

**Promising Entrepreneurial Qualities:
The Malaysian Woman Entrepreneur**

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Introduction

In Malaysia, publicity on women's affairs has become widespread. Women are receiving accolades for their distinguished performances in academic, education, and enterprise. Because of their contribution to Malaysia's development in their own fields, they are recognised as role models, helping other women to achieve the same (Malaysia: Management Times, February 1995). Six other Malaysian women have been profiled together with other 36 outstanding women entrepreneurs in a new publication, Breaking Barriers: Businesswomen of Southeast Asia. These women represent diverse sectors and types of work in seven Southeast Asian countries. Their common trait is that they are successful in the mainstream of economic life (Woman, New Straits Time, June 1995). Entrepreneurship is the key factor exhibited by these women. What makes them become successful entrepreneurs and businesswomen?

Perhaps the qualities demonstrated by some of Malaysian women and other model women entrepreneurs from other countries are the basis of entrepreneurial development. The importance of entrepreneurial development to Malaysia has been studied via women development policies. Malaysia a developing country is fully dependent on her resources especially human expertise and skills to achieve her New Economic Policy. One of its objectives in improving the status of women is to put their participation in economic, social and political development at par with men. Since women make up 50% of the total population (18.18 million in 1990), policies and opportunities are being created to realise women's potential one of them being entrepreneurship. (1991 Projection)

The paper will outline the framework of women's development vis-à-vis the needs

to improve their status economically and socially. Entrepreneurial development is a chosen agenda as it represents economic and social activities. Also current developments in the field of women entrepreneurial activities may suggest that there is a conscious effort from policy providers, and organisers to encourage women to become successful entrepreneurs

Secondly, a broad definition by few of authors on entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship is employed to provide a conceptual interpretation of someone who is considered as an entrepreneur and demonstrates entrepreneurship qualities.

There is a relationship between entrepreneurial development and the above definition. In this context, the writer will emphasise the behaviour of women who are developing and have developed qualities as entrepreneurs.

A section on women entrepreneurs in Malaysia introduces the scenario of entrepreneurial development in the country, as a basis of equal opportunities for men and women to participate in education and employment sectors. One aspect of Malaysia's national policy is geared towards women's development. Women organizations and other support agencies are partly responsible in developing women's needs and propagating their entrepreneurial activities.

Some of the studies on entrepreneurial entry and development highlight global findings of intervening factors that influence women to become entrepreneurs. Some of the factors are social and culture based. In Malaysia, several studies were conducted. One of them has been highlighted for its sampling and findings. Although it is a preliminary study, it has highlighted several pertinent factors that motivate and reinforce women's ability and aspirations to develop themselves in entrepreneurship. Current and projected entrepreneurial qualities point to success formulae that some of Malaysian women entrepreneurs advocate and would like to share with other women who want to achieve the same level of entrepreneurship. Their profiles are sourced out from popular

magazines and newspapers whose references highlight women's activities in entrepreneurial development.

The conclusion attempts to summarize the findings and hopes to draw some conclusions on pertinency of entrepreneurial qualities for women who are embarking on entrepreneurship endeavours and contributing to the country's economic and social development.

The focus of this paper is as follows. It aims to identify the needs of today's women in pursuit of improving their status in society and the country by being entrepreneurs. Secondly, women who are successful entrepreneurs have certain qualities that propel them into the mainstream of economic activities. Can others who are still thinking or have the interest in becoming entrepreneurs learn and model their promising behaviour on these achievements? Thirdly, due to the strong need to project women's work, activities and collective decision-making, there has existed several women organizations since the 80's. What are their roles and driving forces in the development and enhancement of women in various fields especially entrepreneurship and business? Can women help other women achieve a higher economic status in society and the country? Is networking among women an important agenda for each and everyone of these organizations? And lastly, what are the policies and directives set up by respective governments and supporting agencies to help women entrepreneurs achieve Vision 2020? Can women entrepreneurs equally balance their careers as well as family commitments? The paper addresses these questions.

Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship

Is there any differences between an entrepreneur and entrepreneurship? An entrepreneur is defined as someone who acquires, and uses resources effectively, understands strategic management and strategic planning; and is regarded as a relentless seeker of opportunities. Whereas, entrepreneurship is a process of creatively moulding a firm's resources with the intention to create wealth (Dubrin & Ireland, 1993).

