

Nurturing Entrepreneurial Excellence: The Transformative Journey Of Entrepreneurship Week (Entrepweek)

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship Week (EntrepWeek), tailored for Kulliyah of Economics and Management Sciences (KENMS) students, encourages entrepreneurship participation and is primarily organized by the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) Council, Economics and Management Science Society (EMSS), Department of Business Administration (DeBA) and KENMS Entrepreneurship lecturers. Originally a physical bazaar in 2013, it transitioned into a hybrid mode (physical and online bazaar) during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This event is organized at Kulliyah of Economics and Management Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia. The EntrepWeek Team, consisting of advisors and trainers, includes notable figures such as Dr. Fatin Husna Suib as the leader of this project, Dr. Amirah Ahmad Suki, Dr. Al Amirul Eimer Ramdzan Ali, and Dr. Arbaiah Abdul Razak. Student Councils, namely the Bachelor of Business Administration Council (BBAC) and the Economic and Management Science Society (EMSS), also contribute to the team. Furthermore, Kulliyah of Economics and Management Sciences, along with the Entrepreneurship Development Centers (EDC) IIUM, extends sponsorship to support both the physical and online EntrepWeek's bazaars.

ENTREPWEEK'S OBJECTIVES, ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

EntrepWeek is driven by a set of well-defined objectives aimed at empowering KENMS entrepreneurship students. Through the implementation of an online bazaar, the event strives to provide students with a practical platform to showcase and market their entrepreneurial ventures. Additionally, it offers real-time learning opportunities through modules focusing on crucial aspects such as social media advertising, business planning, and financial statements. These modules not only contribute to the academic progress of students enrolled in KENMS' Entrepreneurship courses but also equip them with practical skills essential for entrepreneurial success.

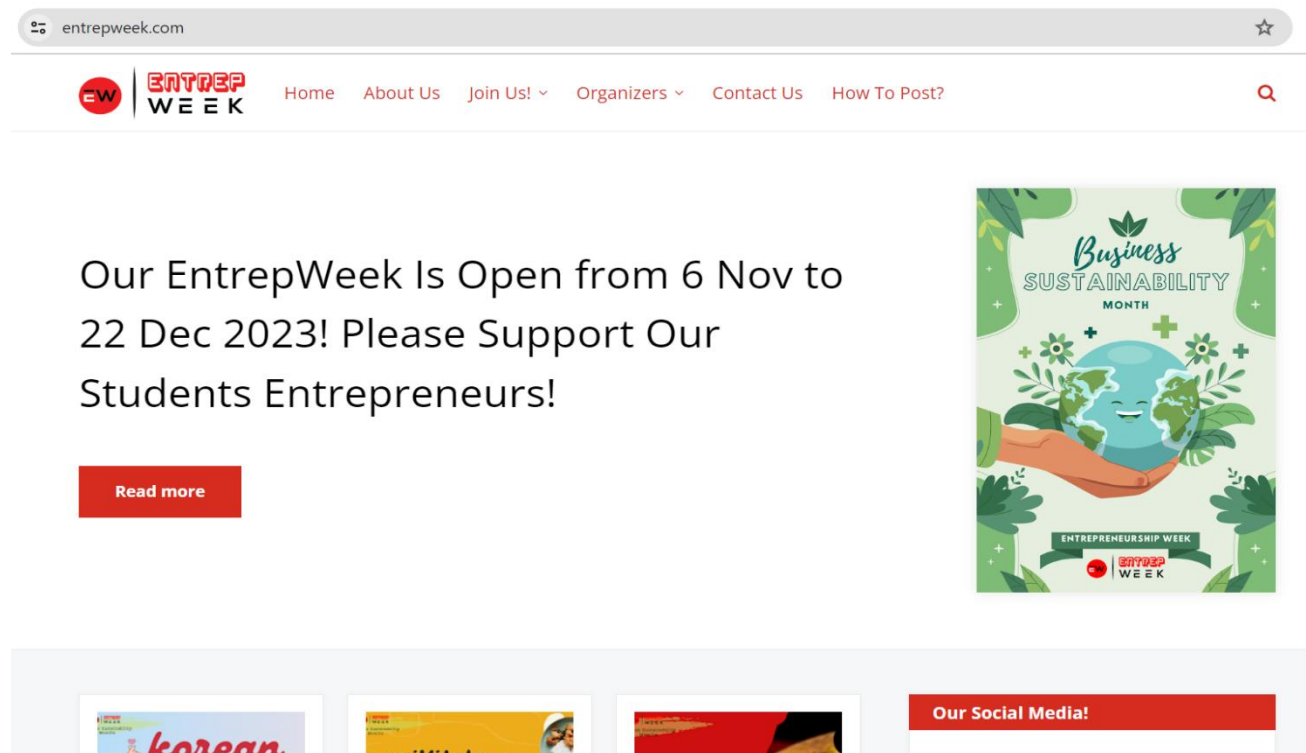
Ensuring the employability of fresh graduates remains a pressing concern, even for those with degrees from reputable universities (Rajaendram, & Menon, 2022). To empower graduates and cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset, Malaysia has mandated compulsory entrepreneurship courses for all university students, aligning with the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education). This strategic move aims to equip graduates with the skills needed for financial independence and success, especially in cases where securing traditional employment proves challenging. In response to these challenges, EntrepWeek takes a proactive stance by identifying and proposing solutions to issues such as a lack of practical business skills, insufficient working experience, and perceived customer trust issues. By actively addressing these concerns, EntrepWeek endeavors to create an environment conducive to fostering entrepreneurial growth and success among students.

