

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

MICROSOURCING AND SWOT ANALYSIS: A CASE OF COVID-19

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Siti Sarah Maidin, Liza Azizun Rahman. Microsourcing and SWOT Analysis: A Case of COVID-19-- Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology 17(7), 8650-8658. ISSN 1567-214x.

keywords: SWOT, Microsourcing, COVID, Impact, Opportunities, Strength, Weakness, Threat.

ABSTRACT:

This paper will explore the role of microsourcing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper will start with some explanation on COVID-19 in Malaysia and then continues with the elaboration on microsourcing. Later, the paper proceeds with a description of SWOT analysis and its suitability in analyzing the microsourcing opportunities during this pandemic. Finally, this paper derives to the conclusion by making a recommendation of a private-public partnership to make microsourcing successfully implemented in Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a world pandemic that impacted most of the countries worldwide. A recent study indicates that COVID-19 pandemic has made a significant impact on the world economy globally.

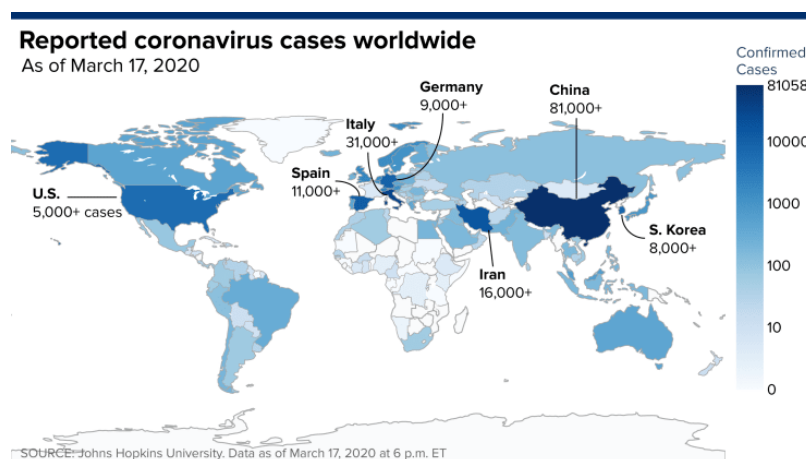


Figure 1 Reported Coronavirus Cases Worldwide [3]

The tourism industry, airlines, retail shops, and the hospitality industry are among the greatly impacted industries due to the outbreak. Following the outbreak of COVID-19 in Hubei, China, the virus was reported to have penetrated Malaysia in January 2020 when visitors (known as imported cases) from China entered via Singapore on 25 January [1] [2]. Fig.1. Illustrates the reported coronavirus cases worldwide. Fig. 2. Shows the global economic outlook in 2020 before COVID-19 and during COVID-19.

