Demographics and personal characteristics of urban Malaysian entrepreneurs: an ethnic comparison

Md. Nor Othman, Ezlika Ghazali* and Ong Chee Cheng

Faculty of Business and Accountancy,
Department of Marketing and Information Systems,
University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur 50603, Malaysia
Fax: 603 7967 3980 E-mail: mohdnor@um.edu.my
Fax: 603 7967 3810 E-mail: ezlika@um.edu.my
E-mail: cheechengong@yahoo.com
*Corresponding author

Abstract: The study attempts to investigate whether becoming an entrepreneur is characterised by entrepreneur's personality characteristics. In addition, it attempts to explore the differences between two ethnic groups, namely, Malay and Chinese, with regard to entrepreneur personality, family background and company background. Four demographic variables, three business characteristics variables and six personality variables were found to be significantly different across ethnic groups. Overall, in terms of entrepreneurial personality characteristics, both Malay and Chinese entrepreneurs scored high with respect to the Pursuit of Excellence; moderately high on Work Ethics; moderate on Dominance, Mastery, and Internal Attributing and moderately lower on Powerful Others and Chance Attributing dimensions. The Pursuit of Excellence dimension was statistically significant different across the groups. The rest were statistically not significant. Some interesting results were that Malays derive satisfaction from working hard and seeing the job well done as compared to the Chinese and that Chinese enjoy having power over people as compared to the Malays. The implications of the study are also discussed along with some recommendations.

Keywords: entrepreneurs; personality; demographic; attitude; business characteristics; entrepreneurs' profile; ethnicity; Malaysia.


Biographical notes: Md. Nor Othman received his Bachelor of Economics (Honours) degree from the University of Malaya, Malaysia in 1978, MBA (Marketing) from Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium in 1981, and Doctor of Philosophy (Marketing) from Oklahoma State University, USA in 1988. His research interests include marketing, consumer behaviour, entrepreneurship and Japanese Management. He has published more than 100 publications in the form of books, book chapters, journal papers, and conference proceedings. Dr. Md. Nor is currently the Dean and a Professor at the Faculty of Business & Accountancy, University of Malaya.