Moreover, EntrepWeek emphasizes the value of entrepreneurial activities in students' portfolios, thereby improving their employability. The event also plays a significant role in building trust by involving recognized student councils and faculty members, instilling confidence in IIUM customers when purchasing from entrepreneurship students. This support contributes to enhancing the credibility and reputation of student businesses, fostering increased trust and, consequently, encouraging more sales.

ENTREPWEEK'S DIGITAL PRESENCE

EntrepWeek strategically employs various platforms, such as its website (Figure 1), Instagram and Facebook Page accounts (@entrepweek), alongside hosting physical bazaars at KENMS, IIUM Gombak. These multifaceted platforms play a crucial role in advertising and showcasing the diverse products created by entrepreneurship students. Leveraging social media aligns with research findings that emphasize its potential to enhance entrepreneurs' capacity for discovering and creating new entrepreneurial opportunities by fostering prior knowledge, alertness, and social cognition (Park et al., 2017). Moreover, the importance of trust within online entrepreneurial groups is underscored, with research indicating that such groups primarily fulfill learners' needs for trust and profit, with trust emerging as the pivotal factor (Wu & Song, 2019). This integrated approach underscores EntrepWeek's commitment to utilizing diverse channels for fostering entrepreneurial engagement and growth.

Figure 1: EntrepWeek's Website



Source: <https://www.entrepweek.com/>

ENTREPWEEK'S PROJECT MODEL AND TIMELINE

The EntrepWeek project model (Figure 2) commences with the engagement of entrepreneurship students in digital business training provided by EntrepWeek through its modules. Following the training, students submit their business advertisements for promotion on EntrepWeek's website and social media platforms. The resulting promotions generate customers for the students, and they receive their profits accordingly.

In terms of the project timeline (Figure 3), each semester spans approximately 14 weeks. The first to fourth weeks of EntrepWeek involve the training of students. Post-training, business registration with the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM) is carried out to ensure the legal operation of the students' businesses. Subsequently, students begin selling their products or services on their individual Instagram accounts and through EntrepWeek's hybrid bazaar, encompassing both online and physical platforms. Weeks five to eleven are designated as EntrepWeek month, during which students actively sell their products. Business Model Canvas (BMC) presentations from all students occur during this month and post the 11th week, students prepare business reports, encompassing financial reports and business plans.

