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**ONLINE BUSINESS TRENDS AMONG UNIVERSITI UTARA
MALAYSIA STUDENTS**



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Abstract

The advent of the digital revolution presents us with personal computers, smartphones, the Internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs). The whole technology helps society to discover new ways of conveying information faster and at a wider radius. Business culture also took advantage of this ability to reach a wider audience, previously only possible via television advertising. In recent years, we have seen an increase in online business. With the advent of platforms that primarily focus on online market, such as Lazada, Shopee, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and many more, a lot of people are beginning to get on this train. This paper addresses the effect of online business on higher education students. It also highlights their experience of making money through social media. The finding of this study shows that students obtained a lot of positive things by doing online business. This activity enabling the students to gain extra income and experience without the needs of any official credentials or constraints from the university administration.

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1. Introduction

Online business is an important tool because it has brought a lot of benefits to people around the world in terms of e-business or commercial transactions, including the sharing of information across the internet. It is designed for people who run an online business that includes buying and selling online or providing an online service while using computers or mobile phones. Businesses that have used online technology in their organization have a greater potential through their management development. It's because ICT helps online businesses boost productivity with an easy and convenient way for people to shop.

1.1. The definition of online business

Online business is defined as any online business that sells products, services, or advertising on the Internet. There are large differences in the industry that can be found online in many different sectors in many countries around the world. The explanation is that many applications can be the tool of this online company to run their project. As a result, anyone can start an online business using any social media platform that serves several functions to help users make money.

1.2. The benefits of online business

Recently, the development of electronic or online business had created various use of technology such as social media, online shop, and many more to ease the people around the world. This business draws on technologies such as mobile commerce, electronic funds transfer, supply chain management, Internet marketing, online transaction processing, electronic data interchange (EDI), inventory management systems, and automated data collection.

2. Problem Statement

Nowadays, the concept of becoming an entrepreneur is emerging among even the youngest of college students. And who can fault these heart-felt, optimistic, and motivated children when the likes of Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, and Bill Gates have turned entrepreneurship into a multi-million dollar success story? As parents everywhere shudder with dread at the prospect of their college-aged child not completing their degree, and students everywhere look for opportunities to make more money than any college education would prepare them for, seeking a middle ground is a must.

No question about earning a college degree has a lot of benefits. If anything, it provides students with lessons on setting a goal and achieving it. Moreover, figures continue to show that getting a college degree can account for almost twice the annual income compared to those with a high school certificate. However, this does not take into account the advantages that running an online business during college can offer.

It's no easy feat to be able to run an online company and to claim a college degree. However, with ample commitment and knowledge on how to combine the two, everyone can attain the success they

desire. Therefore, research on online business among students should be conducted (Ayob, 2019; Bergmann et al., 2016; Baubonienė et al., 2018; Daly, 2001; Siivonen et al., 2019).

3. Research Questions

For this study, the following research questions were identified:

- What are the types of businesses run by students?
- What benefits the student gain from online business?
- Can students do online business without affecting their academic performance?

4. Purpose of the Study

To investigate the previous research questions, the following objectives were defined:

- To address the trends of online business in university student life.
- To identify the motivation that drives the student to run an online business

5. Research Methods

In order to answer the research questions as stated in section 3, a qualitative research methodology was selected. This kind of analysis is sufficient to obtain insight into mechanisms and phenomena on "how individuals experience and interact with their social world" (Merriam, 2002, p. 4). The qualitative analysis reflects on the perceptions and frames of reference kept by those under scrutiny and the context that they have constructed. As Creswell (2007) stated, "aside from dialogue and comprehension, qualitative analysis can fill a gap in established literature, create a new line of thought, or suggest a problem with an under-studied group or community" (p. 102), such as young online business practitioners who have received little consideration in scholarly literature. This study using an in-depth interview approach to collect data. The study design is a case study and the type of case study used is an intrinsic case study. The intrinsic case study was carried out intending to gain an understanding more about a particular case (Othman, 2007). Through case studies intrinsically, researchers would like to understand more about opportunities in the online business run by students in UUM.