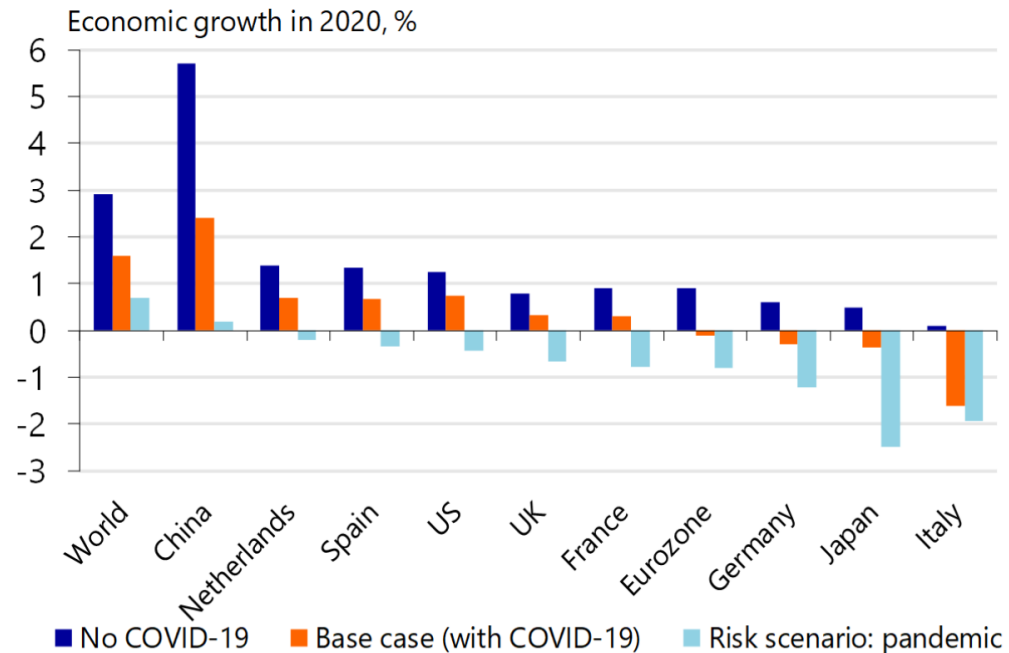


Figure 2 Global Economy Outlook in 2020 [4]

Later, a bigger wave impacted Malaysia through the transmission, which caused the number of cases to keep on increasing. The Government of Malaysia has followed the protocols developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and has urged the professionals to tackle and prevent the widespread. The transmission of COVID-19 is through droplets from person to person. As a method to eliminate the outbreak trajectory, a partial lockdown strategy known as Movement Control Order (MCO) was immediately initiated into the entire state in Malaysia.

The lockdown involves a series of preventive measures and mechanism as an effort to curb further the outbreak including closing down all businesses, schools, university, government and private offices. Permissions were granted by the government for some sectors to operate including essential services. All the travelling were suspended and the borders are closed and all the restricted movement between states also were implemented. The first phase of MCO was started on 18 March 2020 and later it was extended up to several phases until 9 June 2020. Fig.3. illustrates the key timeline, statistics and key regulations in managing COVID-19 in Malaysia.



Figure 3 Key Timeline, Statistics and Key Regulations in Managing COVID-19 [9]

Fig. 4. shows the statistics of the workers have already impacted by MCO measures. This situation has given a significant impact on the economy and society. Therefore, this paper will look into the potential of microsourcing in uplifting the social-economy of the people affected by COVID-19 impact through the approach of SWOT analysis. Performing SWOT analysis as an evaluation tool is crucial to identify and restructure the business strategy.

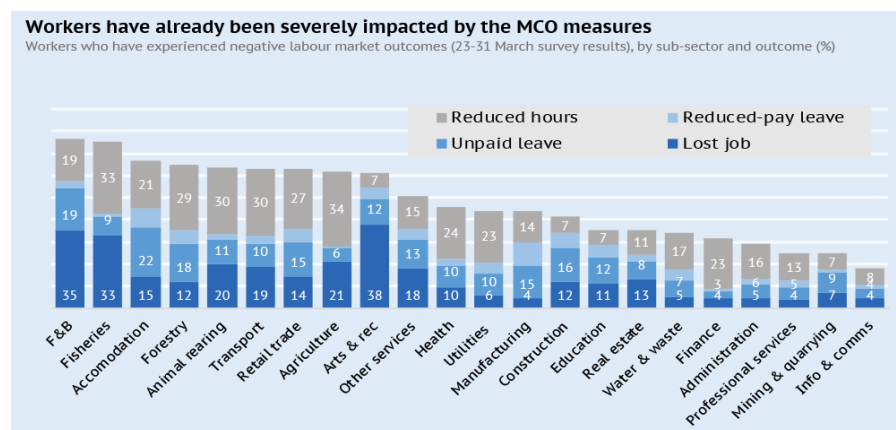


Figure 4 Statistics of the Workers Have Already Impacted by MCO Measures [6]

LITERATURE REVIEW

Microsourcing is a subset of outsourcing, whereby it offers plenty of benefits. It is a short-term job within a month's duration and runs virtually via Information Technology enabled platform. Fig.5. demonstrate the flow of the microsourcing process.

