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# Insights



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## RECTOR'S MESSAGE



Assalamualaikum wbt and Salam UiTM di Hatiku,

It is my great pleasure to congratulate the Faculty of Business and Management of Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah, Kampus Sungai Petani on the success of publishing FBM Insights Vol. 5.

I am very pleased to know that there are a total of 23 authors contributed to this latest volume of FBM Insights, that include topics ranging from youth entrepreneurship, e-commerce, industry 4.0 to fintech ecosystem.

I hope this bulletin can provide an opportunity for Business and Management academic staff to produce more academic materials and develop their skills in academic and creative writing. I also hope that this bulletin will continue to receive full support and response from all academicians of UiTM Kedah Branch.

Again, well done to the Faculty of Business and Management and those who were involved directly and indirectly the FBM Insights. I wish all the best and hope that this bulletin will move forward and extend its wings in the future

**Professor Dr. Haji Mohamad Abdullah bin Haji Hemdi**

Rector

Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)

Cawangan Kedah, Malaysia

## FROM THE DESK OF THE HEAD OF FACULTY



Assalamualaikum w.b.t

This issue of FBM Insights contains twenty-three articles, with topics ranging from Industry 4.0, youth entrepreneurship, e-commerce, issues relating to Covid-19 and fintech ecosystem. Thank you to all contributors.

This is the fifth issue of FBM Insights, which began as a platform for academics to contribute academic articles. Alhamdulillah submissions have been encouraging from the beginning. We hope this trend will continue in the future issues of FBM Insights. I also hope this is a stepping stone for many of us to further improve and embark on academic publications.

2022 brings to us changes as well as new opportunities. It is our hope that everyone looks forward to a better year ahead. Thank you again to all contributors. Keep it up! A hearty congratulations to FBM Insights, and its editorial team on the job well done. All the very best!

**Dr. Yanti Aspha Ameira Mustapha**  
FBM Insights Advisor

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# **INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION (IR) 4.0: IT IS ESSENTIAL IN TODAY'S BUSINESS**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Industry 4.0 (IR 4.0) has become a new buzzword for industrialists, academicians, engineers, scientists, and many other intellectuals in recent years. It has received a lot of attention worldwide. Cyber-Physical Systems, Big Data, the Internet of Things (IoT), 3D Printing, Autonomous Robots, Cloud Computing, Augmented Reality, and other major technology areas are among the main technological fields that will digitise the entire value chains in numerous industries. The benefits of implementing the IR4.0 technologies are predicted to be massive in terms of efficiency, flexibility, quality, and mass customisation. It is projected to bring improved product range and automation and boost customer satisfaction (Kumar & Kumar, 2020).

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is divided into nine primary pillars; each considered a key component of Industry 4.0. These nine pillars describe how producers apply the latest technologies to improve every aspect of their production processes. Whether in the manufacturing area or not, it is critical to understand these pillars because they are projected to have a widespread impact across all industries and society. The IR 4.0 consists of nine pillars: Big Data and Analytics, The Internet of Things (IoT), Augmented Reality (AR), The Cloud, Autonomous Robots, Additive Manufacturing, Cyber Security, Horizontal and Vertical System Integration, and Simulation.

## **INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION (IR) 4.0**

Here are some opportunities delivered by these pillars or enablers of IR 4.0. Augmented Reality allows companies to remote repair instructions basically anywhere in the world via the internet. System integration is widely used in engineering and information technology. It combines different computing systems and software packages into one large system, which is the driving force behind Industry 4.0's optimal functioning. Cloud computing is a computer system resource, particularly for data storage. Next, Big data is a term used to describe large amounts of data that are difficult to manage; Big data analytics is used to discover valuable correlations, patterns, trends, and preferences to help companies make better decisions. IoT is a network that uses sensors, software, and other technologies to communicate with other devices and systems through the internet.

Subsequently, 3D printing allows industries to use and implement additive manufacturing in collaboration with other technologies, leading to the development of the industry towards intelligent production. The next pillar, Cybersecurity, contains technologies and processes designed to safeguard systems, networks and data from cyber-attacks. Autonomous Robots are intelligent



machines capable of performing tasks independently, without explicit human control. This enabler can interact to improve productivity and product quality. These machines can perform more complex tasks and handle unexpected problems. Finally, simulation involves processes in product design, production planning, material flow processes or modelling of unexpected stochastic events. Additionally, it offers real-time data to observe the physical world in a virtual environment, including machines, tools, products and humans.

IR 4.0 is a digital technology transformation occurring in the manufacturing and production sectors. It consists of nine pillars that include Autonomous Robots, Big Data and Analytics. More and more manual and tedious processes across various industries have been and will be automated using smart machines or digital technologies. For instance, most semiconductor and manufacturing sectors are embedding new digital technology more than ever to stay competitive. Here are some other real-world examples of how IR 4.0 has enhanced business performance (VIAR, 2018). First, a construction company in New York has created SAM (Semi-Automated Mason), a robot for building walls. This revolution helps to enhance its productivity and lower its labour costs. Another example is the car manufacturing company, Audi where it aligns its production with smart technology. Its smart technology riding on big data analytics enables it to produce a highly flexible and efficient manufacturing system. The next example is BJC HealthCare, where the company uses RFID (radio frequency identification) technology in obtaining information and tracking their supplies. It has been proven that the company managed to significantly cut the inventory stocked on-site.

In the Malaysian context, the equipment manufacturing company Bosch is embedding the IR 4.0 technologies in the production lines that enable it to become more flexible and efficient in controlling the production processes (Bosch, 2021). However, in other companies, such as among the SMEs, the adoption of IR 4.0 technologies is still in development. This step would eventually enable them to ensure efficient data analysis to make real-time and better decisions (The Edge Malaysia, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, with IR 4.0 digital transformation occurring in the manufacturing and production sectors, all companies, whether they like it or not, should adopt it for all their businesses. By adopting IR 4.0, companies can gain a competitive advantage as well as improve their business performance. Staying stagnant may lead to the deterioration of the company's bottom-line and eventually its closure. As mentioned earlier, there are nine pillars of IR 4.0. Each plays an important role in the business. Most consumers would be looking for products having features of or produced with technology supported by these nine pillars. Companies that are unable to ride on all nine pillars must adopt as many as they can to be at par or above other companies and their competitors.

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# **YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: DOES THE GOVERNMENT CARE?**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has affected people's health and caused a massive impact on businesses among entrepreneurs not only in Malaysia but also around the world. The majority believe that this unprecedented situation will lead to the closure of many firms. Policy mandates, downward demand movements, health concerns, and other issues have forced stores, factories, and many other companies to close (Fairlie, 2020). This can be proven in March 2020, shortly after the Prime Minister of Malaysia announced the Movement Control Order (MCO), a total of 32,465 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) folded due to the proliferation of COVID-19 (Tan et al., 2020). In fact, August set a new high for SME closures with 17,800 SMEs (Free Malaysia, 2020). The former Minister of Entrepreneurial Development and Cooperatives, Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, reported that a total of 9,675 SME operations ceased during the first phase of the MCO from March 18 to June 9, and 22,794 during the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) phase in June to September (Free Malaysia, 2020). This figure is seen as exorbitant since SMEs are the backbone of the national economy.

According to a report from the official SME website, statistics show 98.5% or 907,065 business establishments are from SMEs. In terms of the scale or size of the business, the breakdown is as follows (SME Corp Malaysia, n.d):

- Micro-businesses 76.5% (693,670)
- Small businesses 21.2% (192,783)
- Medium businesses 2.3% (20,612)

In this regard, it is demonstrated that the majority of SME business establishments in Malaysia are from micro-businesses. Due to the MCO, approximately 79.5% of micro-businesses have closed their operations (The Straits Times, 2020). This can be regarded as more than half of the SME business operations being closed, and the country's economy is bound to become unstable. As a result of this closure, the government has taken the initiative to assist in terms of promotion, marketing and product development training instead of financial assistance, specifically among youth entrepreneurs.

Therefore, this matter should not be overlooked. SME entrepreneurs, especially among the youths, need to remain resilient and competitive to ensure that businesses can be continued in the long run.

## **YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

In the face of the COVID-19 outbreak, Malaysia experienced a high unemployment rate. Particularly so when the government announced the MCO in March 2020. This is evidenced from a report by Trading Economics where the unemployment rate in Malaysia increased by 3.9% in March 2020 from 3.4% for the same month in the previous year (Trading Economics, 2020). This is the highest unemployment rate since March 2009, when the number of unemployed increased

by 17.1% year over year to 610.5 thousand. According to a report by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2021), the unemployment rate for those aged 15 to 24 increased by 0.3% to 13.5% month over month in January 2021. However, the number of unemployed youths aged 15 to 24 had decreased by 17.0 thousand people to 275.3 thousand, compared to the previous month of December 2020 which recorded 312.2 thousand people. Similarly, the youth unemployment rate for those aged 15 to 30 increased by 0.5% to 9.2% in December 2020 by 8.7%.

Based on the above report, it demonstrated that this scenario needs to be considered seriously. One of the last resorts for the unemployed, especially among the youths, is to venture into entrepreneurship even though they have no experience in business. However, the government always encourages the involvement of people in entrepreneurship, especially the youths. Special attention is given by the government and private agencies by providing various support and platforms in the form of programs, financing incentives and entrepreneurial training to attract these people to be seriously involved in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs are also urged to be more progressive in advancing their business and to step out of their comfort zones by setting high goals to market products internationally. This is also outlined in the National Entrepreneurship Policy 2030 (DKN) (Entrepreneur Development Ministry, 2019).

Thus, some assistance has been given by the government to SMEs. One of the government's measures to stimulate the Malaysian economy is through the People and Economic Strategic Empowerment Programme (PEMERKASA) 2021 aid package, which includes the following assistance:

- Micro-enterprises and SMEs will be given a one-off assistance amounting to RM1,000 under the Geran Khas Prihatin (GKP 3.0).
- Additional financial funds amounting to RM500 million will be provided for microcredit financing through Bank Simpanan Nasional (BSN), Tabung Ekonomi Kumpulan Usaha Niaga (TEKUN), Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA), and SME Corporation programmes

In addition, the government has also taken the initiative to establish a Youth Exporters Development Programme under the DKN. The youth entrepreneur training programme is dedicated to youths aged 20 to 40 years old for those who are interested and have been involved in exporting activities through special training and guidance. Youth entrepreneurship is also an important agenda in the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (RMK 12) (Economic Planning Unit, 2021). To develop youth entrepreneurs into dynamic and inspiring entrepreneurs, a total of 10,812 youths are involved in entrepreneurship programmes. The aim is to improve skills and capabilities in doing business. This program is called the 3K Programme (*Kepimpinan, Kemahiran dan Keusahawanan*) (Leadership, Skills and Entrepreneurship), Smart Youth, Entrepreneur Outreach, and Smart Partnership youth entrepreneurs. Youths in rural areas are also encouraged to be involved in business and programmes are formed to encourage involvement among the local community. Government-linked companies (GLCs) and Government Linked Investment Companies (GLICs) must collaborate with local, regional, and state governments to build competencies and generate commercial opportunities for local leaders.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the results of the assistance, it clearly shows the government's determination in assisting youth entrepreneurs in boosting business activities now and in the future. However, continuous assistance without any effort shown by youth entrepreneurs does not guarantee that the business will be successful. Therefore, the challenges among youth entrepreneurs in conducting business need to be identified. This is to ensure every problem that occurs can be effectively addressed without any prejudice.

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# **ISLAMIC BANKING INDUSTRY IN FINTECH ECOSYSTEM: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Financial Technology or 'FinTech' implies the utilization of technology and mobile devices for information access to transaction notifications, bank accounts and credits, debit alerts with short message services, or other applications that inextricably link customers to banking institutions (Stewart & Jürjens, 2018). The emergence of FinTech started after the financial crisis in 2007/2008 due to decrease in customer trust towards the traditional banking system (Breibach et al., 2019).

The application of Fintech in Islamic banks or companies is permissible, providing it complies with the principles of Shariah. Embracing such technological advancements will improve Islamic banking services, preserve customers' digital security and provide them with easy access to digital transactions. As the percentage of the unbanked population remained high in OIC member countries, Islamic Fintech is considered a solution in providing access to banking services. Despite that, the demand for Islamic Fintech will increase tremendously with the growing population of the young and tech-savvy Muslim generation. The position of a world leader in Islamic finance gives advantages to the Islamic banking industry in Malaysia to explore more mechanisms to support the digital transformation, including FinTech. The supportive regulatory environment, well-established capacity building, and readiness of the existing or new customers are among the substantial factors contributing to the growth of Islamic Fintech application in the Islamic banking industry.

## **ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**

Fintech companies have been granted approval by regulators to use technological platforms to provide low cost and time saving financial services comparable to those provided by traditional banks. As a result, both Islamic and conventional banks would encounter intense competition in capturing the interest of potential clients, particularly millennials. Nevertheless, the conventional banks have an advantage in adapting to Fintech due to strong infrastructure, assets, human capital and technology. In the case of Islamic banks, it is argued that they are relatively passive to adopt technology, particularly full-fledged Islamic banks (Ali et al., 2019).