Figure 2: EntrepWeek's Project Model

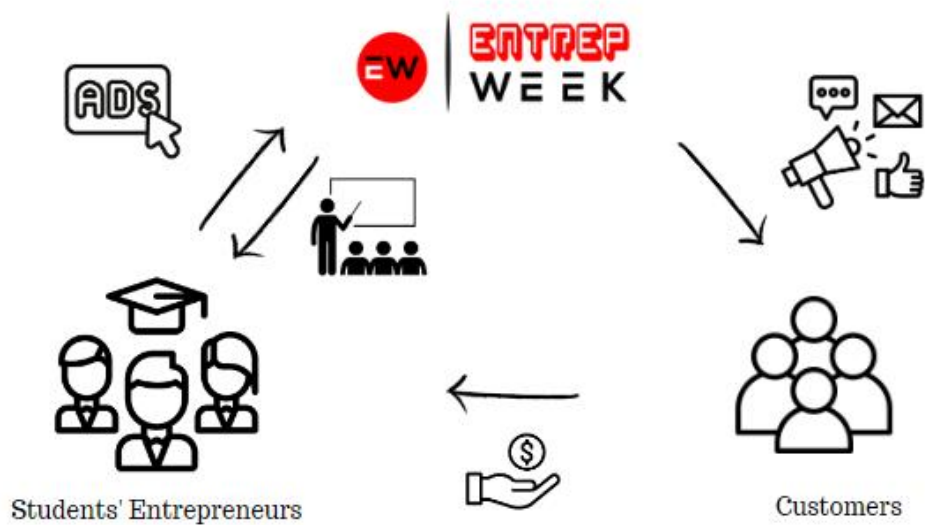
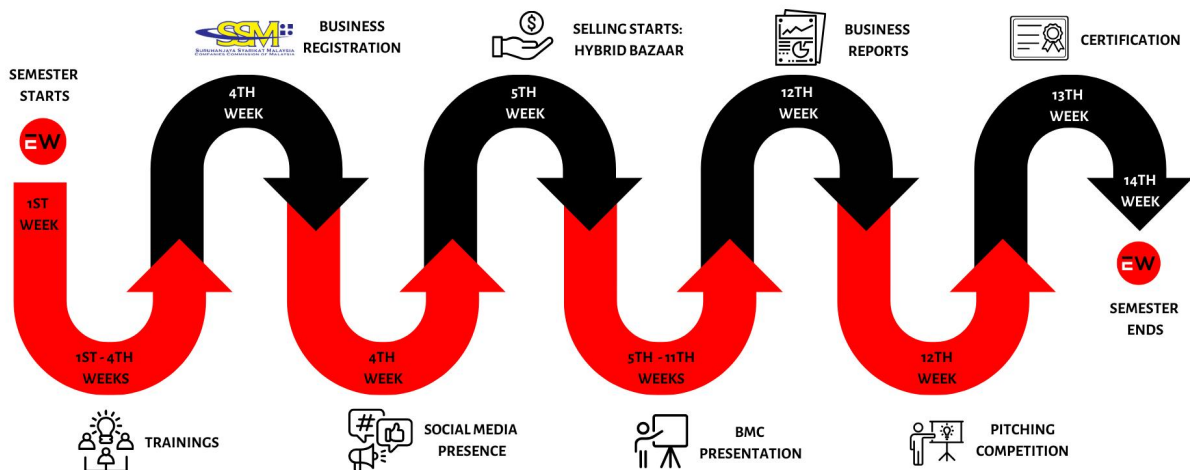


Figure 3: EntrepWeek's Timeline for IIUM's Entrepreneurship Students



To conclude EntrepWeek month, a business pitching competition takes place in the 12th week, followed by the issuance of certifications to all participating students. The EntrepWeek project concludes in the 14th week of the semester. Notably, this project repeats twice a year, aligning with the two semesters in a given year.