Another writer defines an entrepreneur as someone who exercises control over production that is not just for personal consumption, but a process of creating values by pulling together a unique package of resources to exploit an opportunity (Stevenson H. and others, 1985). Both definitions have almost similar connotations and meanings. Both address the ability, creativity, drive, initiative, and strategic thinking of individuals who exercise those qualities in acquiring resources and creating wealth. Another author extends the above definition and regards an entrepreneur as an originator of a new business venture because of his or her ability to use factors of production such as land, labour and capital to generate new goods or services. He perceives opportunities that others fail to see or underestimate. (Stoner and others, 1995)

An inventor like Henry Ford has been considered as an early entrepreneur due to his ability to use information that is generally available to create something new. He has applied the division of labour in the manufacturing of automobiles in the assembly line. But Akio Morita, the president of Sony has created the Walkman personal stereo just through adaptation from existing products at Sony (Stoner & others, 1995)

A Malaysian author cum corporate businesswoman, motivational speaker and successful entrepreneur defines an entrepreneur as someone who plans, manages, co-ordinates and implements efforts in relation to economic forces and drives. There is a need to organise, own, manage and to have the ability to face risks, constraints, competition and other threats in pursuing entrepreneurship (Hamid, Maznah, 1994).

Almost all the above definitions address the technical as well as human aspects of entrepreneurship. Other contributing factors such as opportunities, governmental interventions and infrastructural facilities may serve as supporting elements for entrepreneurs to actively participate and advance in entrepreneurship. Although the main thrust of this paper is to study the successful traits, behaviours or characteristics of some of Malaysian women entrepreneurs, we also

intend to look at other entrepreneurial activities such as networking and training which can help women to foster their relationship and support amongst themselves in furthering access to information and opportunities. How do entrepreneurs overcome some of the constraints such as family commitment's as mothers and wives, capital, management and controlling resources, as well as getting ahead and being on track all the time? Some of the constraints are partly due to local culture and practices in gender relations, which are in turn linked to societal expectations and opportunities available. Perhaps the view that sees women as sensitive, emotional, and feminine is no longer a limitation but a blessing and a gift as they can be utilized creatively and positively.

Women Entrepreneurs in Malaysia

Female entrepreneurship started to gain momentum rapidly only in the 90's even though the government of Malaysia had already embarked on an entrepreneurship policy before the 80's. The Malaysian Planning Structure for Developing Women Entrepreneurs (1993) highlighted a growth of women's participation in the educational and employment sectors between 1950's and 1980's. The policy attempts to address policy issues regarding women's participation in self-employed businesses and other related managerial activities. It is further expected that women will advance in managerial and entrepreneurial roles.

Current entrepreneurial activities such as seminars, courses and meetings organized by women's organizations and other agencies have helped to influence women who seek to upgrade their status in society. These organizations and agencies aim to develop and foster entrepreneurship amongst women through their membership drives, meetings, training and other networking sessions. The most prominent of these women's organizations are:

- 2) Malaysian Institute for Progressive Women (IKWAM)
- 3) National Association of Women Entrepreneurs (NAWEM)
- 4) Association of Bumiputera Women Entrepreneurs Malaysia (Usahanita)
- 5) National Council of women Association (NCWO)

These associations also help to locate and identify the needs of women who aspire to be economically active especially in entrepreneurship. They act as resource centres and information links for existing support agencies such as the Malaysian Entrepreneurial Development Centre (MEDEC), the National Productivity Corporation (NPC) and the Bumiputera Trust Board (MARA) (Evelyn Sim, 1995) who provide them with entrepreneurial infrastructures such as consultancy, business development and other support programmes for those new and existing entrepreneurs. With this support, women are realising their career needs and options in non-traditional fields such as self-employed businesses. Other women's organizations such as the Soroptimist International of Malaysia, Selangor Association of Women Friends are becoming increasingly supportive and collaborative in their efforts to help project and enhance women's contributions in the business and professional arenas through their numerous development programmes and agendas.

Women's involvement in entrepreneurship has also been made possible through an equal opportunities policy for women and men enabling them to participate in all economic activities under the National Women Policy Plan (1993). Under this plan, the government has provided MR 20 million to help the Secretariat for Women Affairs (HAWA) implement programmes and projects for the development and enhancement of women in the country.