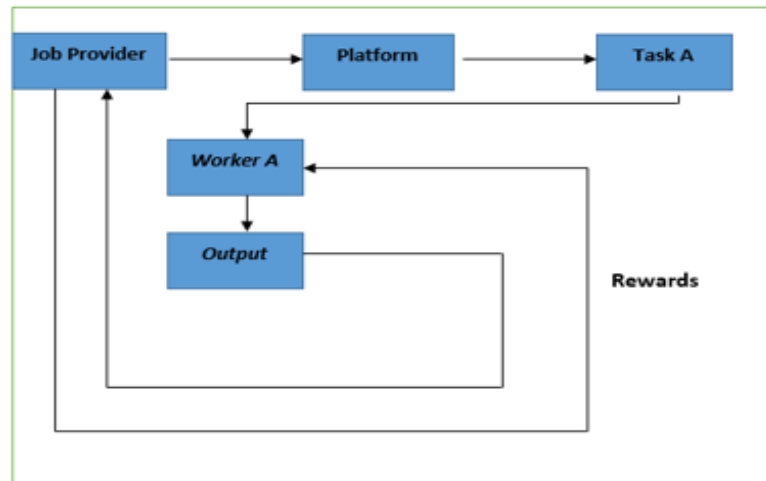


Figure 5 Microsourcing Process

There are several primary actors involved in microsourcing, including job providers (task owner), platform (IT-enabled services/platform), and workers (public/society). The job provider will post job opportunities (task assignment) through the platform, and the interested workers will accept the offer. Once the task is completed, the worker will submit the output through the system, and the job provider will evaluate it accordingly. Rewards in the term of monetary, gifts, or token will be given to the workers [5]. COVID-19 pandemic has transitioned the world into digital business by emphasizing e-commerce. Fig.6. shows the digital activities among the people during MCO.

PEOPLE'S LIVES ARE DIGITALIZED UNDER MCO, WITH SOCIAL MEDIA, E-COMMERCE AND STREAMING

Would you say are doing each of the following more frequently or less frequently compared to one month ago?

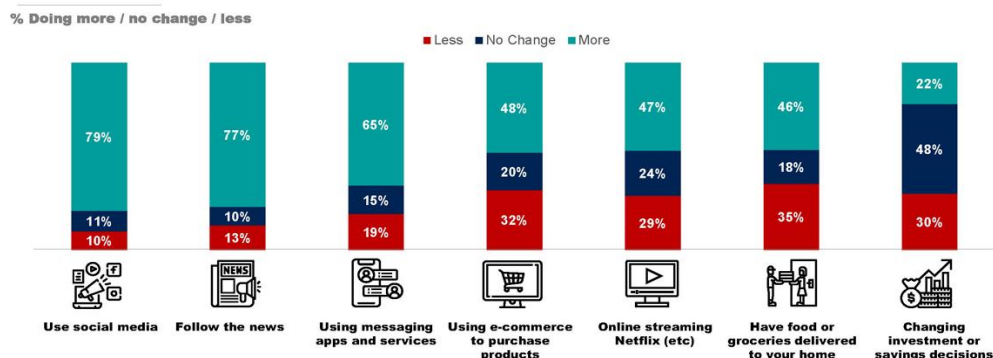


Figure 6 Digital Activities among the People during MCO. [8]

Microsourcing has been identified as one of the channels to assist the people impacted by COVID-919 to earn income through the usage of IT. For this situation to be successful, the job provider and workers need to collaborate

and exchange information and ideas. Therefore, a SWOT analysis will be examined in this paper to explore further the role of microsourcing during this COVID-19 pandemic. Fig.7. illustrates the SWOT component.

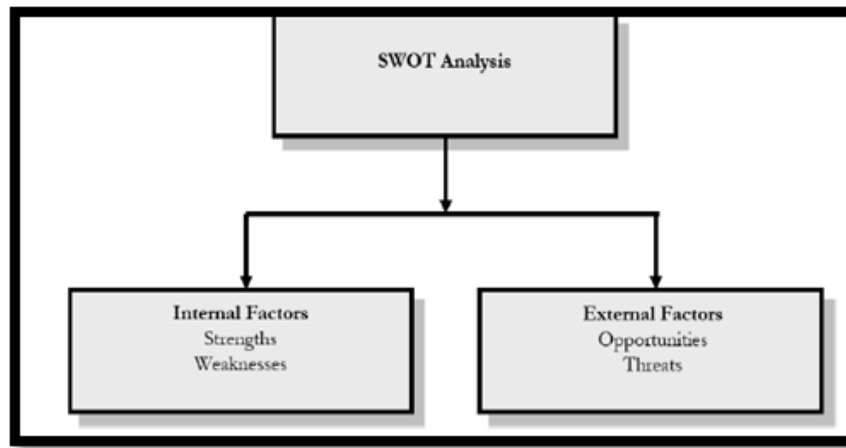


Figure 7 SWOT Analysis Component [7]