The regulators such as Bank Negara Malaysia and Securities Commission are responsible for upholding the stringent regulations in order to protect the interest of the consumer. At the same time, they need to strike a balance to ensure financial stability, stimulating innovation and competition among the industry players. The existing regulations and guidelines need to be revised, including for Islamic banking institutions to suit the rapid growth of digital banking technology and innovation. Currently, several guidelines have been applied or drafted by regulators in order to safeguard the industry, which complies with six areas such as banking and takaful operations, digital assets, electronic Know Your Customer (e-KYC), digital banking, financial crime and cyber security.

Workforce challenges is another challenge to the Islamic banking industry. The increase of the technology such as automation in banking could lead to massive trends of unemployment

(Meena & Parimalarani, 2020). Simultaneously, the adoption of technology must be monitored closely as excessive application of superior technology would lead to a war between technology versus humans (Roy & Viswanathan, 2018). Basically, the challenges can be divided into two categories; lack of skills among the existing employees and talent shortage in the area of digital technology. The increase of innovative banking products and services may require specific skill sets for the bank employees. Therefore, the banking institutions should retrain or upgrade the skills of the employees in order to ensure they can adopt the changes in the institutions. Simultaneously, the industry lacks talent in the area of machine learning and data analytics, as well as Shariah knowledge (Haridan et al., 2020).

As discussed earlier, Islamic banking institutions are responsible for offering Shariah-based products and services to fulfil the needs of Muslim customers. Despite focusing on creating awareness or acceptance among Muslim customers towards Islamic Fintech, the biggest challenge of Islamic banks is to integrate the products, services and operations with the Fintech applications (Haridan et al., 2020). At the same time, it is also crucial to ensure the products and services of Fintech comply with the Shariah principle.

## **INITIATIVES FROM GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY**

The government of Malaysia are very committed to developing a secure and efficient ecosystem for Fintech development. The collaboration between government and industry players is translated through various initiatives and programs.

1. **Financial Technology Enable Group (FTEG).**  
Bank Negara Malaysia established FTEG in 2016 in order to support and facilitate technological innovation in the Malaysian financial system. The members of FTEG consist of cross-functional groups in the financial system.
2. **FinTech Regulatory Sandbox Framework.**  
This framework was introduced on October 18, 2016, which provides Fintech firms and financial institutions an opportunity to conduct their operations and experiment in a real or live environment.
3. **Strategic Partnership between Islamic banks and Fintech (start-ups) firms.**  
Incumbent Islamic banking institutions are expected to face strong competition with Fintech firms. Still, Islamic banking institutions can collaborate or execute a strategic partnership with Fintech firms to benefit both parties involved in the industry. It gives a "win-win" situation to both parties. Islamic banks will share their advantages in terms of wider distribution of network in terms of bank branches, data of customers and reputation of the institutions. While, the Fintech firms will contribute in terms of their creativity, agility and pool of talent who have the latest skillset needed by banks.
4. **Investment in Digital Technologies.**  
In order to sustain their position in the competitive environment, Islamic banking institutions must be ready to adapt to the changes in the industry. At a certain point, investment in banking technology is required to enhance customers' experience and improve the efficiency of transactions and operations. For example, MBSB Bank and Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad have increased their investment in technology in 2019 to enhance their digital offerings (International Monetary Fund. Asia and Pacific Dept, 2018).

5. Diversifying the Talent Pool.

Lack of skills, mismatched talent pools and change of job nature are among the common issues and challenges faced by various industries in Malaysia. Since 2007, Bank Negara Malaysia introduced a Financial Sector Talent Enrichment Programme (FSTEP) programme. It is a 3+1 training programme for fresh undergraduates to prepare them with the necessary skills and knowledge currently required by financial institutions. Another programme, "Fit-for-Work" (FFW), was introduced in 2018, which provides an opportunity for unemployed graduates to undergo nine months of technical training in the areas related to digital technology in finance.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, banking institutions (conventional or Islamic) have experienced drastic changes in digital transformation for such a long time. From automatic teller machines (ATM) to internet banking, the banking sector remains sustainable and relevant to customers. Islamic banks are expected to experience stiff competition from newcomers of Fintech start-up firms, a limited skilled workforce in Fintech, the commitment of regulators in promoting innovation in the FinTech sector, and safeguarding financial stability to ensure the Shariah-compliances of the Fintech instruments. However, an intervention by the government through regulators, Fintech players or even training provider institutions will minimize the drastic impacts of Fintech disruption. Among the recommendations are a collaboration between Islamic banks and Fintech start-ups, investment in digital technology, revising the regulations according to fast-paced innovation and diversifying talent pools or skilled workforce in Fintech. Fintech firms have used digital technology to provide clients with value in important areas such as price, convenience, access, choice, and community. However, incumbents still have the advantage when it comes to trust.

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# APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY IN FOOD INDUSTRY

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## INTRODUCTION

When it comes to cooking and eating, technology is unnecessarily the first thing that springs to mind. On the other hand, technology has changed the way we create and find food over time because of applications, robotics, data, and data processing techniques, among other things. Technology helps food companies produce more effectively to meet the demands of a growing global population. Given that there are currently 7.5 billion people on the planet, it follows that the need for food is increasing on an annual basis (Martin, 2019). It is possible to increase the shelf life and safety of food by applying technology to improve the processing and packaging of the product.

In the food sector, automation improves quality while also reducing costs for the company. The use of robotics lowers the cost of food preservation while simultaneously increasing the amount of food produced. It is estimated that over 30,000 robots work in the European food business, with the number of robots per 10,000 workers increasing from 62 in 2013 to 84 in 2017 (Adamo Software, 2020). Not only do countries such as Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Italy, have a large market, but also the highest robot densities. Robotic equipment can aid in reducing safety issues in the food industry's more dangerous tasks, which are becoming increasingly common.

Precision agriculture is important when it comes to determining how technology may be used to benefit farmers. GPS tracking devices and satellite photos are being used to monitor agricultural production, soil levels, and weather patterns to increase farm efficiency (Marketing Tutor, 2019). These technologies do not only see what is going on in the fields, but they may also use the results of the analysis to determine the health of the soil and the crop's yield.

Drones are one of the most important devices farmers are using to accomplish this. They can locate and detect ill or damaged crops and they may also provide urgent treatment. The implementation of these drones does not eliminate the need for labourers but aids them to become more efficient in their work through increased productivity. With strict product standards in vast quantities, as well as a need to reduce costs, robotic elements assist in establishing a faster environment that produces more goods than what would be possible with traditional labour (Marketing Tutor, n.d.).

## TECHNOLOGIES THAT REDUCE COSTS

When the food and beverage business uses technology for record keeping, smart broilers and ovens in the kitchen, and an online ordering system, the entire process becomes more efficient, with no delays or kitchen-related safety issues (Martin, 2019). Even though such

catastrophes are infrequent, they can have a significant monetary impact on a business. To remain competitive, some world's biggest food and beverage companies are bringing their operations online (Marketing Tutor, 2019). The ability to place orders for their favourite delicacies and have them delivered to their doorstep would be available to the public. Upon receiving the online order from the customer, the business would then process it and subsequently bring the necessary food goods to the customer's residence.

Because of technological advancements and the availability of online purchasing, it is much easier to get started in this business nowadays. As a result, there has been a significant increase in the level of competition in the food and beverage industries. Customers can now order a specific product from a range of different suppliers in a single order. It is available for purchase from a variety of different companies. Customers are more inclined to purchase items if they learn about the dish's unique selling point. The knowledge gained from food business experience allows businesses to save money by selecting the optimal combination of components rather than relying on trial and error. Saving money on food waste can be accomplished by preparing the necessary amount of food at any appropriate time of day. The cost-effectiveness of your company contributes to the acceleration of its growth.

## **CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGIES IN THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY**

In the context of food processing technology and technology in the food service industry, automated equipment and robots are being implemented to regulate food quality. Furthermore, it promotes consistency for food businesses or even restaurants that require inventory management optimization to operate efficiently. It may be claimed that the robot edge is the best representation of the concrete spirit of food technology (Adamo Software, 2020). Robots are being used extensively in most parts of North Europe, with the number of robots increasing by 20 percent per year. In Europe, around 30,000 robots are presently in charge of the production of goods. Automated systems assist the food and beverage industries in overcoming the limitations of risky or high-accuracy job roles.

The pandemic had a significant impact on the global restaurant technology market in 2020. On the contrary, it was hailed as an exhilarating time for reconstruction and rehabilitation after the disaster. The world is currently on the lookout for creative solutions to bridge the gap between corporate complexes and their customers. In terms of potential, the meal delivery service is the most promising technology now, attracting both restaurateurs and investors. On average, earnings from food sales with the option of delivery have accounted for over 6 percent of total restaurant revenues (Shaw, 2021). More importantly, with an estimated annual growth rate of 10 percent, the meal delivery service is expected to have a prosperous future. On-demand food delivery software development would become more realistic because of the tremendous demand for establishing a customised system that matches the specific needs of each firm.

## **CONCLUSION**

As a result of all these technical developments, there is a plethora of possibilities that might completely transform the way we produce food. The only thing we can do now is wait and see if advancing technology is the answer to alleviating world hunger and resolving our waste crisis. The food and beverage industry has the potential to be a very profitable business. Although it is incredibly competitive and necessitates a substantial initial expenditure. The most recent COVID-19 pandemic, on the other hand, has done considerable damage. Online ordering and home delivery are excellent options for first-time customers as well as those who have yet to start.

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# ANNOTATIONS GIVE MEANINGFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

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When possible, we write our annotations on pages as we read. Annotations allow us to underline, jot simple notes, and post or stick notes on the pages. We annotate while reading or after reading. In lectures, educators encourage their students to annotate to activate their learning and to enhance knowledge transfer. Annotations have been proven to be a tool to foster better cognitive development and enhances student learning engagement (Tseng, 2021). Annotations can also be seen as a way for students or lecturers to talk to their own work. Annotations reveal our thinking and personal responses rather than the views of others. It helps to explain relevance and our own connections to the subjects.

Annotations can be done by hand or by using software (Writers' Center Eastern Washington University, 2021). Traditionally, physical marking or highlighting text or writing in the text margin is done. At its best, annotation encourages active engagement, promotes critical thinking and endorses stronger retention of concepts (Pearson, 2021).

Besides using text to annotate, images can also enhance our annotations. Illustrated annotations (see Figure 1) represent concepts and elements that we see in a literature, for example. In teaching and learning, illustrated annotations help students to synthesize information and activate their creativity. It makes annotating less boring. The illustrated annotation process promotes engagement between students and educators. On top of that, students gets to express their artistic talent and creativity. Annotating using illustrations instead of just texts, provides a more hands-on experience with personal touch.

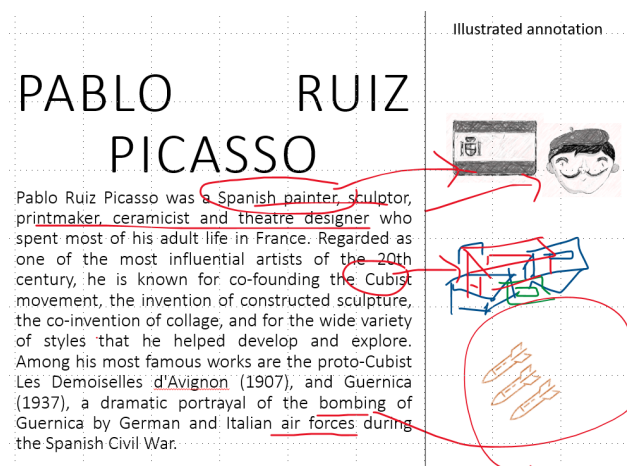


Figure 1: Example of illustrated annotation.

Technology advancement has further enhanced our annotation activity. Screen annotation software is introduced to allow us to annotate on our computer screen and save the result. This software is very useful especially during presentations where we can make annotations on the screen while presenting.

ENSA (The Animated Screen Annotation Application) takes screen annotation to another level. It allows us to annotate or draw freely over another application on a computer screen and enhances the annotation process by animating selected areas of choice (see Figure 2). ENSA also allows overlays of annotations (see Figure 2). ENSA is an innovation developed by En. Syafiq Abd Samat with his fellow researchers. ENSA is highly used in the teams' lectures especially to demonstrate drawings or graphical processes. The annotations used are intended as visual aids during lectures. This interactive lecturing has improved student's understanding and participation.