Table 1 portrays statistics (projection) on the status of women in Malaysia between 1990 and 2020. It shows a significant career progression for women and their prominent contribution in the fields of economic and

- 1) Malaysian Association of Bumiputera Women in Business and Professions (PENIAGAWATI)

social development. Women entrepreneurs are expected to increase to 1.2 million by 2020. It is therefore a significant indicator since it will

contribute to the realization of fulfilling the country's mission and vision towards becoming a fully developed nation.

Table 1
Status of Malaysian Women Between 1990 and 2020 (Projection) (in millions)

	1990	2000	2020
1 Total population	18.0	22.6	33.7
* Women	9.0	11.3	16.8
2 Productive population (Ages 15-64)	10.4 (59.7%)	11.3 (59.9%)	16.8 (61.0%)
* Women	5.2	6.8	10.0
3 Population (Ages 15-44)	8.3 (46.0%)	10.2 (45.0%)	14.5 (43.0%)
* Women (50%)	4.2	5.1	7.3
4 Working Women (% of productive women)	1.9 (36.0%)	2.6 (38.0%)	4.0 (40.0%)
5 Women entrepreneurs (% of working women)	0.19 (9.10%)	0.34 (15.0%)	1.2 (30.0%)

Source: Planning Policy for the Development of Women Entrepreneurs in Malaysia, 1993

Entrepreneurial Entry and Development

The following studies intend to highlight some of the factors that motivate or influence women to become entrepreneurs. These studies are selected from the U.S.A., U.K., Singapore and Malaysia. Most of these studies tend to focus on entry conditions such as education and qualifications, societal involvement in education, choice of careers and other requirements such as the need to be ones own boss among women.

In the US a study on why women involve themselves in business was conducted by Carole E. Scott (1986). Scott presents information on the backgrounds, educational levels, experience, capital acquisition of a sampling population for the district of Georgia. She concluded that women became entrepreneurs because they wanted to be their own bosses. Entrepreneurship was also seen as a challenge as it satisfied a material drive.

In the UK, a similar study of entrepreneurs was conducted by Jean M.

Watkins and David S. Watkins (1976). The study established the fact that women only prospered in entrepreneurial activities if society adopted a different attitude towards women's involvement in educational opportunities and choice of career. In Singapore, Irene K.H. Chew and Tan Chew Yan (1991) ascertained traits, background and entry barriers for women in entrepreneurship such as education and technical qualification which had changed recently. This has created a bigger pool in the number of women in entrepreneurship as well as in other professions of the formal sector. The increased participation of women in privately owned-businesses in Singapore was reflected in an increase of job opportunities triggered by the nation's economic growth.

In Malaysia, Md. Zabid and Farizza Ariffin (1992) have categorized important factors that motivate women to involve themselves in business field. These factors are job satisfaction, opportunities, autonomy and success. There are other studies conducted on

entrepreneurial development. One of them was conducted by Sabitha Marican (1993) on

a general profile of women entrepreneurs is presented as in Table 2.

Table 2
General Profile Women Entrepreneurs, Malaysia

Age	Percentage
21-30	31.8%
31-40	37.9%
41-50	30.3%
Marital Status	
Single	18.2%
Married	69.7%
Divorced	10.5%
Educational Background	
Primary Education	23.1%
Secondary Education	44.6%
College/University	21.5%
Certificates in Entrepreneurship or Equivalent	10.8%

Source: Marican (1991), "Toward Productivity Enhancement of Women Entrepreneurs in Line with the Goal of Vision 2020: A Case of North Malaysia"

Age

It can be seen that 69.7% of women entrepreneurs are within 20 to 40 years which shows that more younger women are involved in business world. This suggests a positive upward trend for women to participate in economic activities and development. It also suggests that women have realised their needs to improve their economic and social status at an age that enables them to actively pursue in the fields chosen.

Marital Status

Since 69.7% of the women entrepreneurs are married, this indicates that women can handle both career and domestic or family responsibilities. On the other hand, marriage may also threaten the advancement of women in their careers especially when their careers takes up most of their time. Other findings suggest that women can face various challenges and have the ability to cope with pressures probably even better than men.

Educational Status

Only 21.5% of women entrepreneurs possess college or university qualifications. And only 10.8% have certificates in entrepreneurship or equivalent qualifications. This indicates women still lack of formal training in business or entrepreneurship which needs to be addressed if they want to achieve professionalism. Current findings (Table 7 and 8) show that women entrepreneurs have sound academic and vocational backgrounds and that women are willing to learn and get qualifications to take them through their career.