SWOT analysis comprises four main components which are namely: Strength (S), Weakness (W), Opportunity (O), and Threat (T). SWOT analysis is among the powerful weapon to evaluate a business operation to achieve a competitive advantage. This statement also in-line with [7] opinion claiming that SWOT analysis is practically used to access the organization's resources capabilities and limitations, its business prospects, and potential challenges to its future. Strength and Weakness components are accessed internally, while Opportunity and Threat are examined externally.

Strength is related to the capability of the organization in performing their business operation activities. It includes available resources, which are people, skills and competencies, equipment and machinery, and people's knowledge. Weakness is related to the challenges in achieving the objectives. Example of weakness includes resources constraint, lack of strategies to compete with rival and the loopholes, which makes it difficult in achieving the aim. Opportunity is related to exploring and recognizing the potential of future needs services and products in the market. By looking into opportunity, the stakeholders can perform prediction analysis of their revenue growth and sustainability for their existing products and services and forecasting the market entrance of their new product and services. The threat is crucial in examining the potential of any external negative impact on the organization. For example, new competitors to the market, supply chain problem, and evolving new tools and technology.

By reviewing all the stated elements in SWOT analysis, the paper will further explore each component in each element of the analysis and thus will be explaining how to utilize it into a microsourcing context. Fig.8. Illustrates a typical SWOT analysis component that comprises four quadrants, which are Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat.

SWOT Analysis	
Strength	Weakness

1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
Opportunity	Threat
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Figure 8 SWOT Analysis Component

Furthermore, this paper will explore the mapping of SWOT in addressing microsourcing issues during pandemic COVID-19.

Strength

During MCO, most of the time is spent are home, and most of the activities are performed online. This is a good signal that job providers and workers can collaborate via a microsourcing platform. The job provider can post a simple task requesting the workers to perform some “data collection for marketing purpose” task. The workers may accept the job by agreeing to the stated payment and terms and conditions. The workers will start distributing the survey to the public. Once completed, the workers will compile all the data and send it back to the job providers. Payment will be released once the job provider receives the completed task. This is a simple example of how microsourcing could help people in generating income during the pandemic.

Weakness

Among the weakness is the lack of community awareness on microsourcing activities, lack of trust, and quality issues from the outcome produced by the workers. The community needs to be empowered through digital literacy. The awareness to be made through society on how microsourcing will help the people in generating income. Trust factor needs to be taken into account to ensure the community feels safe to perform its task online securely. The job providers and workers need to communicate and agreed on the quality of the outcome and how it will be evaluated.

Opportunity

During MCO, the non-essential business was closed down as one of the precautions measures to ensure the public did not gather in a crowded place. Most of the people are doing their office work online while the school children and university students are learning online. It can be denoted that most of the activities are performed online. Therefore, the people shifted their online activities and shopping habit into an online platform via e-commerce. The spending expenditure increases day-by-day. The business owners mostly changed their business model to fit into online business.

Examples of product consumer shops online are foods and beverages, school and office supplies, electronic appliances such as notebook and tablet, a health

supplement, and household items. Delay of shipment due to shipment problem and other reasons has given opportunities for the people to do a part-time job as a runner. The customers need the items urgently and on time without having to wait for courier services and to avoid any delay in receiving the items. Therefore, it offers an ocean of opportunities for job providers and workers as well. Job providers can advertise tasks on the platform. Examples of tasks during COVID-19 are doing a “runner” job. The workers will log in and accept the job. Once the job completed, the system will remark as “done,” and the “runner” payment will be credited into their account.