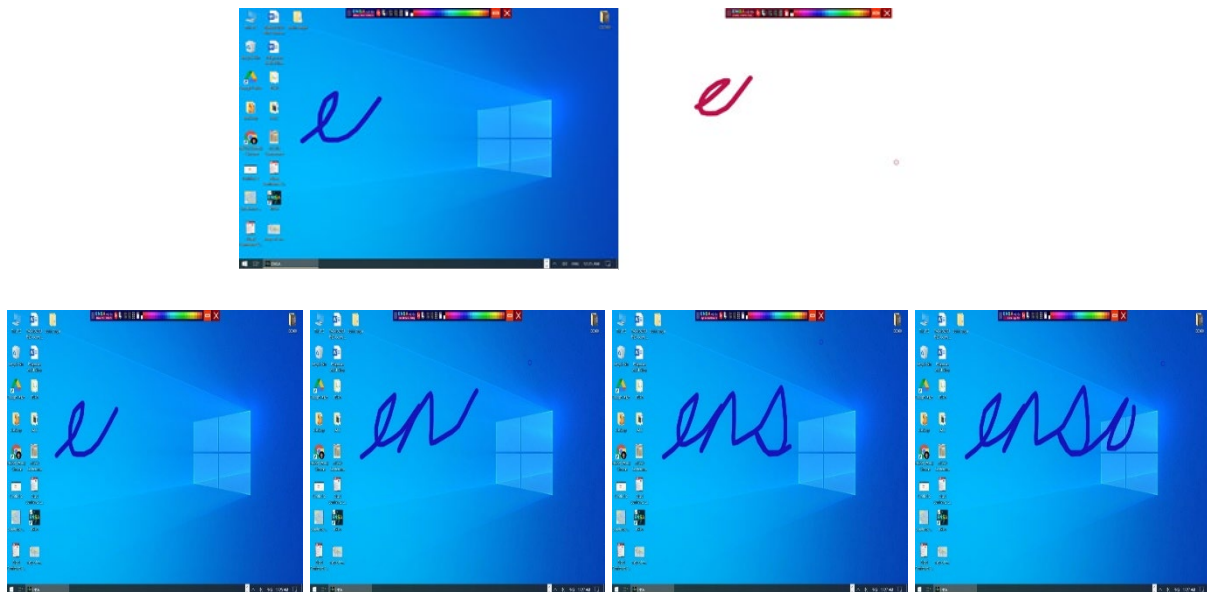


Figure 2: Example of ENSA annotation. Animations on selected areas on a computer screen.

It is important to highlight that any type of annotation used being it text, illustrated or animated, students and educators can benefit from the annotation process. Annotation give meaningful learning experience as the process enriches learning experience: summarize text, highlight important information, and ultimately prepare learners and educators for discussions.

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# AN INTRODUCTION TO ENSA: THE ANIMATED SCREEN ANNOTATION APPLICATION

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Lecturers and teachers had a drastic shift of teaching patterns when the COVID-19 pandemic happened. Face-to-face teaching has now moved to remote teaching; thus, making successful engagement and assessment more challenging. As they learn to observe and utilise the digital space, they consider new possibilities of teaching practices. Digital or screen annotation is one possibility that can transcend and assist the new normal in teaching.

In traditional annotation, activities of note-taking, underlining, drawing, and highlighting are done on print-based texts (Kawase et al., 2009). Compared to screen annotation, all these activities can be done directly on screen-based texts (Dahl, 2016). In addition to that, screen annotation allows the insertion of recorded sound and videos (Olesh, 2016). This technology is a mix of presentation, screen capturing, whiteboard and note-taking tools (Tyrsina, 2021). It is an emerging educational technology and extensively used in education (Turner and Zucker, 2020). Screen annotation empowers lecturers and teachers to be more active and effective during lectures or classes. Besides that, the tools have been proven to significantly impact student engagement (Dahl, 2016 & Olesh, 2016). The usage of screen annotations in lectures have also resulted in strong positive feedbacks. Students place high value on the extra revision tools and work examples they get through screen annotated lectures (Rowlett et al., 2014). Another research done by Tseng (2021), also found that annotation tools foster better behaviour in student cognitive engagement. In addition, the same research concluded that annotation tools benefit and enhance student learning engagement (Tseng, 2021). Annotation process reassures active engagement, boosts critical thinking and promotes stronger retention in learning activities (Pearson, 2021).

Evolution and innovation in technology have made it possible for traditional annotation and screen annotation to be animated. ENSA (The Animated Screen Annotation Application) is a screen annotation application with a quick animation feature. Developed by Syafiq Abd Samat, ENSA is an upgraded version of *Surih Angin* which was designed based on Adobe Flash and Adobe Air Extension. It shares similarities with other available annotation applications. The animated annotation allows users to annotate or draw freely over another application on the computer screen and enhances the annotation process by animating selected areas of choice. The animation helps users to highlight their intended key annotation and thus, it is believed to improve the understanding of readers or learners. ENSA has been further developed and other screen annotations were studied. Based on our experience using ENSA and making comparisons with other screen annotation applications, we found that other applications do not have a function menu option to save overlays. Having this special function, ENSA is able to recall these overlays rapidly and in a sequence that animates the screen annotations.

ENSA is designed to annotate not only in a single image of drawing but can also overlay on top of other software on a computer screen. This feature is able to enhance user's experience and

enable users to attract attention, highlight important information, help explain ideas, and retain the focus of the audience.

By introducing ENSA to the society, especially in the education field, we hope users (teachers and lecturers) would be able to enhance their audience's experience for better focus and comprehension of the intended content or idea. On top of that, online lessons or learning, and group discussions can be more exciting as the usage of animated features give the possibility of a more stimulating knowledge and idea transfer. Additionally, we, the researchers, believe that ENSA can be used for lean and agile presentations.

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# E-COMMERCE ISSUES IN RETAIL INDUSTRY

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## INTRODUCTION

With the introduction of e-commerce, or internet commerce, shopping, formerly limited to brick-and-mortar companies, has taken on a new meaning. E-commerce advancements are critical in defining the retail industry's future. E-commerce has had a profound effect on retail, encouraging merchants to offer a similarly compelling purchasing experience. The best e-commerce practices have infiltrated the retail industry, and most firms already have an online presence or will soon have one. Retailers are taking advantage of modern technology that enables shoppers to examine promoted items from any location and at any time. This contributes to the growth of website traffic and revenues.

There is talk of a global "retail apocalypse" as customers' buying preferences shift away from malls. The research implies that enterprises should rethink their business strategies, by using digital retail, the sector's sole remaining double-digit growth industry. Any activity in which a business sells products or services directly to a consumer for personal or family use is considered retail. The term "retail" has taken on a new meaning because of the digital revolution. It encompasses all operations involving the selling of products and services to clients outside of traditional brick-and-mortar stores. This is the definition of e-commerce, a subset of the retail industry focused on the purchase and selling of products and services via the internet and other kinds of technology (Righini, 2020).

Despite their considerable contribution to the economy, the position of tiny and micro merchants has worsened as customers' purchasing alternatives continue to grow (Morganosky, 1997). They are always competing with larger enterprises and have recently faced increased competition from out-of-town branches built by large merchants. Notably, new electronic competitors are posing a threat to brick-and-mortar businesses by using e-commerce to sell products and services to a local market via the Internet (Vandermerwe, 1999).

Malaysia will be the 40th largest e-commerce market in 2020, ahead of Iran but behind New Zealand, and Malaysia's e-commerce market is to rise by 49 percent by 2020, contributing to the world's 29 percent growth rate. E-commerce sales are continuing to grow. New markets are developing, and established markets have the potential to grow even larger. Global growth will resume in the next few years. With its growing middle socio-economic classes and slow offline retail infrastructure, East and Southeast Asia will be the main drivers behind this development (E-Commerce Market Analysis, n.d).



## **ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUES**

### **1. Streamlining Delivery**

E-influence of commerce on the retail business is a result of the ability to order products online rather than visiting a store and picking them up in person. It's a big convenience to have goods and services delivered right to our doorstep. As a result, well-known firms have been forced to close their retail sites. Almost every major food retailer worldwide is seeking to increase efficiency savings to support price reductions. Due to the prevalence of e-commerce platforms, customers will soon be able to buy the same degree of discount as they did previously.

Tesco was able to save around 1.5 billion pounds on operating expenditures, according to October 2016 reports, through procurement cost savings and effective distribution networks. They aim to save between 3.5 and 4% of expenditures in the 2019-20 fiscal years, a considerable rise over the 2.9 percent they saved in 2017-2018 (Nation Valley News, 2019).

Nowadays, most merchants are concerned with the efficacy of their distribution techniques. Everything is evaluated, from payment convenience to product delivery on time and packing, to guarantee that the retail and e-commerce markets still are balanced. Tesco is not alone; hundreds of enterprises in the retail and e-commerce industries have been under pressure to reduce operating expenses to focus on customer service and enjoyment.

### **2. Retailers' and e-competitiveness commerce's**

In the future, e-commerce platforms will become the new trend, but limited to few industries, such as fashion or electronics. However, worldwide rivalry between retail and e-commerce platforms will continue (Nation Valley News, 2019). They are on the verge of coexisting thanks to their mutual dependence. People discover companies via online purchases, which is why brick-and-mortar businesses are gaining appeal. On the other hand, internet businesses are gaining popularity due to the visibility of the brand. Thus, even if there is news of job cuts, fresh employment prospects will materialise.

### **3. Customer Growth Prospects**

Nonetheless, e-commerce has made it simpler for shops to recruit new consumers, increase communication, manage finances, do further research, and market their brand than ever before, all while generating sales at a lower cost. Customers choose a more convenient purchase technique, which is e-commerce; as a result, their shops have developed into a secondary means of selling their items. Retailers now can sell their items internationally. This has improved the retailing industry's ability to generate income and grow its customer base. As a result, merchants were under pressure as their customer base has grown. They must expect this and develop a cost-effective plan for delivering their products directly to customers through shelf merchandising and the use of reputable distribution centres. Due to its quick expansion, e-commerce has revolutionised the retail sector and proved itself as a mainstream means of consumer selling.

### **4. Technological Implications**

Security issues, internet access, and compliance with existing protocols are among the top technology-related challenges plaguing e-commerce businesses, according to industry observers. One unanticipated consequence of e-commerce's fast development in popularity is that it has become a more appealing target for criminals: greater e-commerce activity results in higher security issues. Additionally, each new high-profile 'hacking' event erodes the customer's confidence in online retail, underscoring the crucial significance of e-commerce security (Rakuten Super Logistics, 2019).

Another risk that has surfaced as e-commerce has grown is the rising concern about the network infrastructure's resiliency. Another technological hurdle is integrating Internet software with legacy programmes and databases; e-commerce technology is constantly evolving, and adding modern technology is not always straightforward or cost effective.

## 5. Social Danger

Concerns about consumer privacy and the sharing of personal information have risen dramatically in recent years (Rakuten Super Logistics, 2019). Additionally, when an e-commerce organisation extends beyond its first geographical footprint, cultural concerns become a consideration. Unlike conventional merchants, who could simply use language and marketing strategies that appealed to their target market, online merchants must consider their larger consumer base's linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity. Each of these qualities has the potential to sabotage e-commerce businesses' efforts to build long-term 'relationships' with a diverse client base (Rakuten Super Logistics, 2019).

## 6. Legal Consequences

While it may look as though e-commerce has been around for a long length of time, the fact is that it is a relatively young industry with various unsolved legal challenges, the most significant of which is intellectual property rights. Then there are legal considerations regarding taxation: as we previously discussed — and as has been widely reported in the business press in recent months — a recent Supreme Court decision ruling that states can collect online sales taxes on businesses that are not physically located within their borders has the potential to have a significant impact on the bottom lines of e-commerce companies nationwide (Rakuten Super Logistics, 2019). The industry's exceptional success influenced that choice — and governments' readiness to tax e-commerce — and one of the 'downsides' of rising market share is that e-commerce businesses have become a more desirable tax 'target' for states trying to enlarge their tax base.

## CONCLUSION

To summarise, online buying via e-commerce websites is becoming a widespread practice that is inextricably related to the digital era. Everything is available for purchase on the internet. Suppliers support the progressive trend of growing retail locations and, hence, the so-called "face-to-face" engagement with consumers, which can enhance the shopping experience. Both shopping tactics offer few pros and disadvantages that the client must weigh. When compared to brick-and-mortar businesses, e-commerce sites excel in a multitude of areas, including time-consuming purchases, convenience, and rapid comparisons of rivals, product range, and prices. As the worldwide trend suggests, traditional retail shops will continue to struggle to attract customers in the future years, while internet shopping will continue to grow at a breakneck pace.

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# DIGITALISATION OF MALAYSIAN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

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## INTRODUCTION

The expansion of agriculture is without a doubt the most significant period in modern human history. Agriculture is the science behind farming, which entails cultivating plots of land to grow crops for human consumption (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). Agriculture played a key role in the evolution of a more sedentary or static human civilization.

The term "Neolithic Revolution" was coined in the 1920's by V. Gordon Childe, an Australian archaeologist and one of the twentieth century's foremost prehistorians (Balter, 2005). Agriculture, he asserted, was a watershed moment in the revolution because it gave early human colonies control over their own food supplies. He also asserted that, following the end of the last ice age over eleven thousand years ago, a warmer and less harsh climate compelled early humans and the few domesticated animals to migrate and congregate near fully developed rivers, oases, and other water sources. These activities laid the groundwork for most agricultural societies and early kingdoms, which grew to become great civilisations.

We have entered the next stage of human development, one of complete digitalisation. Digitalisation is a term that refers to the process of converting written material to a digital format (Collins Dictionary, 2020). Capital investment in innovation, manufacturing, efficiency, and advancements in digital technology has the potential to foster more fair and sustainable growth (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020).

Data analytics and networking advancements are enabling most businesses to fully use a slew of new digital applications, including smart appliances, shared mobility, and advanced manufacturing methods, such as 3D printing. In the not-too-distant future, systems will be able to forecast who will need specific commodities and deliver them at the most helpful time, location, and cost. This is all possible because of digitalisation. Numerous systems are already in place, supplying critical benefits to specific businesses in areas such as safety, production, accessibility, and long-term viability. Furthermore, it influences markets, businesses, and most importantly, jobs. There will emerge new business models, displacing century-old practices (International Energy Agency, 2020). It will be up to influential politicians, corporate executives, and other stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition of the industry into the next phase.