Capital, Experience and Training

Table 3 exhibits an analysis on capital, experience and training for women entrepreneurs.

Table 3
Capital, Experience, and Training for Women Entrepreneurs, Malaysia

Capital, Experience and Training	Percentage
• Self-employed prior to current business	60.0%
• Work in the same field (entrepreneurship)	50.8%
• Acquire capital from family members and own saving	56.0%
• Need capital between RM5,000-10,000	44.0%
• Choose current field due to own interest	83.1%
• Owner of the business	73.0%
• Doing business for two to five years	50.0%
• Have less than 10 employees	84.6%
• Employees make up of family members	55.2%
• Never attend formal training organized by the government	55.3%
• Start business on own initiative	93.8%
• Do not prefer to work for employer if there is a choice	90.0%
• Disagree that they (women) will be granted a higher status if they work with the government that what they are currently doing	80.0%

Source: Marican, (1991)

An interesting aspect on capital acquisition is that the majority of women received financial support from family members and their own savings. The capital used is rather small, between RM5,000 - RM10,000. Even though the businesses are small and they hire less than 10 workers, these women have a keen interest in entrepreneurship since they have already been involved in business between two to five years. They are independent in that they have taken the initiative to open their own businesses and are willing to continue in the

field even though they may have other options such as working for other people.

Table 4 exhibits attitudes of women entrepreneurs, another finding from Marican's study. Interestingly, 85% of women entrepreneurs do not believe that success in entrepreneurship depends on gender. In fact, 82.7% of them believe in their efforts in the pursuit of entrepreneurship. They also have a high tolerance level vis-à-vis pressures from business and an ability to manage just as well as or even better than their male counterparts.

Table 4
Attitudes of Women Entrepreneurs, Malaysia

Attitude	Percentage
• Becoming entrepreneurs is not the reason to be famous	65.1%
• Do not believe that success in entrepreneurship is dependent on gender	85.0%
• Women entrepreneurs can still face various challenges	74.2%
• Believe in own effort	82.7%
• Problem securing financial/infrastructural assistance available is higher among women compared to men	56.5%
• Are not aware of government or private agencies that can help to improve the performance of their business	72.2%
• Women are also highly capable in coping with pressure and managing business just as well as or even better than men	71.2%

Source: Marican (1991)

Table 5 exhibits the division of domestic and work roles for women entrepreneurs.

Table 5
Attitudes towards the Division of Domestic and Entrepreneurial Work Roles, Women Entrepreneurs, Malaysia

Division of Domestic-Work Roles	Percentage
• Business activities seldom interfere with their attention on domestic problems	95.3%
• Disagree that successful women entrepreneurs are not “womanly” and tend to label them as incapable of leading/nurturing the family	87.8%
• Disagree that women prioritize domestic problems more than problems at work	73.9%

Source: Marican (1991)

A majority of the women confirm that business activities are not likely to distract their attention from domestic problems (95.3%). 87.8% of them do not believe that those entrepreneurs who are successful are not “feminine” or “incapable” to perform in the domestic roles. And 73.9% of the women disagree that women prioritize domestic problems more than problems at work.

In summary, Marican discovered that women entrepreneurs possess positive characteristics that include having ambitions to establish and manage a business, willingness to generate capital either from own savings or via assistance from the family, being interested in the current field of involvement and having the ability to face challenges and pressures. These findings suggest that entrepreneurial development is driven by women themselves (internal drives)

more than outside factors (external drives). Women have shifted their roles from the traditional to the modern. They are now more self-independent and are willing to take challenges in managing owned-business and ambitions.

Another study revealed the difference in the patterns of making decision between women entrepreneurs and successful entrepreneurs. It also highlighted some of the decision making fields that differentiate the manner the two groups make decisions. As the study was conducted in 1986 it could be suggested that some of the patterns have changed due to changing situations, demands, expectations, and opportunities.

