules and regulation imposed by each country. Potential customers can do engage in online business to buy products such as property, vehicles, furniture, health and beauty products and many more. Some of online businesses also offer various types of services to fulfill the needs and wants of customers. For instance, potential buyers can order food and beverage through food delivery services that are provided by GrabFood, Food Panda, dahmakan, QuickSent, Honestbee, The Naked Lunchbox and Shogun2u (Lirong, 2019)

## Conclusion

In conclusion this paper has highlighted the implementation of online business among UiTM Kedah students. From the data collected and from the students online business portfolio report that they had submitted, it clearly shows that government effort in promoting online business to university students has been successful. Most students expressed their happiness and gratitude to the university for providing them the opportunity to be involved in online business through this entrepreneurship subject. More than 50% students stated their desire to proceed with their online business because of the benefits that they acquired from this business activity. Looking at the current and future economic outlook, the basic knowledge and experience that the students acquired from this online business assignment can provide them an alternative career choice as entrepreneurs. The authors hope that the government, through relevant government agencies, will continue to provide other forms of assistance to graduates such as free seminar or workshop on online business to increase their knowledge and to prepare them for a more challenging business world after graduation.

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