Most of the agricultural innovators' grand ambition is to enable the entire industry to advance or leap up the developmental value chain. This entails the application of a variety of technologies, ranging from Internet of Things-based agriculture to ultra-high-tech agriculture. This would entail the creation of a more sophisticated and integrated platform for farmers, the widespread use of advanced robotics, and the expansion of indoor farming (Loh, 2021). As a result, national plans and concurrent regulations must be implemented for the industry to achieve its goal of complete digitisation.

Malaysians have embraced digital technology fully, with the digital economy comprising cashless payments, e-commerce expansion, and ICT significantly adding to the country's GDP. While digital adoption is widespread among the populace, numerous firms and industries in Malaysia continue to lag behind. Agriculture is the most noteworthy of this, accounting for around 8% of Malaysia's GDP along with forestry and fisheries. Even though the industry employs approximately 11% of the population, it is extremely slow to adapt, with many farmers and businesses continuing to rely on old methods and reluctance to adopt digital solutions (Santiago, 2021).

Government authorities, on the other hand, have concentrated their efforts in recent years on modernising agriculture by encouraging young people to enter the field. Only in August 2021, an incoming Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry declared his intention to recruit university graduates to work in contemporary agriculture, naming Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang as places suitable for short-term crop cultivation. Bringing a younger generation of digital natives into agriculture would also accelerate the adoption of smart farming in Malaysia via machine learning, IoT, and AI solutions.

## **THE DIFFICULTIES**

As is the case with any modern technology, digitising the entire agricultural value chain will create new opportunities for the process's primary stakeholders. Integrating such digital technologies into established farming practices, on the other hand, would introduce disruptions or risks that could jeopardise the entire endeavour. To begin, digitisation will increase overall efficiency. Farmers can use smart farming practices to collect data that can be used to further improve yields (Giesler, 2018). In this new era of farming, cloud computing is widely used to process data. These are the systems that automatically collect, analyse, and store data. These data are available on any mobile device. The advantage of a cloud system is that service providers can access the data sources. As a result, the farmer will have a wealth of information and pertinent recommendations at his fingertips. It is critical to emphasise that the farmer owns the data.

Additionally, as digitalisation advances gradually but steadily, the adoption of digital technologies may result in the emergence of a slew of new markets that did not exist just a few years ago (Giesler, 2018). Producers will be able to set up their own pipeline to direct their produce to more modern consumers, who are more demanding and sensitised. Consider a digital pasar (market) in which the consumer can contact the manufacturer directly. This enables direct communication between the client and the farmer, ensuring that the highest quality product is delivered to the client's home, be it dairy, vegetables, meat, or seafood.

While we recognise that digitising agriculture would help local farmers, we must also recognise that this strategy has some drawbacks. While massive amounts of data may be generated, ensuring that local Malaysian farmers have the necessary infrastructure to use and reap the benefits of digitalisation presents a challenge. Simply browsing the internet in rural areas reveals that the infrastructure needed for the next agricultural revolution has not been fully implemented. In 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak, rural students were forced to climb hills and trees, drive hundreds of kilometres to the next town, and even skip critical exams due to a lack of high-speed internet infrastructure (Lee, 2020).

A more pressing issue in Malaysia is rural farmers' lack of digital literacy. Digital literacy has been largely determined by socioeconomic status in the Asian region. Historically, this region's and, to a lesser extent, the world's young urban and suburban populations have been the primary users of technology. These groups have always been dominant due to their increased awareness of technological advancements and ability to afford new pieces of technology. While this is not always the case, when it comes to the urban poor, the broad consensus has generally been true.

## **THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FUTURE**

While the process of digitalisation can be slow at times, the agricultural industry is currently undergoing a complete transformation. One innovation is the development of agricultural drones, which are used to optimise agricultural operations, increase crop yields, and check crop growth. Farmers who use this type of equipment will obtain a more detailed image of their fields through sensors and digital photographs. Employing an agricultural drone to collect data and optimise crop yields will eventually help farmers as population growth will undoubtedly increase demand for produce soon.

The sky is the limit with this technology as seen in the development of unmanned combine harvesters for use in Kedah's vast rice fields as well as their deployment on Cameron Highlands tea plantations. These technologies will undoubtedly propel this industry forward bringing attention to an industry that has previously been overlooked in this country. This is becoming increasingly critical as Malaysia strives to develop an agricultural economy capable of self-sufficiency (Free Malaysia Today, 2020)

## **STRATEGIES FOR A DIGITALLY ENABLED AGRICULTURE SECTOR**

Farmers' days of toiling in scorching heat for extended periods of time are numbered. Technology has permeated the agricultural industry over the last few decades aiding farmers in their operations. Now, some agricultural fields are implementing modern technologies, such as the Internet of Things (IoT), big data analytics (BDA), and new artificial intelligence (The Sun Daily, 2020).

According to Dr. Karl Ng, director of Data Ecosystem Development at the Malaysian Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), the injection of digital technical aspects into agriculture is expected to be effective soon. He noted that MDEC launched its Digital Agtech programme several years ago after visiting several agricultural regions across the country to gain a better understanding of farmers' circumstances. MDEC recognised that the issues confronting local farmers, which are primarily related to expenditures, monitoring, neglect, and workforce, could be addressed through the rapid implementation of such a programme.

The agricultural sector in Malaysia will continue to thrive and be prepared for future challenges with the aid and guidance of these key agencies, which have implemented policies such as Digital AgTech (Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation, 2020).

## **CONCLUSION**

Clearly, digitalisation has had an impact on Malaysia's agriculture sector, presenting both opportunities and challenges for the livelihoods and lifestyle of local farmers. These possibilities and risks must be addressed directly if the sector is to thrive in the coming years. To achieve such wealth, both policymakers in Putrajaya and industry players, including farmers and business leaders, will need to implement critical policies and strategies. Only by addressing all these issues will agriculture in this country be able to grow into the powerhouse it can become. Agriculture, as we all know, is a critical sector that employs hundreds of thousands of Malaysians and supplies food for tens of millions more, and without it, this country would perish. This is amplified by Malaysia's projected population growth in the coming decades.

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# **STUDENT INTERNSHIP CHALLENGES DURING COVID-19**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 epidemic has had unexpected and unanticipated effects on how people live, work, and play. This pandemic had brought a number of negative impacts on our health and well-being, as well as our social and economic standards, politics, culture, and education. A majority of affected countries have implemented a lockdown in order to flatten the infection curve. The government of Malaysia has issued a Movement Control Order (MCO) requiring the closure of all non-essential sectors, including educational institutions.

At institutions of higher learning, all regular physical teaching and learning, as well as other co-curricular activities, have been temporarily suspended. Students are being confronted with a new standard of virtual or online teaching and learning methods. Most final-year Bachelor's Degree students are required to participate in industrial training for 6 months or longer, depending on their programme requirements. However, the few implementations of MCO had caused an impact on student enrolment into internship programmes both before and during their internship.

As a student, finding an internship or employment might be a challenging task. Adding a pandemic and a damaged economy to the mix makes things much worse. Students are not the only ones who are struggling to find opportunities as a result of the pandemic. The difficulties of working remotely, and for some, in person, is one of the apparent challenges COVID-19 faced for many organisations (Kenoun, 2020). These limitations have influenced the experiences of those who are new to the internship and job markets.

Employers from both the commercial and public sectors were still excited about and supportive of the internship programme from January to early March 2020. Some companies, however, elected to opt out of the programme after the World Health Organization (WHO) announced on March 11, 2020 that the COVID-19 crisis had progressed into a full-fledged pandemic (Wong, 2020).

## **CHALLENGES BEFORE PLACEMENT**

One of the difficulties the students encountered was finding a place to undergo industrial training because most businesses were unable to operate while the Movement Control Order was in effect. Students also faced difficulty finding suitable companies near their homes because most of the companies engaged strive to save money by not hiring students for industrial training. As they do not want to jeopardize their safety as a result of the epidemic, students' hunt for companies near their respective living zones often becomes futile.



Furthermore, students must find a location that is appropriate for the subject of their study. The majority of major companies in the industry take a long time to respond to student applications. Due to a lack of available positions, some of the suitable businesses were forced to stop accepting student applications.

In order to select an appropriate student, most companies employ online platforms. Students must apply either through email or the company's website. Some students experience difficulties in meeting the company's appearance expectations. Students must be well-prepared and targeted in their approach if they want to make a strong first impression, as well as ready to deliver a relevant personal introduction during the interview process via online platform.

## **CHALLENGES DURING INTERNSHIP**

Students who have secured a place and undergone industry training confront a variety of hurdles. Due to the implementation of movement restriction orders, the company does not operate physically and all transactions are completed online. Since the bulk of the workforce is expected to work from home, students must learn to work independently, manage their time properly, and acquire skills and knowledge in a non-traditional workplace.

During the COVID 19 outbreak, however, student internships were less able to provide opportunities for strengthening student abilities in terms of dependability, ability to work independently, and ability to acquire new information. This suggests that, due to the pandemic's limits, students had difficulty in absorbing new knowledge at work. (Mediawati et al., 2020). Most students had never seen social distancing requirements or mask-wearing before the pandemic, which makes it difficult for them to get to know coworkers and assimilate into a new work environment (Kenoun, 2020).

Besides, students also need to confront challenges in terms of learning corporate culture and teamwork. As they are compelled to work from home, their learning gets limited. They are also unable to interact with other members of staff as they could prior to the outbreak (Wong, 2020). Even though internships and jobs are different before the epidemic in terms of what they entail, students must continue to strive to create connections despite the new challenges.

There are some students who face challenges when they are asked to work from home during their industrial training period. This is because they do not have adequate facilities at home to complete the assignments. Some people do not have reliable internet access, and others do not have the necessary computer equipment or gadgets to complete tasks.

Students were concerned that if the pandemic prolonged, their employers might terminate their internships early, disrupting their learning and causing them to fall short of the required internship length for the module. The host company has urged students to discontinue their internships in some cases; nevertheless, most students have been given the option to continue their internships online or virtually.

Given the lack of personal and on-site involvement, students expressed concerns about how employers monitor or evaluate their work performance. However, at the end of the industrial training period, most companies give students a fair and transparent evaluation based on their relatively good student achievement, despite the many challenges faced by both parties during the period.

This writing is based on feedback from students who have completed or are currently completing industrial training. In addition, at the end of the training period, the industry shares some information via feedback forms.

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# INDUSTRY 4.0 AND ITS CHALLENGES

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## INTRODUCTION

There is no denying that technology plays a significantly important role in our daily lives; however, the increasingly linked culture we live in also has an impact on the business world. This is the point at which Industry 4.0 begins to take shape.

Industrial Revolutions evolved with the first one in 1765. During Industrial Revolution 1, mechanization took place where there was a key discovery of the steam engine, which created a new source of energy which then helped accelerate the construction of railroad, thus developing the economy. In 1870, Industrial Revolution 2 arrived with an evolution of a new source of energy—gas, oil and electricity. The internal combustion engine was invented, as was the growth of steel demand, chemical synthesis, and communication systems such as the telegraph and telephone. The vehicle and the plane were also invented during the Industrial Revolution 2. In 1969, Industrial Revolution 3 began with the advancement of electronics, telecommunications, and computers. With new technologies, Industrial Revolution 3 paved the way for research, biotechnology and space exploration. Two key technologies were introduced; Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs) and Robots, to facilitate the industrial sector (Institute of Entrepreneurship Development Team, 2019).

Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) which started in 2016, is a rising mixture of traditional manufacturing and industrial platforms and methods, and also the most innovative smart technologies (Kumar & Kumar, 2020). Petrillo et al. (2018) stated that IR 4.0 is constructed on the concept of a smart factory, in which machines and people are linked by cyber-physical systems (CPS). The benefits of implementing IR 4.0 technologies are predicted to be massive in terms of efficiency, flexibility, quality, mass customization, improved product range, automation, and boost customers' satisfaction (Kumar & Kumar, 2020).

Despite its benefits of IR 4.0, many organizations are still having difficulties in adopting digital manufacturing solutions on a broad scale; for example, two out of every three enterprises conducting digital manufacturing solutions fail when they move to a wide-scale rollout (Stefanini, 2021).

## CHALLENGES OF IR 4.0

Even though each business faces unique and various obstacles due to their complex nature, there are some common challenges. According to Khan and Turowski (2016), businesses confront five universal obstacles of IR 4.0.

1. Data Challenge – Within a large company, every division already has their own way of data management in the form of printouts, emails, Excel sheets, proprietary applications, and

various database solutions. This leads to a lack of consistency in data management among various departments.

2. Data Exchange – IR 4.0 requires businesses to exchange data within their facility or departments and ensure that data is available for the use of other functions in a timely manner. Traditionally, data between the factory floor and various departments were not shared. Data transfer across departments is a time-consuming process.
3. Process Flexibility – IR 4.0 enables the production of individualized and customized items. Individualization and customization demand cost-effective production flexibility. The production environment should be adaptive at the process level in order to give such flexibility. However, the technology currently in use on the factory floor is insufficient and does not facilitate process flexibility.
4. Training and Skill Development - The majority of the workforce is made up of the older generation who are unwilling to learn new technology or change their work patterns. It is a challenge to introduce new techniques, devices, or adjust their ways because they are reluctant to change.
5. Security - The industry wants to keep its workers, products, and manufacturing facilities safe from security threats. The use of smart devices in manufacturing is becoming more popular. It is true that the connectivity of these devices delivers significant benefits in terms of making our lives easier. On the other hand, from a security standpoint, it presents a higher threat.