Table 6 shows the different patterns in decision-making between models of women and successful entrepreneurs

Table 6
Different Patterns in Decision-Making between Women Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurs who are Successful

Decision-Making Field	Model of Women Entrepreneurs	Model of Successful Entrepreneurs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal • Focus on everything • Small 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal on formal • Focus on division of job • Medium and big
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non monetary returns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on monetary returns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small size • Prefer to choose female as employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The size expands as company grows • Prefer to choose male as employees due to their expertise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak in management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak in the beginning, but keep improving especially in managing and planning

Source: Chaganti (1986)

Even though, women entrepreneurs choose an informal and small structure, current findings suggest that women are more committed and willing to start small so that they gain confidence and learn new skills faster.

Women are often motivated by non-financial returns such as autonomy, or business ownership. (Marican, Table 3). For instance, it has been known that Rabia Kader, an ethnic Uighur Muslim living in Urumgi began with only the equivalent of US\$10 as capital. From a small shop, it grew into a huge complex known as Xinjiang Arkider Industries.

Entrepreneurial Qualities

Profiles of sixteen women entrepreneurs have been compiled at random. The selection of these personalities is partly based on their track record publicised either in popular women's magazines or local newspapers. Some of them have received award for their outstanding contributions in the fields of business and entrepreneurship. Their qualities motivate other women who are aspired to become successful entrepreneurs. Their contributions represent a step in the

direction of achieving Malaysia's dreams of becoming a fully developed nation.

The general profile of sixteen women entrepreneurs who hail mainly from central Malaysia projects their ages, ownership or business status, nature of business, supporters/motivators, former qualifications/training, success formulas and special awards/social contributions/ community involvements as shown in Table 7 and 8 respectively.

Apart from the above profiles, interviews with some of the heads of women's organizations were conducted to establish and gather information on the following issues:

- Their specific roles in developing or enhancing women's status and involvement in entrepreneurship and business
- Their target members: who and how do they reach them
- Their networking strategies for members to acquire useful contacts and support?
- Are they incorporating their roles to enable entrepreneurs to benefit from them?

Table 7
General Profile of Sixteen Women Entrepreneurs, Selangor, Malaysia

No.	Age	Status	Started since	Nature of Business	Supporters/Monitors	Qualification/Training/Experience
1	37	Shareholder (41%) and Sr. Mgr.	1983	Pharmacy	Husband (Pharmacist) & Father (assr. staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma (overseas) • Entrepreneurial workshop: local and overseas • Previous experience (administrator)
2	34	Owner, Sole Supplier & Mgr.	1984	Ceramic (decorative) products	Husband, parents, family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree (local) • Technical and entrepreneurial courses: overseas and local • Worked in government
3	42	Owner	1992	Tailoring pattern sewing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailoring self-taught
4	48	Owner	unknown	Bakery: festive cakes and specialities	Husband (teacher)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-taught and interest in cooking and bakery
5	30's	Franchiser & Mgr.	1993	Fast Food Caterer	Husband and father	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tertiary education • Technical/In house training in Franchising
6	29	Owner	1988	Importer, supplier of Spiritual Water	Husband and father	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary • Diploma
7	30's	Major Shareholder & G.M. (20 subsidiaries, RM13 mill. pd up capital)	early 90's	Building	Father (former Min. of Finance): an important role model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degrees in Admin. & Mktg • Various workshops: locally & abroad • Financial tips and advice
8	40's	Owner & C.E.O	Mid 80's	Exec. Fashion & Boutiques	Husband (an entrepreneur)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn the rope of business from husband • Previous exp. (10 years)
9	34	Partner & Invest. Mgr.	1989	Securities	Husband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree (Finance) • M.B.A. • Previous exp. (remisier)

No.	Age	Status	Started since	Nature of Business	Supporters/Motivators	Qualifications/Training/Experience
10	40's	Partner & M.D.	1974	National Agent for Beauty Products & Sole Producer of Local Cosmetic Product	Family member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous experience - M.D. Mgr - Administrator
11	37	Shareholder & M.D.	1989	Importer, supplier & wholesaler of Carpets	Husband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree • Previous M.D. for a consultancy firm
12	47	Owner & M.D.	1992	Publication & Investment Company	Father, husband, daughter and previous business partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M.B.A. (Harv) - 1st Malaysian Woman • M.D. (K.L.S.E.'s - 1st Women Co.) • C.E. (bank of Hong Kong) - 1st Asian Woman • Ex. Chairman (Chair of Supermarket, Hong Kong) - 1st Asian Woman • Previous government Sr. Officer
13	40's	Shareholder & Ex. Chairman	1991	Manufacturing, Property Mgmt. & Invest, Holdings		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postgraduate (Mgmt)
14	34	Shareholder & M.D.	1990	Stockbroking	Husband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree (Bus., Econs & Finance)
15	46	Owner, M.D., P.R. consultant & Motivational Trainer & Ex. Chairman of Personal Empowerment Sdn. Bhd.	1988	Communication/ P.R. firm	Husband & family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree (Educ) • Postgrad. (P.R.) • Multiple Corp roles • Former Head of the Dept. & Lecturer (College) • Former corporate woman (Multinational)
16	42	Major shareholder, chairman, Law Practitioner, Politician	Mid 80's	Building & Estate Mgmt	Husband, family members, business partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree (law & Business) • Various Workshops: local & abroad