In selecting the study location, researchers consider four criteria namely the nature and purpose of the study, willingness and cooperation from the place of study, truth as well as approval and opportunity (Rayahin, 2005). Referring to these criteria, the researcher is encouraged to research the UUM campus. According to Chua (2006), purposive sampling refers to the sampling procedure where a group of subjects with certain characteristics was selected as the respondents. Respondents are determined by asking any student at UUM based on the purpose and the will of the researcher is a student who runs an online business at UUM. Next, the respondent helps the researcher to find other respondents appropriate to this study. This process is called the snowball i.e. a selected participant or a background will give us instructions for selecting the next participant (Noor, 2008; Othman, 2007). Table 01 shows the description of respondents in this study.

Table 1. Description of respondents

| No. | Age | Gender | Course |
|-----|-----|--------|------------------|
| 1 | 20 | Male | Media Technology |
| 2 | 20 | Female | Media Technology |
| 3 | 20 | Female | Media Technology |
| 4 | 19 | Male | Media Technology |
| 5 | 23 | Female | Accounting |

6. Findings

This section provides answers to the research questions, based on the explanation of the respondents to support conclusions drawn. Five major themes emerged from the data: 1) types of product, 2) benefits of online business to the students, 3) time management, 4) advantages of online business, 5) strategies to get the potential customers, 6) strategies to gain profits.

6.1. Types of product

- Food includes supplement food, chocolates, and cakes.
- Clothing – printed t-shirt.
- Bag – student sling bag.
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Figure 01 and Figure 02 depict the example of products sold by the respondents.



Figure 1. Product sold by respondent 3



Figure 2. Product sold by respondent 5

6.2. Benefits of online business to the students

These are the benefits elicited from the study:

- Gaining side income which can support study expenses.
- Gaining self-confidence.
- Soft skills development such as mutual communication skills.
- Gaining experience in problem-solving which can be used in their real working environment.

6.3. Time management

Online business does not affect the academic performance of a student since they can manage their time efficiently. Moreover, online business does not require much time as it can be resolved by the sales team.

“As a student I need to focus on my study because academic is my priority. Hence I need to divide my time and cannot doing fulltime online seller. This is just my part time and my hobby.” –

Respondent 1

6.4. Advantages of online business

The advantages are:

- Eliminating the geographical aspect of reaching customers.
- It helps to improve the effectiveness of marketing since it is more cost-effective.
- Easier to collect user’s information for marketing purposes

6.5. Strategies to get potential customers

In order to get potential customers, they are using social media channel such as:

- WhatsApp status
- WhatsApp groups
- WeChat moments
- Facebook page
- Facebook story
- Instagram

“To attract customers, I use the most convenient way of marketing product to an audience which is through social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. To promote my product in those platforms, I included promotional posters and promotional words to advertise my product.” – Respondent 4

6.6. Strategies to gain profits

To gain profits, they use these strategies:

- Sign up as a marketing agent of an established company, so they can run the business with zero capital.
- Access to cheap marketing by using social media marketing funnels to promote the products.
“I choose to sign up as a drop shipper of a beauty supplement food company that is known as Jellyta. This product is found by the Malaysia singer named Wani Hasrita. I applied to be one of the online seller of this product by contacting their headquarters.” – Respondent 5
“Being a drop shipper is an easy job. I can start business with zero capital” – Respondent 3

7. Conclusion

The finding of this study shows that students can obtain a lot of positive things by doing online business. It seems that more students are started to gain interest in the online business area. This activity enabling the students to gain experience without the needs of any official credentials or constraints from the university administration. Thus the students should grab this opportunity to gain experience in entrepreneurship during campus life.

The importance of the work is to provide an insight into the university’s administrator to create a policy regarding academic subject related with online business. For future work, the study about the effectiveness of social media as a medium for marketing is suggested to be done.

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