## CONCLUSION

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is a new industrial revolution in the 21st century that allows businesses to produce smarter, more efficient, effective, individualized, and customized products at a lower cost. Because IR 4.0 is still in its early stages, many additional challenges may emerge in the future. The adoption of IR 4.0 may alter not only the entire company and value chain system, but it can also provide a competitive advantage over the competitors, which is critical in today's global market.

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# BALANCING THE SCALE OF WORK AND LIFE

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## INTRODUCTION

Work-Life Balance (WLB) is a term that describes the process of achieving a healthy balance between work and personal life. According to Lockwood (2003), WLB refers to the condition where employees strike a balance between both professional and personal obligations. A good WLB creates a productive and healthy environments both at work and at home. The context of a person's personal life may include time spent developing relationships and performing non-job duties, as well as time spent pursuing personal interests.

Due to the diversity of the workforce and the changing realities of many companies, it is critical to maintain a WLB among employees in order to keep them productive, happy, and engaged. If employees perceive their company as helping them in balancing work and family life, the company may gain a competitive advantage in terms of hiring, retention and productivity. It is also remarked by Feeney and Stritch (2017) that companies with access to family-friendly policies encourage employees to work in a healthy environment and achieve favourable job outcomes.

On the other hand, WLB issues would have adverse effects on both the personal and professional life of an employee. Poor WLB could result in mental and physical stress, and can negatively impact job performance in the professional or work life. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the importance of striking a balance in the scale of work and personal life.

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

A healthy WLB is essential to develop a conducive, supportive, and healthy working environment. It allows employees to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal or family responsibilities that are commensurate with their level of job productivity and commitment. WLB is relatively a new concept in the eastern countries, Pakistan for an example, even though it has gained broader recognition and acceptance in the western countries (Ansari et al., 2015). Numerous large and successful organizations have incorporated and practiced healthy WLB into their organizational culture as a means to stimulate employee job satisfaction and motivation. Studies have found that healthy practices of WLB can result in many benefits to an employee, and therefore to the company as well. For instance, the effectiveness of WLB practices could result in an employee's good performance. In comparison to an unhappy employee who strives to strike the right balance between work, family, and self, a happy employee will be self-driven to work (Ansari et al., 2015).

However, balancing work and family life poses a significant challenge for both employees and employers. Therefore, the employees themselves must also strive to balance work and family commitments. In the cases where it becomes unmanageable, it will affect employee productivity, work performance, and well-being. For instance, Lowe (2005) states that one (1) in four (4) employees experiences a high level of conflict between work and family as a result of work-to-family interference and caregiver strain. He further remarks that 60 percent of employees, especially in managerial and professional levels, have experienced work-family conflicts.

Recently, in the context of Malaysia, the mounting pressure of work demand is expected to negatively influence the employee's life domain (Sharmila, Lee & Khairuddin, 2021).

The efficacy and effectiveness of WLB management are essential in today's working environment because WLB is also associated with occupational health and psychological outcomes. WLB determines whether or not the employees have improved health and well-being in their life after working in a company. According to Wang et al. (2008), the imbalance between work and family life is a more potent risk factor than work stress for causing mental disorders among employees and adversely impacting their physical health. Work environments with high psychological demands and low job control have also been reported to harm employee's health and well-being, as well as positively cause work-family conflict (Amstad et al., 2011). Therefore, organizations or companies need to design engaging WLB programs to reduce stress and prevent burnout amongst employees.

For example, companies can improve WLB among their employees by using innovation and utilizing technology to manage both work and personal responsibilities (Alegre & Pasama, 2018). Additionally, they suggest that work-related motivation, engagement, and creativity could balance the scale of WLB. It is also supported by Pandita and Singhal (2017) that companies can encourage work-life balance by offering flexible timing, leave policies, and compensation, among other benefits.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, ensuring WLB among employees is one of the important strategies to enhance their quality of work while also supporting and balancing their personal lives. It is pertinent that companies advocate for practical implementations of WLB towards their employees to reap long-term benefits for both parties. As WLB is an essential aspect for organizations and individual employees, commitment and effort from both parties are required.

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# NANOCREDIT PROGRAMMES: WHEN MICROCREDIT IS TOO BIG

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Nano Credit  
Sources: AUM Consultancy (2021)

One of the most inventive strategies for poverty reduction is a microcredit programme. Despite the fact that there is a significant body of literature describing the positive and significant effects of microcredit programmes on participants' lives, there are also a number of publications arguing that microcredit programmes have a negative effect on participants' lives. Some of the complaints included how microcredit programmes have caused participants to acquire dependency disorders, as well as how high interest rates and administrative fees have financially burdened them. In reality, critics of microcredit programmes on indebtedness have said that these programmes have led to some participants falling into a debt trap, leading to the problem of loan sharks.

When the above-mentioned concerns with microcredit are not resolved, a new and innovative financial inclusion mechanism should be established as a philanthropic method to address financial burdening, indebtedness, and loan sharks. Providing new and reliable financial inclusion will provide not only financial aid and solutions, but also an easy access facility and a transparent approach without any hidden transaction charges. The concept of providing relatively small loans to the poor, inspired by nanocredit programmes in India, Indonesia, and Thailand, needs to be implemented to support their livelihood and ensure their welfare. This is where a nanocredit facility may truly help. These poor people will be able to readily acquire the finances to

accomplish their short and long-term objectives thanks to this new and reliable financial inclusion. It also has the potential to be a new tool for eliminating poverty and enhancing the poor's economic prospects.

In conjunction to this, there has been evidence in the literature that nanofinance is currently practised in numerous countries such as India, Indonesia, and Thailand. In 2007, a new notion of nanofinance institutions arose in India, the country with the largest number of poor people. Mahanti, the pioneer, founded Amara Biswas, a nanofinance institute in 2007 with the purpose of preventing women from becoming money lenders and aiding them in times of need (Mahanti, 2007). This organisation was founded because a large number of people did not have access to small loans for emergency requirements (such as small company expansion, education, illness, death, and weddings), and some of these people turned to money lenders for help. Indeed, Mahanti claimed that the creation of this nanofinance institution (NFI) was aimed to complement rather than compete with microfinance institutions (MFIs).

Meanwhile, in Jember, Indonesia, the Bank for Poor Families or Bank Keluarga Miskin is in charge of nanofinance (Bank Gakin). According to a study by Musari (2017), Bank Gakin has demonstrated proven success with good responses among disadvantaged people since the banks provide them with simple access to loans. Bank Gakin was created based on the Bangladeshi Grameen Bank's concept. The bank operates in the same way that Indian self-help organisations do (SGHs). In contrast, Thailand's government has provided opportunities for non-bank organisations and the private sector to engage in a government-backed Nano Finance Project. Nanofinance, according to Thailand's government, is an alternative financing mechanism that can be supplied to those who do not have access to traditional financial institutions.

Following the ideas of nanofinance in India, Indonesia, and Thailand, it can be seen that the financial service of nanofinance is emphasised as an opportunity for those in need of money, particularly the poor, to not be dependents, but rather providers to society. The fund assists these people to improve their human and economic sustainability as well as their livelihoods, food security, emergency needs, school fees for their children, and family health care.

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# ERGONOMICS WORKSTATION FOR HOME OFFICE

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## INTRODUCTION

During the COVID-19 outbreak caused by the novel coronavirus, working from home became the new way of working. The pandemic has changed the way we work and transformed the workplace culture with more people working remotely. A survey conducted by human resources solutions agency, Randstad released the result of their H1 2021 Workmonitor survey in Malaysia found that 69% of Malaysians want to continue to work from home until the COVID-19 vaccine has been widely distributed (Randstad, 2021).

## THE PROBLEM

The challenges of working from home is lacking designated home office spaces in which countless individuals had to create improvised work setups in living rooms, kitchens, bedrooms — wherever there is space (Barrios & Pitt, 2021). Many of the workers do not realize that poor ergonomics design in home office spaces can result in serious health problems. These include discomfort in the back and arm issues, neck and shoulders, hands and wrists, migraine, headaches and eye pain.

Most employees working from home use computers and laptops that can cause health problems and musculoskeletal injuries (Seva et al., 2021). The computer users always carping of having musculoskeletal symptoms such as pain in the neck, shoulders, arms, wrists, and lower back region (P. Vinothini et al., 2018). A study by Jian and Poh (2021) found that mental workload and stress levels are the major underlying factors leading to poor ergonomics issues, followed by workstation chair height. Therefore, in designing home office workstation, it is important for the worker to choose an ergonomic chair due to health concerns.

## THE SOLUTION

The Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia has provided guidelines to explain how suitable seating contributes to the safety and health of people at work, for example by helping to prevent back pain. This guideline layouts advices on the design and selection of seating and some examples of seating arrangements for different kinds of work (Department of Occupational Safety and Health, 2002). It can be applied in designing home office workstation. Sitting in an unsuitable chair can result in tiredness and discomfort especially when you seat for long periods of time. Therefore, it is important to have an ergonomic chair that can improve back pain and support the natural 'S' shape of the spine. In a well-designed workstation, the worker should be at a comfortable height and position in relation to the work. All equipment that is frequently used should be kept within easy reach to eliminate repeated twisting or stretching movements (Department of Occupational Safety and Health, 2002).

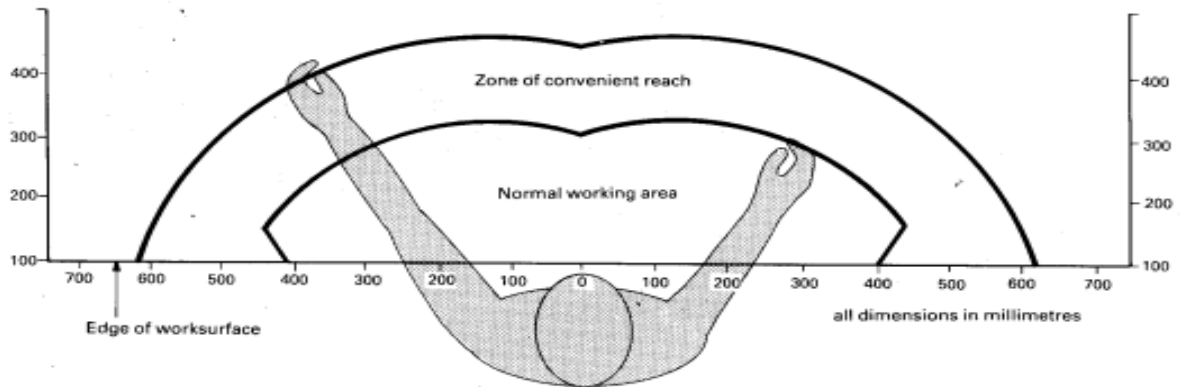


Figure 1: Reach in the horizontal plane. (The distances shown can be reached by 95% of women).

Another important aspect to put extra concern when working from home is overusing the computer. Working from home requires workers to spend a lot of time working on a computer especially to those who work in the IT industry or academicians where a computer is a primary tool in teaching and learning. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) United States Department of Labor provides a Computer Workstations eTool that illustrates simple, inexpensive principles that will help workers create a safe and comfortable computer workstation.



Figure 2: Computer workstations e-Tool.

Source: Occupational Safety and Health Administration (n.d)

These eTool suggest ways to minimize or eliminate identified problems and allow you to create your own "custom-fit" computer workstation as shown in figure 2 (Occupational Safety and Health Administration, n.d.)

1. Top of monitor at or just below eye level
2. Head and neck balanced and in-line with torso
3. Shoulders relaxed

4. Elbows close to body and support
5. Lower back supported
6. Wrists and hands in-line with forearms
7. Adequate room for keyboard and mouse
8. Feet flat on the floor

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is important for us to consider an ergonomics workspace in any situation even if we are working from home. Ergonomics workspace will somehow contribute to the job efficiency and productivity. A healthy workplace will reduce the risk of developing repetitive stress injuries and keeping employee morale high.

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## **RETIREMENT SAVINGS: HOW IT FARES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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Retirement savings has become a top-notch topic of recent years. The issues of concern range from unpreparedness for retirement, poor knowledge of finance and investment products, economic instability, high medical cost and constant fear that there are not enough funds to sustain lives during retirement. In Malaysia, agencies such as the Credit Counselling and Debt Management Agency (AKPK), Employee pension Fund (EPF), banks and not to leave behind, insurance companies have stepped up effort to educate the public the importance of planning for their retirement. But albeit various campaigns and programs being offered in regard to preparation for retirement, majority of the public are still slow in acting on their retirement savings. As such, there are still quite a number of retirees who are not able to support their post retirement living where it has become a trend for retirees returning to work after they have retired from their job.