Table 8

General Profile of Success Formulas and Awards for women Entrepreneurs (Selangor), Malaysia

Success formulae (as quoted by the Entrepreneurs)	Awards, Honours, Contributions	Entrepreneur Ratings (according to serial no.)	
(Column i)	(Column ii)	(Column i)	(Column ii)
A. Managerial Styles	A. Entrepreneurial Achievements		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt not adopt to sensitize with local needs Motivating & caring for employees Empower employees Open communication, keep others informed Listen & ask Lead with empathy Build a team, work as a team Learn from mistakes Take control of circumstance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outstanding Entrepreneur Outstanding Women profiled in Breaking Barriers: Business Women of Southeast Asia Best dressed personality 	1, 9, 12 2, 7, 12 2, 11, 12 1, 7, 12 1, 12 12 8, 11, 12 10, 11 6, 12	2, 7, 12, 13 15, 16 8
B. Substance	B. Outstanding Contributions in Women Organizations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand business Prioritize goals, plan strategies Excel in planning, organizing, leading & controlling Build on shared strengths, pool diverse expertise to compensate weakness Excel in or maintain quality & standards Cast effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> President Committee member Mentor: trainer, speaker, writer 	12, 16 9, 12, 14 12 11, 12, 14 2, 3, 4, 12 4	16 9, 14, 15 1, 2, 12, 15
C. Personal Qualities	C. Other Status		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know your wants in life Commitment, patience, resilience, compromising (at times), perceptive Positive attitude, rational Hardwork, willing to learn, read, attend seminars/courses Confidence & believe in success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political Portfolio Business Consultants for women & men in Business Social & Community work 	9, 13, 14, 15, 16 7, 10, 12 8, 11, 12 8, 10, 12, 15 1, 9, 11, 12 5, 10, 12, 15	16 12 8, 16

Women entrepreneurs who have been sampled and profiled (Tables 7 and 8) are in their 30's and mid 40's, educated and trained in the fields relevant to their professional involvement, own or have shares in business as well as are leading managers. The findings specifically suggest that an average of two to three women entrepreneurs adopt and practice the

caring, inspiring, empowering, trusting, keeping in track leadership. The same ratio of women appear to possess a business vision. Women exercise quality awareness and ensure that goods and services delivered are of quality and satisfactory. Women also used their conceptual skills and action-orientedness to prioritize goals, and plan strategies. The findings on

personal qualities suggest that women entrepreneurs are generally able to identify what they want in life and work for it. This is supported by the fact that they are willing to learn, read, attend seminars and work hard.

Due to their qualities and perseverance, four of the women have been awarded Outstanding Entrepreneur awards by an internationally affiliated women's organization, two of them are profiled in a new publications in recognizing their contributions to various societies in Southeast Asia. Four of them are considered mentors since they are always motivating and inspiring other women, and one of them has achieved enviable corporate and political status.

They appear to be women of quality or substance who strive from the bottom and are yet able to pursue and advance higher into corporate world. The qualities demonstrated or reflected by women entrepreneurs appear realistic, sensitive, cultural, visioned, empowering or trusting, customer-oriented as well as self-actualizing.

Women's Organizations in Entrepreneurship in Malaysia

From the interviews with heads of the women's organizations, their roles in developing women entrepreneurs are summarized as follows:

- secretariat for members to get information on entrepreneurial activities and development.
- liaison bodies between members and the government of Malaysia, state and local agencies and organization, as well as external agencies and bodies.
- organizing talks, forums, discussions, seminars, conferences and other activities geared towards developing entrepreneurs in human and technical skills.
- helping and supporting women who own and operate business in enhancing their leadership skills and business qualities.