Threat

One of the identified threat is government policies. An example of the policies implemented during MCO is no inter-state traveling is allowed. In the case of a “runner” job, they just can take the job within their demographic only.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the explanation above, it is evident that SWOT analysis is essential in identifying factors that can contribute to uplifting the community household income, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fig.9. illustrates in summary how a SWOT analysis can help to identify the required element to ensure the successful implementation of microsourcing, especially during this crucial time.

SWOT Analysis: Microsourcing during COVID-19	
<i>Strength</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More time doing online activities at home • Most of the 	<i>Weakness</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires knowledge on using technology (application/system) • Requires an active Internet connection • Requires awareness on microsourcing
<i>Opportunity</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to the Internet • More flexibility to earn extra income at home 	<i>Threat</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies/Regulations

Figure 9 SWOT Analysis during Pandemic: A Summary

Based on Fig.9., it can be concluded that all the elements in SWOT analysis are interrelated with each other. Malaysian Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) is the leading agency that facilitates microsourcing in Malaysia. Fig. 10. Illustrates the main page of microsourcing, which is accessible through <http://erezeki.my>. The job providers need to be registered with MDEC and can post tasks through the platform.

The workers can log in to the system and select their task preference, either it is a digital micro task, digital works, or digitally-enabled task. Example of the digital micro task includes data entry, image review, and removing duplicated data. Digital works are web development, software testing, and graphic design.

The digitally-enabled task covers conducting surveys, plumbers, and technicians.

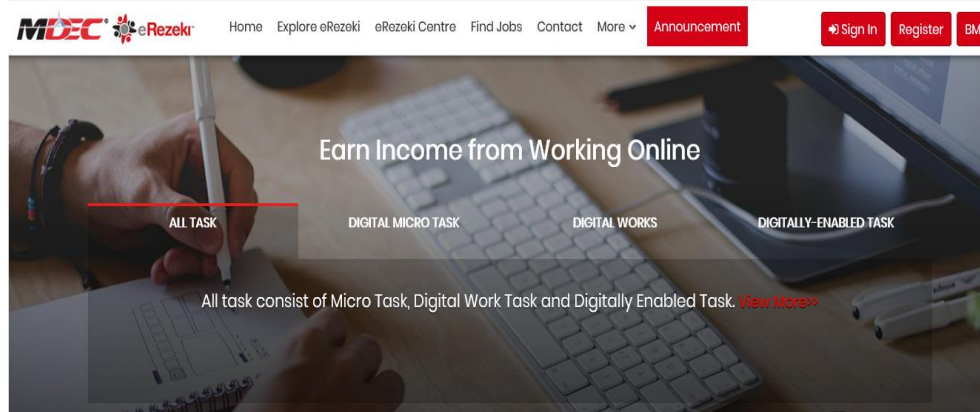


Figure 10 MDEC Microsourcing Page [10]

Pembangunan Oleh Komuniti Untuk Komuniti (POKOK) is another platform that was developed to assist the “Facilitating Societal Upliftment” and “Microsourcing to Generate Income for the B40” under Digital Malaysia which aims to uplift the B40 group income [11]. The unique part of this platform is the engagement of the Non-Government Organization (NGO). POKOK is a collaboration program with the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, and the Pahang State Government. Some of the successfully implemented projects by POKOK with the collaboration from both NGO, Private and Public sectors are reading and spoken English program, Cancer Free Family Project, Child Safety Campaign, Connecting communities through cycling, Microsourcing: Temporary work activity and domestic home management services [11]. The goal of POKOK is to assist the non-IT literate B40 community in learning how to use the IT platform and thus generating income. It can be summarized that the crucial part in microsourcing to ensure the B40 group of people are aware of microsourcing and know how to use the platform.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper derives towards a conclusion by making a recommendation to ensure B40 enjoys benefits from the microsourcing process. Public-private partnership is crucial in microsourcing. These agencies need to exchange their ideas, collect funds, and organize awareness campaigns related to microsourcing. By empowering a strong collaboration, the implementation of microsourcing will become easier to tackle.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was supported by Asia Pacific University (APU) Internal grant funding [FCET/21/2018].

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