In laymen perspective, retirement refers to the basic needs of retirees which include a place to live, money to cater for day-to-day expenses, medical bills and emergencies. Retirement may seem to be far away in the future but it needs planning now to make sure that the workers have enough to support themselves after they end their paid employment. There are few studies that highlighted Malaysians still do not think retirement savings as the utmost importance. For example, a study conducted by Credit Counseling and Debt Management Agency (AKPK) (Aznam, 2017) reported that over 50% of Malaysia are not financially ready for retirement. According to the report by AKPK the young adults still do not think about retirement savings. In the study, it is also reported that although people made savings but it is still not enough to support their post retirement lifestyle. To further support this scenario, Shagar (2016) indicated that an HSBC survey revealed most Malaysians have to spend more on medical cost and children education fee and they have less fund to put aside for retirement savings. In addition to this, a survey done by Prudential Relationship Index (PRI) in 2013 also uncovered that almost half of Malaysians are not confident that they will have enough savings for their retirement.

To add more concern to the above, there is a trend of retirees returning to work after retiring their jobs (Hassan et al.,2016). According to Loh (2009), more than half of the workers who retired with EPF funds deplete their EPF savings in just a few years. In point of fact, EPF Chief Executive Officer revealed that 68% of members aged 54 years had savings less than RM50,000 which could last them for five years (Shagar, 2016). An article further indicated that Malaysia will be an aged nation by 2035 where 15% of the population will be over 65 years old. Moreover, the life expectancy of the population has also risen to 72.5 years and 77.4 years for males and females (respectively) raise question whether EPF savings are enough to sustain retirees living maintenance for 15 to 20 years. To make this situation worst, only 48% of the workforce has active EPF accounts, 10% of them have Government pensions and the rest of the workforce is not covered by any pension plans (Ks, 2017). Hence, the workers need to plan early for their retirement. To this effect, there are various campaigns by the public and private agencies to persuade the workers to nest up some of their income for their retirement but to no avail. Majority of the workers still procrastinate in planning for their retirement. They do not save enough to maintain their pre-retirement standard of living and simply being ignorant. Most of them think that the EPF fund and their government pensions will be enough to cover for all their post retirement

expenses. However, this pre-pandemic thinking no longer holds when the far-reaching COVID-19 pandemic have wounded the society with the Malaysian government's virus containment measures coerced financial pressures to the population (Dass, 2021). According to Yong and Sia (2021), the society is hit hardest with the lost income through reduction in pay and job loss. The loss of income contributes to less savings by the society which directly affect their capacity to save for their retirement. Even those with EPF as their retirement nest will have less fund for retirement when EPF announced its relaxed withdrawal policy to relieve its members from financial hardship (Rahim & Trisha, 2021).

In a nutshell, retirement saving has become extremely challenging to Malaysians. The possibility of the COVID-19 pandemic intensifying retirement insecurity is considerable, especially given increased life expectancy and mounting reliance on public resources to support health and an ageing population. Therefore, there is a need to further explore solutions that may assist the population to save for retirement during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

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# LEVERAGING AR-RAHNU MICRO FINANCING FOR FLOOD VICTIMS

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Malaysia was struck by a series of flash floods in December 2021, affecting numerous parts of the nation, including Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Pahang, Kelantan, and Negeri Sembilan. These regions experienced increased rainfall, resulting in pluvial floods that caused significant property damage and fatalities. Despite a warning issued by the Malaysian Meteorological Department (MET Malaysia) on 17 December, 2021, victims and the government took little action to prepare for the inevitable. In addition, the department was accused of failing to issue a warning or update information to Malaysians on Typhoon Rai and Tropical Depression Twenty-Nine to Malaysians ("Malaysia's Meteorological dept denies claims it failed to issue rainfall warnings", 2021). At least 17 people perished as a result of the surge, and more than 60,000 people were evacuated to rescue centres (Farah Syazwani, 2021). Moreover, Malaysia was expected to have sustained damage of more than RM300 million consequent to the destruction of victims' property and infrastructure in all affected states (Nurfarahin, 2021).

The effects of a flood can be severe for victims, depending on how severe the flood was. The immediate implications of floods include loss of lives and damage to property, such as houses and vehicles. The effect of the flood will require a considerable amount of money to restore homes and fix vehicles, as most insurers exclude flood damage under most policies. The insurer provides such coverage as an optional feature with an additional premium charge of approximately 0.2 percent to 0.25 percent to the customer, and most customers do not opt for natural disaster protection in their property and vehicle insurance policies (Mohd Zaky, 2021). Therefore, victims need to use their savings or secure additional financing to fix or restore their property. To reduce the burden on victims, the government, NGOs, and private companies have announced some measures of assistance. The Malaysian Prime Minister has announced RM1,000 in aid to every household affected by the devastating flood. In addition, RM100 million has been allocated for repairing damaged infrastructure, including bridges, roads, and others (Bernama, 2021). However, the assistance may not be adequate to compensate for the loss (Free Malaysia Today, 2022). Therefore, this article provides information for the victims to consider Ar-Rahnu as an immediate access to financing for recovering the damages stemming from the flood.

According to the National Flood Forecasting and Warning System, important family documents and gold jewellery are the most critical items to save first. Victims do, in fact, carry and wear gold jewellery as an ornament on their necks, arms, and fingers. The majority of women obtain gold jewellery through inheritance, dowry, gifts, or purchase (Moors, 2013). Their gold jewellery is a valuable asset that may be liquidated, particularly during difficult economic circumstances. Ar-Rahnu has been extensively recognised and approved by the public, and victims should consider using the service. In addition, a study by Suhana et al. (2016) demonstrates that the Ar-Rahnu scheme was well-received among the rural population.

Ar-Rahnu offers a more affordable and expedient method of obtaining funding by pledging gold jewellery to the Ar-Rahnu operator (Saharan et al., 2021). The micro-financing obtained from



the Ar-Rahnu operator may be used to fix or restore victims' damaged property, thus reducing their burden. Therefore, it is recommended that the operator of the Ar-Rahnu offer a solution regarding the terms and conditions of safekeeping charges for individuals impacted by the devastation caused by the excessive rainfall. This offer can function as a form of relief assistance by Ar-Rahnu operators to alleviate the victims' burden.

In conclusion, floods have wreaked havoc on the victims' livelihoods. Property damage necessitates that victims have a considerable amount of money in order to repair and restore their property. Loss of life, particularly of the household's breadwinner, will also result in financial hardships. Thus, Ar-Rahnu intends to establish a mechanism for victims to obtain immediate financial assistance, and the Ar-Rahnu operator should take the initiative to alleviate the victims' burden.

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# WHAT IS LEAN 4.0?

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## INTRODUCTION

The fundamental concept of waste reduction and efficiency enhancement, which started with Japanese automobile manufacturing, has existed for an extended time. This occurred even before the term lean was introduced by John Krafcik in 1988 (Laaper & Kiefer, 2020). Currently, the manufacturing industry is undergoing a gradual transformation from craft to mass production and from mass to lean production. Lean production is an approach that continues to succeed by reducing industry complexity. However, the complexity has increased as a result of the intricacy of market demands, an unbalanced environment and excessively ambitious customers (Cifone & Staudacher, 2021). In this regard, lean applications are unlikely to be feasible in the industry as the production processes become more challenging in tandem with technological advancements. Therefore, a new research topic, Industry 4.0 (IR4.0) comes into place to deal with the increased production complexity (Mayr et al., 2018). In this sense, the introduction of Lean 4.0 and its integration with IR4.0 could be viewed as a revitalized version of lean (Raji *et al.*, 2021). Though it is believed that Lean 4.0 will contribute to robust production, by far, there is no universally accepted definition of Lean 4.0, and its components have not yet existed (Rybski & Jochem, 2021).

## WHAT IS LEAN 4.0

Lean 4.0 is a combination of lean manufacturing principles and Industry 4.0 tools (Accialini Training and Consultin, 2021). Lean manufacturing is defined as a production concept created by Toyota Motor Corporation with the goal of reducing waste throughout the value chain to reduce lead times, costs and enhance quality (Shah & Ward, 2007). Toyota was one of the successful companies that implemented lean manufacturing to achieve a world-leading position in the automobile industry. Whereas Industry 4.0, colloquially known as the "fourth industrial revolution," refers to the current state of industrial operations (Raji et al., 2021). The terms "Industry 4.0" and "Industrie 4.0" were first used in 2011 at the Hannover Fair, which attracted the attention of numerous governments around the world (The Future Factory, n.d). Industry 4.0 intends to increase efficiency, transparency, and adaptability, resulting in a mass personalization scenario. Furthermore, the goal of IR 4.0 is to improve transparency by digitally connecting every component of the manufacturing process (Mayr et al., 2018). Though Vigneshvaran and Vinodh's (2021) definition of lean is based on consistency and standardization, whereas IR 4.0 is based on interconnection and adaptability.

Currently, the integration of Industry 4.0 and lean, referred to as Lean 4.0, is a sensational academic topic as everyone agrees on its enormous potential (Gillani et al., 2020; Pagliosa et al., 2019). For instance, Lean 4.0 technologies assist smoother production and product improvement by utilizing a waste detection system (Javaid et al., 2021). According to a study by Cifone and Portioli Staudacher (2021), Lean 4.0 improves company performance regardless of the production plan used; however, organizations that employ a repeated strategy see a considerably greater improvement. Indeed, when the majority of the industry embraces Lean 4.0 and digital transformation, the industry becomes more agile, flexible, and low-cost. Ghobakhloo and Fathi

(2020) mention, developing lean-digitized production systems is a realistic business strategy for corporate survival in the age of Industry 4.0. In fact, the corporate environment has evolved dramatically since lean was developed, due to factors such as the Internet, globalization, outsourcing, oversupply, "services," rapid technological change, increasingly complex products, and now, IR 4.0.

Although Lean 4.0 has helped the industry in becoming more efficient, some of the barriers of Lean 4.0 have been identified. Growing competitive pressure, an unclear long-term vision, a lack of managerial support and an insufficient capital fund are the most significant impediments to the integration of lean and IR4.0 (Vigneshvaran & Vinodh, 2021). More specifically, in an ever-changing world where demand and products are unstable, flexibility becomes critical (Raji *et al.*, 2021). Thus, one could argue that the interaction between lean and IR4.0 has not been dignified, even though discussions on this topic continue among scholars and practitioners.

## CONCLUSION

To summarize, lean began as a method to eliminate waste, but has evolved into a foundation for building intelligent systems. While Lean 4.0 is a relatively new concept in several industries, it is apparent that the goal of lean is to increase firm performance by reducing waste and increasing efficiency. Additionally, Lean 4.0 also aids in the reduction of repetitive tasks, tedious work, and other non-value-added activities, especially when it comes to business decisions such as customer service. However, no link has been established between the complex IR 4.0 and the improvement of business performance. Nevertheless, industries that are unable to fully embrace Lean 4.0 will definitely face tremendous pressure in the future. Therefore, it is essential for every company to take gradual steps when deploying new technologies in order to determine what works and what does not in the implementation of Lean 4.0.

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## **21ST CENTURY SKILL – THE NEEDED SKILL NOW**

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### **THEN AND NOW**

At present, the world has changed at a turbo speed. The same thing which was done 20 years ago, has definitely been done differently now. The era of globalization, technological innovation, change in climate and demographic have given a great impact on how things were before.

For example, the introduction of Facebook by Mark Zuckerberg and Dustin Moskovitz in 2004 has changed the way people socialize and whom they socialized with. The socialization network is now wider and the communication is now way faster than before. Besides that, globalization and technological innovation has resulted in the transformation of work nature itself which leads to new demands and opportunities. With latest hit of COVID 19 in year 2020, the world and its daily activities are definitely not the same any longer.

Therefore, to stay competitive in the job market and to remain relevant, the set of skills which a person acquired needs to be upgraded and changed as well. The new set of skills needed are known as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skill (Bruno [n.d]).

### **21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY SKILL – THE ESSENTIAL SKILL NEEDED NOW**

So, what are 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills?

According to Chu et al. (2017), the 21st century skills are a set of abilities that needs to be developed and obtained in order to succeed in the information age. The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are not primarily based on content knowledge, but it is on “deeper learning” skills like critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork. These set of skills are not new skills, nevertheless, these skills are now important in the digital era (Bruno [n.d]).

21<sup>st</sup> century skills are a combination of “soft skills” and “hard skills” where the hard skill components focus on digital literacy, which is now highly in demand due to the information age. Whereas, soft skills are the people skills which include how a person interacts, how a person involves in collaboration and also managing skill. It also includes teamwork, motivation, problem solving, enthusiasm and trust. Technical skills or hard skills alone is no longer enough for workers to compete in this highly competitive global work environment (Dean & East, 2019).

According to Chu et al. (2017) and Stauffer (2020), 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills consist of three categories with twelve abilities. The three main categories are Learning skills, Literacy Skills and Life Skills.

The first category is learning skills which focus on critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication skills. Learning skills are also known as the four C's and these skills assist people on the mental processes which allow for easy adaptation and improvement to the modern work environment.

The second category is the literacy skills which include the information literacy skills, the media literacy and the technology literacy. Having the ability or the literacy skills would allow a person to understand facts and how to separate fact from fiction. Literacy skills are also a crucial capital for someone to develop himself, to live satisfactorily, and to participate actively in society (Shelow, 2016). Strong literacy skills also play a major role in non-verbal communication as communication these days are constantly held through digital device.