Women's activities are making headlines in local newspapers and magazines. Most of these activities have basically the same characteristics: to foster and enhance women's development in entrepreneurship. To women entrepreneurs, these activities help to establish and expand their networking pools. Through networking, they meet other women, share ideas, establish contacts, learn new techniques, get business tips and expand their general markets or industries related to their respective lines of business.

The recent 43rd International Congress of Femme Chefs D'enterprise of Women Entrepreneurs (FCEM) held in Kuala Lumpur brought together over 200 businesswomen from 34 countries. They met to exchange ideas and experiences, and to learn more about business as well as to seek new business opportunities. It was organised by the Malaysian Association of Bumiputera Women in Business and Professions (PENIAGAWATI) headed by a businesswoman, Maznah Hamid and affiliated to FCEM. The president of FCEM, Joke Van Den Boer has affirmed that the association will strive to assist women from different countries in their business and trades (New Straits Times, Sept 2, 95; Mgmt Times: 5)

Another international meeting in July this year at Langkawi, Malaysia brought together almost 350 women entrepreneurs from all over the world including 150 from Malaysia. It marked the 4th meeting of the International Federation of Women Entrepreneurs (IFWE). The three-day meeting are hosted by the Association of Bumiputera Women Entrepreneurs Malaysia (Usahanita) with the theme "Global Interaction on Challenges before Women Entrepreneurs in the Year 2000". Usahanita, is a registered member of the IFWE that collaborates with the World Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (WASME) and was formed in 1981 with members comprising women entrepreneurs from various business fields. Current membership is

1,000. WASME-IFWE aims to develop self-employment and entrepreneurship among women in both developed and developing countries. Three international meetings have so far been held in Karachi, Addis Ababa and Jakarta. The Usahanita president, a Malaysian affirmed that the meeting addressed topics of interest, such as today's business economics and how women entrepreneurs could expand their business opportunities besides providing a good opportunity for the participants to network by exchanging ideas and knowledge and discussing possible joint-ventures and import-export activities via individual business meeting sessions (New Straits Times, 19 Sept. 95: Woman).

On August 25, 1994 some 3,000 people, mainly women met in conjunction with Women's Day at Putra World Trade Centre, Kuala Lumpur. Among the activities organised were workshops on Women and Investment, How to Start a Business, Business Communication and Networking, Product Development Design and Quality Improvement and Marketing and Customer Relations. Speakers came from Association of Bumiputera Women in Business and Professions (PENIAGAWATI), Malaysian Entrepreneurial Development Centre (MEDC), Entrepreneur National Berhad Corporation (PUNB), Total Quality Management Consultancy and women entrepreneurs billed as Outstanding Entrepreneurs (New Straits Times, 7 Aug. 1995; Eye-witness). This meeting was organised by the Ministry of Social and Rural Development and Women Affairs, one of the agencies that helps women to advance their economic status.

The National Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Malaysia (NAWEM) officially formed on May 20, 1993 whose president is a highly respected corporate figure who is also a lawyer and a recently elected politician held its first two-day workshop in March as part of NAWEM's Management Development Programme. The workshop was designed to help entrepreneurs learn and apply the

concepts and principles of management. NAWEM will continue to conduct other workshop modules in Marketing, Public Relations, Financial Management and Information Technology as well as entrepreneurship (New Straits Times, Mac. 1995). NAWEM provides women entrepreneurs with supports and networking infrastructures.

Conclusion

We have attempted to highlight that women entrepreneurs are generally and globally seeking similar aspirations in the business world. Their access to entrepreneurship depends largely on educational, and equal career opportunities. Women entrepreneurs in Malaysia have qualities that are being projected, modelled and exemplified. Their success formulae are advocated and shared with others. Their business performance shows that they practice what they preach.

Women entrepreneurs have come a long way in their efforts to be accepted in and associated with formerly male dominated careers: business and entrepreneurship. Malaysian women have begun and continue to expand their horizons by actively seeking new opportunities and creating a competitive edge in their attempts to enhance their status in society. Their participation and contributions in various fields such as education, business, services and politics have had a very significant impact on economic, social and political development of Malaysia. Their managerial and leadership qualities exemplify, model and demonstrate the need to recognize women as role models in their respective business fields.

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