Life skills is the final set of skills needed. It is also known as FLIPS which represents flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity and social skills. Life skills look at intangible elements of a person in their everyday life (Chu et al. 2017). And the term 'Life Skills' refers to the skills which a person needs to make the most out of life. These skills allow a person to manage and lead a better quality of life.

Having the skills of the 21st Century is now a need, in order to remain running and relevant in the modern and current workplace. Based on the above, even though there are various scholars and academic who write and research on needed 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, most of the outcome are the same where it focuses on communication, problem solving as well as information literacy skills.

## **SO, WHAT'S NEXT?**

Will these 21 Century Skills remain relevant forever? The skills will definitely change with the demand and changes in the job market. The workplace and nature of jobs will change drastically as all organizations no matter how big or small they are, will always be competitive as they need to be the best in the market or industry. Therefore, the key drivers to these are employees who have skills which match the job market. Are you one of them?

If you are not, let us learn and relearn on what is needed and important now. Let us be flexible, keen to adapt to changes, open to feedback and able to collaborate more. And let us enjoy the workplace and contribute more to the workplace.

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# NEW MARKETING STRATEGY THREATENING THE TRADITIONAL HEALTHCARE BUSINESSES

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## ABSTRACT

Many new marketing strategies have evolved in the recent years due to the movements from traditional purchase behavior to online of customers. At first, customers were forced to adapt to online purchase, but as they get used to it, it became very handy and now online business becomes preferable business over the traditional. As COVID-19 attacked the world, the healthcare business became among the few industries which attracted many new entrants that became competitors to the existing ones. These new entrants came along with their new marketing strategies which overtook the traditional marketing methods. It soon became a threat to the existing businesses. This article discusses the methods the new entrants did to become successful in a short period and the solutions the existing businesses should adapt to if they want to remain significant and preferred in the industry.

**Keywords:** marketing strategy, new entrants, healthcare, online marketing

## INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, many new non-traditional healthcare companies such as Watson and Guardian are entering the healthcare industry by providing products and services that depend on the consumer wants. As this world try to instant-everything, new entrants took the opportunity to reform the healthcare industry. According to Chaffey (2021) most of the traditional healthcare companies still use outdated marketing by sustaining the same strategy which still seem as consumer-oriented without being aware that the new entrants enter the market using marketing technology-based without physical presence and this will coincide the healthcare market in the future.

## ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

McCarthy (2019) stated that new entrants in the market generate ideas by offering more convenient and affordable products or services to the consumer. They focus on producing innovation and improvement in traditional healthcare products and services. According to a PwC survey, a mild-pain patient will choose to invest using home test kit and online consultation with a doctor or health assessment in order to check their level of health instead of taking a long haul and time to meet a doctor for a consultation and assessment. It shows that the entrants in healthcare market achieved superior actualization as what consumer wants.



For new strategies to change the macro environment, companies should first break through smart technologies, such as creating a one-stop platform where everyone can meet medical needs (Poovenraj Kanagaraj, 2020). On an e-platform, everyone can get health consultations from doctors, purchase of medical products and virtual health projects. E-platform built can assist the company to gain more sales as everyone can reach them easily in one place. The most important is the company can manage and track customers' database through pixel tracking. According to Hamphill (2019), Pixel tracking can capture the new potential customer and existing customer when they visit the company's e-platform. The example for pixel tracking system works such as Google pixel, Facebook pixel and Tik Tok pixel. It is costly for built in pixel tracking system but once it is created, marketing strategies and management can be systematic in one place and beneficial for the company's performance (Cookies Pro Knowledgebase, 2021).

According to the article by Medifine (2020), a variety of other business niche jump into the healthcare industry to capture the market. Most of them see healthcare industry as the industry that never diminish in demand for their products and services. New entrants seem to be threat in short time frame to traditional healthcare ecosystem as they are not only from new start-up company but also from trusted and well-established companies. In this pandemic era, everything can be changed whether strategies or products and services served as it would be an attempt to survive or to aim competitive advantage in the healthcare market. Traditional healthcare business should not only focus on existing rivals but also consider any potential of new entrants. As well-known companies like established pharmacies such as Multicare Pharmacy and Health Lane Family Pharmacy, they should use their strengths as a master brand in the healthcare products and services market. According to Chamber (2020), loyal customers brand can result higher profits more than new customers. Companies experienced in the healthcare industry should reshape their companies by positioning their corporate image and brand in the minds of every customer.

In the healthcare industry, the existing or new distribution channels can be used along the manufacturing of healthcare products as the manufacturers can provide services from producing to packing the products. Obviously, this shows that the market is open to any company to supply to the demand of the consumer. For example, referring to an article by Mida Insight (2020), nowadays masks have become a necessity for everyone in the world. Therefore, many companies brand their own masks and sell them over-riding the medical-related companies monopolizing the mask supplies. In order to achieve customer satisfaction, company should produce a product that solved consumer problem. When new entrants enter the market through innovative products in the healthcare sector, traditional companies can use these ideas to build and market their new products. Between the products and services produced by well-known companies and new companies in the market, customers will choose a trustworthy company rather than a new company (Brino, 2014). Therefore, if those established companies innovate their products and sell at a reasonable price, the customer will prefer over the new entrants.

In conclusion, in order to maintain the stability of traditional healthcare companies, companies should adopt and implement reliable and futuristic marketing strategies. If traditional healthcare companies want to maintain long-term business in the healthcare field, they should be aware of global changes in order to adapt to the new trends brought about by new entrants (Hooley et. al.,2017). By doing so, the traditional companies would be able to retain their businesses as well as upgrade to be current and remain relevant in the industry.

**Issue 1: Outdated products and services:**

New strategies to changing macro-environment  
Breakthrough intelligent technology

**Issue 2: Variety of others business niches enter the market:**

Positioning  
Master brand  
Developing product line

**Issue 3: The existing or new distribution channels are open to use:**

Innovation  
New products

Diagram 1: Problems and Solutions

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# **COVID-19: DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN ASEAN MOTOR VEHICLE SALES?**

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The COVID-19 virus first appeared in China's Wuhan province in December 2019. The virus spread throughout the world from the Wuhan region. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the virus a pandemic in March 2020, citing the virus's rapid global infection rate and high mortality rate (Ceylan et al.,2020). The current tally of cumulative cases around the world is 273,900,334 as of December 21, 2021, with recorded total deaths of 5,351,812. With over 50 million cases including over 800,000 deaths, the United States continues to lead all countries in terms of cumulative number of COVID-19 cases. Malaysia, too, recorded a large number of cases, reaching over 2.7 million, with more than 24,000 deaths (World Health Organization, 2021). For the past two years, we have been living in the COVID-19 era. This virus is becoming increasingly virulent and lethal. Not only that it had a significant impact on human health and life, but it also has a substantial impact on most, if not all industries, the economy of a country, and the world in general. Most governments around the world have closed their borders and implemented a lockdown or movement control order to prevent the virus from spreading further.

All sectors of the economy were closed during the movement control order, with the exception of services and industries determined as essential which were allowed to function under rigorous operational controls. To stay afloat, some businesses resorted to downsizing operations, layoffs, or, in the worst-case scenario, company shutdown. Self-employed people such as small hawkers and petty traders lost their jobs and income since they were not allowed to open a shop or booth. Consequently, the number of unemployed individuals increases dramatically. As shown in Table 1, all ASEAN countries observed an increase in the unemployment rate in 2020, with Brunei, Singapore, and Malaysia recording the highest rates at 8.37 percent, 5.19 percent, and 4.11 percent, respectively. One's household's income would be impacted by the unemployment. People's purchasing power plummeting, and the lifestyles of those who are affected are severely changing. The question then arises, will the series of events resulting in income loss and an increase in the unemployment rate have an effect on vehicle sales?

Table 1

The unemployment rate in ASEAN countries

Country / Year	2018 (%)	2019 (%)	Country / Year	2018 (%)	2019 (%)
Brunei	6.92	8.37	Philippines	2.24	3.36
Indonesia	3.62	4.11	Singapore	3.10	5.19
Malaysia	3.31	4.55	Thailand	0.72	1.02
Myanmar	0.50	1.79	Vietnam	2.04	2.27

Source: The Global Economy (2021)

Southeast Asia is one of the regions where the automotive sector is thriving, producing passenger and commercial vehicles, as well as motorcycles and scooters. The Southeast Asia market is dominated by Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The ASEAN economic bloc, which encompasses this region, is the world's fifth-largest automotive market cluster (Madhok, 2020). The automotive industry is highly responsive to the economic cycle, and it is anticipated that this industry will be the most hit by the COVID-19's implication as the related industries have come to a halt and people are spending money on necessities and retaining whatever they have for the time being until the situation gets better.

Table 2

Passenger and commercial motor vehicles sales data for ASEAN countries

Country / Year	2018	2019	Nov'2020	Oct'2021
Brunei	11,226	11,909	12,505	-
Indonesia	1,151,291	1,030,126	532,027	703,089
Malaysia	598,598	604,281	522,573	382,379
Myanmar	17,524	21,916	17,707	7,874
Philippines	357,410	369,941	223,793	214,186
Singapore	95,243	90,429	56,423	51,069
Thailand	1,041,739	1,007,552	792,146	596,393
Vietnam	288,683	322,322	296,634	218,734
Total	3,561,714	3,458,476	2,453,808	2,173,724

Source: ASEAN Automotive Federation (2021)

Only towards the end of 2019 was COVID-19 discovered. As a result, the impact of COVID-19 on motor vehicle sales will only be visible from 2020 onwards. The sales data for 2018 and

2019 comes from a non-COVID-19 timeframe. So, according to data obtained from the ASEAN Automotive Federation as shown in table 2.0, sales in 2019 were down modestly due to lower demand in Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia. The data obtained for 2020 and 2021 is not a full year's worth of data respectively, but it provides an excellent picture of the sales situation in the automotive industry in this region over the past couple of years for the passenger and commercial vehicles segment. In 2020, the total number of units sold in all nations had decreased by 29% to 2,453,808 units and it went further down to 2,173,724 units in October 2021. When comparing sales volumes in 2020 and 2021 to pre COVID-19 years, practically every country has seen a decrease in sales volume. Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam were struck the hardest. Indonesia is the only country that has improved in 2021, however, the figure is still significantly lower than in 2019. For our country, Malaysia, COVID-19 really slammed the demand for new motor vehicles. As per the Malaysia Automotive Association (MAA), vehicle dealers lost RM14 billion in June and July 2021 due to a reduction in domestic market sales. Likewise, the losses incurred in the course of decreased export earnings and local sales of spare parts ("MAA: Car dealers posted RM14b losses", 2021)

COVID-19 does give a significant difference in the sales of motor vehicles for ASEAN countries. But with the re-opening of all economic sectors and improvement in household income, it is expected that the industry will find its momentum to be back on track with the sales. However, we were recently hit by a natural disaster which observed residential and other properties getting flooded, motor vehicles particularly passenger cars getting submerged, as the big flood hit central Malaysia region and a few states in the east coast. This major event would definitely influence the sales of motor vehicles. What will the state of Malaysian automotive sales be in the year 2022? Will it begin to improve again or continue to fall? A matter to consider.

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# **FACTORS INFLUENCING TOURIST READINESS TO TRAVEL DURING PANDEMIC**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Some of the countries in this world have been affected by an unprecedented event which is the COVID-19 pandemic. Regional quarantine, lockdown, travel ban, and border closure policies have been issued by most countries to break the chain of the spread of this virus. These restrictions are considered to be most effective in containing the spread between people but indirectly it is strongly affecting the tourism sector (Gosling et al., 2020; Wen et al., 2020). Even though vaccination programs have been implemented in various countries, there is still uncertainty on the effectiveness of the vaccines and also when the pandemic will end (Esterman, 2020), and this may influence tourist readiness to travel during this pandemic.

## **FACTORS INFLUENCING TOURIST READINESS TO TRAVEL DURING PANDEMIC**

Tourist readiness to travel during a pandemic may be influenced by several factors. One of the factors that tourists may consider when deciding to travel is perceived risk (Rittichainuwat et al., 2018). In the tourism context, perceived risk is associated with a tourist's perception of uncertainty and potential outcomes resulting from the consumption of travel and tourism offerings (Liu et al., 2016). This factor becomes one of the influential elements that may affect individuals' decision making, as potential tourists will avoid risky situations and to visit destinations that in their perceptions are safe. Rittichainuwat et al. (2018) found that tourists make travel decisions based on their own perception rather than the actual situation. In the context of the pandemic, when someone believes that COVID-19 is dangerous, they will maintain physical distance and avoid traveling. The attitude to stay at home and protect oneself is influenced by the perception of the negative effects or the loss that could be caused by traveling (Rahmafritria et al., 2021)

Consciousness in hygiene and safety also influences tourist readiness to travel. Tourists relate this factor with the potential effects to their health and well-being when they engage in travel and tourism activities (Olya & Al-Ansi, 2018). Safety and hygienic needs in public transports, hotels and also recreational sites are among the highest concerns for potential tourists (Sigala, 2020). Wen et al. (2020) also indicated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, potential tourists are generally likely to find destinations based on safety and hygiene, cleanliness, established infrastructure, and high-quality medical facilities.

Furthermore, the trustworthiness of information is another factor that influences the readiness of tourists to travel. The decision to travel is affected by the level of trust that potential tourists have on the information they receive prior to their travel; the higher the level of risk, the more information tourists will find in order to support their decision to travel to a selected destination. Thus, the credibility of the information source is very critical to the risk information processing of tourists especially during the pandemic (Aliperti & Cruz, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

To summarize, based on the factors that have been mentioned above it can be said that potential tourists are still conscious of the spread of COVID-19 and this may influence their readiness to travel during this pandemic. The self-awareness and reinforcement of new social norms among the public have made potential tourists be more careful in selecting their travel destination during the pandemic.

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# **THE USE OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT IN ADVERTISING PROMOTION**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Endorsement is a type of advertising in which well-known personalities or celebrities with a high level of public recognition, trust, respect, or awareness are used. In advertising promotional efforts, celebrities such as actors, actresses, comedians, singers, athletes, and many others are employed to advertise products or services. This is due to the celebrity's own fan base, who will purchase the things they endorse. Furthermore, when it comes to aiding a brand or a product during marketing efforts, each celebrity endorser has unique traits and benefits. As a result, the more famous or well-known celebrity endorser is, the more expensive it is to use their image to express a product's or brand message's attractiveness. Popularity is a term coined to describe how well-known people can affect customers' attitudes, perceptions, and intentions. The more well-known the endorser, the greater the influence he may have on the consumer's view of the brand and buying intent (Nguyen, 2021).

The history of celebrity endorsement may be traced all the way back to Queen Victoria, who was a fan of Cadbury's chocolate. Between 1875 and 1900, trade cards incorporated images of well-known people to raise brand recognition. Various showbiz figures allied themselves with businesses such as tobacco, beauty, fashion, electrical equipment, and alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages throughout the early twentieth century (Melewar et al., 2021). Celebrity endorsement research began in the mid-1990s, as Michael Jordan's prowess as a spokesperson became increasingly prominent and appreciated as an investment option in the business sector. During this time, the emphasis shifted to aligning the endorser with the brand (Moore et al., 2021). Since then, advertisers have been willing to spend thousands or even millions of dollars to employ a well-known and respected celebrity as a brand endorser in order to influence buyers' purchasing behaviour toward the endorsed items. According to Pokharel and Pradhan (2018), 61.3 percent of people agree that celebrity endorsers impact their purchasing decisions. According to Ekeland and Borenstein (2020), four out of five consumers would trust an endorsement over relatives and family members. This demonstrates how powerful celebrity endorsement can be in advertising. Thus, this paper will further discuss on the use of celebrity endorsement in advertising promotion.

## **CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT**

The employment of a celebrity in product or service promotion can draw consumers' attention and raise their intents to buy the product, as well as more effectively present the product to consumers. For example, in a sports advertisement, a celebrity endorser with a desirable physical appearance might improve the appeal of the advertisement to the target demographic (Frank & Mitsumoto, 2021). A brand can be attracted to a celebrity endorser who is attractive in terms of personality or accomplishments. Furthermore, by successfully drawing buyers to a



specific brand, it will be possible to increase brand recall and familiarity. When buyers are presented with a product category, they will be able to recall the brand from their memories. This is more easily accomplished with the use of an endorsement as a messaging appeal. Customers will remember the brand represented by the endorser more easily, and the brand will be mentioned first, compared to brands that do not use attractive endorsers (Paramhita & Purnamie, 2019). Therefore, using endorsers in advertising can effectively draw consumers' attention to the brand's existence. It can also help people remember and recognise the brand.

In addition, using celebrity endorsers as messaging appeal can also help to establish consumers' trust in the brand. This situation can be achieved by enlisting the help of celebrities who specialise or have knowledge in specific fields as endorsers. The competency level, knowledge, and experience that endorsers possess is referred to as expertise. Consumers believe that the knowledge of endorsers is the foundation of their purchasing intentions for a brand, rather than the appeal and trust in that brand (Andita et al., 2021). For their product and brand image, a firm should choose an endorser who is an expert in the relevant industry rather than the one who has a large follower on social media (Lee et al., 2021). Besides, using experts as product advocates can help build confidence among brand consumers. When a product is utilised and marketed by someone who is knowledgeable in the industry, consumers are more likely to believe in its usefulness. A heart health expert, for example, would utilise and recommend a heart health product. Consumers will be able to trust the product's brand because of his considerable experience and understanding in the sector. When opposed to an endorser who doesn't have enough knowledge in the subject, an expert endorser is more trusted and honest (Schouten et al., 2020). The employment of endorsers in message appeal, particularly the involvement of experts as brand endorsers or ambassadors, can help to increase customers' trust in a brand.

Furthermore, a celebrity endorser who shares the same traits as the target population may help the advertisement and brand gain popularity. Celebrity endorsers are used by companies because it is more enticing to show celebrities advocating items compared to ordinary people endorsing products. Because celebrities are already appealing and attractive people, it may provide a more real personal experience that consumers can trust, as well as a greater rise in product credibility. Meanwhile, the aspects of attractiveness include celebrity attraction, familiarity, and likeness to the brand consumer. A bond of equality exists between the message's recipient and its sender, which is characterised as celebrity similarity. As a result, a customer may feel a connection to the endorser and assume they have something in common. When people believe and learn that they and the endorser share similar features, interests, and a way of life, they are more easily influenced (Komalasari & Liliani, 2021). Because of the campaign's endorser is a celebrity, the campaign's credibility has been improved, resulting in a more trustworthy advertising message. Thus, celebrities may be useful as message sources for certain sorts of items because they have qualities that the public associates with reliability.

Moreover, celebrity endorsements are used to draw attention to a product because endorsers can transfer their traits to it, and if target consumers enjoy or aspire to have the endorser attributes, they will buy the product or service. Celebrity endorsers are another aspect that influences purchasing decisions, and their utilisation will have an impact on the brand's image and can be leveraged to boost sales (Lestari & Wahyono, 2021). In an attempt to build a consistent image between the company and the consumer, advertisers have depended on celebrity endorsement as one of their communication techniques. Celebrity endorsers have been demonstrated to elicit higher purchase intentions and more positive responses to advertising. When these characteristics are correctly and efficiently communicated, it is believed that they can develop and contribute to brand and image awareness, as well as other desirable marketing results like higher sales and revenues (Nzuva, 2021). Consumers also stated that they consistently follow the lifestyle and product recommendations of their favourite celebrities, either by purchasing or recommending the product to others. Celebrities frequently advocate products in genuine, real-life situations, which may increase trustworthiness perceptions. As a result, when celebrities support a product, people are more likely to assume that the endorser genuinely believes in the benefits of the product.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, celebrity endorsements have a significant impact on people. When we see someone we respect, particularly celebrities endorsing a product, we are more inclined to buy the product or service offered. Since we are social beings, endorsements will always appeal to us. It can be seen in today's society that celebrity endorsement for advertising has become a worldwide phenomenon. It is increasingly being employed in all advertising channels, including social media platforms, televisions, billboards, and newspapers, to ensure that consumers are always pulled to the transmission of messages with a strong appeal. When properly combined in terms of merging the sources of the businesses with both quality and quantity, celebrity endorsement can justify the high expense of advertising while resulting in amazing customer purchasing.

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# **FACTORS ROCKETING IN THE PRICE OF ESSENTIAL GOODS IN MALAYSIA**

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The current skyrocketing prices on essential goods such as vegetables, poultry, eggs, and other food items when Malaysia has yet to fully recover from the impacts of COVID-19 is such a worrying issue to consumers. Based on a report by the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP), the prices of certain vegetables have steeply increased by as much as 200%. These include vegetables such as cauliflower (RM7 to RM16 per kg, choy sum (RM3 to RM9), broccoli (RM8 to RM20), and sawi (RM5 to RM8). Here are a few factors that contribute to the increase in the prices of essential goods in Malaysia.

## **CONTRIBUTING FACTORS**

First is the shortage in the supply of goods especially when the country has to face a challenge at the end of each year due to the northeast monsoon that restricts the movement of fishermen. Furthermore, the significant weather changes also affect crop growth and supply. The heavy rain is not suitable for vegetables to grow as it would affect the production and its quality. The shortage in supply is also due to a lack of manpower in planting and harvesting. Unfortunately, our local farmers rely heavily on foreign workers but many of them had returned to their home countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the sharp spike in the cost of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides also led to the increase in current vegetable prices (Kana, 2021). In addition, there are also certain stakeholders or players exploiting the supply chain and taking advantage to further increase in price to enjoy higher profit margins (Husin & Wie, 2021).

The second factor is the increase in the cost of production. Most local firms or businesses experienced an increase in operating costs to comply with standard operating procedures (SOP) to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 among their customers and workers. The businesses have to bear additional costs such as the cost of face masks, sanitization, as well as COVID-19 screening tests. As a result, producers tend to reduce the aggregate supply, thereby causing an increase in the price of goods (Nabila et.al., 2022). Additionally, the increase in demand for basic goods also occurred due to the easing of interstate activities resulted in an increase in tourism activities, people returned to dining out, and the fully booked hotels. This results in the tourist destinations being unable to match the demand due to insufficient supply.

Finally, instability of global oil prices and high inflation are also other contributors to price hikes. When there is a shortage in local supplies and the country's high reliance on imported products, there is a high tendency of local sellers to increase their prices. The example was evident to explain the direct relationship between oil price and inflation that occurred in the 1970s, when the price rises from USD3 before the 1973 oil crisis to USD40 during the 1979 oil crisis, and that resulted from the cost of production that rise substantially (Choo et.al., 2017).

## CONCLUSION

The issues of price rocketing such as crisis economy and income inequality can give effects on a country if the government does not immediately play a role to control it. For a long-term solution in an effort to overcome the issue of shortening the supply of goods, the government should come up with a food security action plan that promotes urban agriculture and imports from within Asia. Besides, enforcement should be carried out against the middlemen to find out the root of the immediate increase in prices of goods. Enforcement agencies need to constantly monitor the price of goods in the wet markets while the profits earned by the sellers and farmers are not as high in order to avoid exploitation by the middlemen. To address the issue, strict enforcement by the government needs to be imposed on every stage of the supply chain, from the manufacturer to the final trader who is inclined towards the wellbeing of society.

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# THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON POVERTY IN MALAYSIA

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## INTRODUCTION

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has greatly impacted most of the nation including Malaysia. The recent data released by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) has projected that the pandemic has reversed the decreasing trend on absolute poverty, causing it to increase to 8.4 percent (639,800 households) in 2020 compared to 5.6 percent (405,400 households) in 2019. Taking into account the data from household income to present the incidence of poverty, DOSM reported that the main sources of income of a household in 2020, which come from paid employment and self-employment recorded a decrease of negative 16.1 percent and negative 9.7 percent respectively. Meanwhile, the mean monthly household gross income decreased by negative 10.3 percent to a record RM7,089 as compared to RM7,901 in 2019. The reduction trend was contributed by households or individuals who experienced job losses, reduced working hours, and an increased in skill-related underemployment (Mahidin, 2021).

## THE ISSUES FROM COVID-19

The spreading of pandemics also affected the distribution of income among people. The majority of households experienced with the decline in income make them shift from higher-income to lower-income group. In 2020, 20 percent of households from the M40 group with income between RM4,850 and RM10,959 has moved to the B40 group. Without being left behind, the household in the T20 group was also affected when 12.8 percent has shifted to the M40 group. However, the percentage decrease in income for B40 and M40 households was larger than the T20 household group. An estimated 64.77 percent of B40 households rely on a single source of income, making them vulnerable to shocks and stress risks that could impact their livelihoods (Ghazali, 2017). Furthermore, about 60 percent of the labor market in Malaysia is dominated by workers from B40 households which consist of low and medium-skill jobs. This puts them at risk of losing their jobs and sources of income if no immediate action is taken by the government to this group (Thinagar et.al., 2021).

## THE GOVERNMENT AID FOR PANDEMIC

Currently, the Malaysian government has been playing its role to mitigate the economic impact caused by the pandemic through launching eight stimulus packages worth RM530 billion with the latest package, Pemulihan is worth RM150 billion to address the crisis since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March 2021. The stimulus packages did not seem only to tackle issues of poverty and inequality among the poor but to ensure inclusive protection of citizens from economic shocks that are experienced by various income groups. Due to the closure of many economic sectors during MCO, stimulus packages such as PRIHATIN that are provided by the government have been targeted for B40 groups so they can spur economic growth and stimulate the economy through household consumption activities (Thinagar et.al., 2021).

## CONCLUSION

As to overcome the impact of the pandemic, the government used the tool of fiscal policy by providing such stimulus packages which aimed to reduce the burden on those affected. Aligned with the government expenditure-led economic growth hypothesis and based on the Keynesian view, the government expenditure on major infrastructure and social programs stimulates aggregate demand, thereby elevating economic growth (Arvin et al, 2021). As another solution,

the government also used financial policy to issue a moratorium for housing loans and car loans which can be deferred for six months. These government's initiatives enable borrowers to have better financial plans and reduce their struggle in this liquidity crisis. Meanwhile, Ismail et al., (2019) also proposed a strategy in monetary policy that can be enforced by the government to increase the saving and income to those affected especially the B40 group in the future. The government can provide an emergency saving plan by providing low monthly payments as an initiative to encourage more participants for B40 groups. During an economic downturn or when the country faces a financial crisis, those affected can withdraw their money from this emergency saving plan. The economic stimulus package that has been implemented by the government will then create a temporary boost in economic activities.

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