ENTREPWEEK'S MODULES AND TRAINING

The integration of a university training program into the core curriculum has proven effective in enhancing students' entrepreneurial skills and transversal employability competencies, underscoring the value of such initiatives (Laguna-Sánchez et al, 2019). While digital entrepreneurship education has successfully boosted undergraduates' soft skills, particularly in the realm of information technology, it is noted that leadership skills exhibit the least improvement (Zainal & Yong, 2020). Furthermore, the implementation of a developed digital entrepreneurship learning model has demonstrated effectiveness in inspiring students to venture into businesses utilizing information technology, thereby fostering an entrepreneurial spirit and enhancing 21st-century literacy skills (Erdisna, Ridwan, & Syahputra, 2022).

EntrepWeek's training modules encompass a comprehensive range of skills designed to equip participants with the knowledge and expertise required for entrepreneurial success. These modules carry a significant weight in the assessment of KENMS entrepreneurship students, constituting the majority of their marks. These modules will also be employed to educate public entrepreneurs, particularly those in need, through training sessions.

The module kicks off by delving into the realm of digital marketing with a module on designing business advertisements using CANVA. This hands-on training focuses on developing visually appealing and effective promotional materials, a crucial aspect of creating a compelling brand image in the digital landscape. In addition, a key aspect of initiating a business is the legal process of business registration. EntrepWeek addresses this by collaborating with *Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia* (SSM) (Commission of Companies Malaysia) to provide training on the registration of businesses for startups. This module ensures that participants are well-versed in the legal aspects of establishing and operating a business, laying a solid foundation for compliance and ethical business practices.

EntrepWeek places a strong emphasis on the digital presence of entrepreneurial ventures, offering training on content creation through Blogger at www.entrepweek.com. Participants learn to leverage this platform to establish a professional and user-friendly online presence, a critical element for reaching a broader audience and enhancing brand visibility. The program extends its digital marketing focus to include training on scheduling business advertisements through Facebook Meta Business. This module equips participants with the skills to strategically plan and execute advertising campaigns on one of the most widely used social media platforms, ensuring effective outreach and engagement.

Moving beyond static content, EntrepWeek introduces modules on dynamic social media marketing through Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook Page Marketing. Participants learn how to leverage these platforms to create engaging content and build a strong online presence, fostering customer engagement and brand loyalty. On the other hand, brand identity is a key consideration

for any business. (citation) EntrepWeek addresses this by incorporating a module on brand logo and product labeling. This training focuses on the visual elements that contribute to brand recognition and differentiation in the market, emphasizing the importance of a cohesive and memorable brand identity.

EntrepWeek also covers a range of crucial skills for entrepreneurs, including multimedia proficiency with video editing using CAPCUT, emphasizing the creation of visually compelling content for the digital landscape. Additionally, the program addresses financial management essentials through a module on Financial Management in Excel, offering practical insights into budgeting, financial analysis, and record-keeping vital for sustaining successful businesses. Furthermore, the curriculum focuses on the art of Business Pitching, providing participants with the skills to craft compelling presentations and offering a unique opportunity to apply these skills through a competitive Business Pitching Competition. Business planning is central to the program, incorporating modules on Business Model Canvas and Business Plan, guiding participants in articulating concepts and creating robust plans for sustainable ventures.

Recognizing the potential for social impact, EntrepWeek introduces a module on Social Enterprise, promoting a holistic approach to entrepreneurship that considers broader societal needs. Additionally, the program emphasizes the importance of effective written communication with a module on Copywriting via ChatGPT. Finally, recognizing the prominence of digital commerce, EntrepWeek collaborates with the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) to provide insights into leveraging digital platforms for e-commerce through the Go-Ecommerce Portal module.

ENGAGING INDUSTRIES' EXPERTS IN ENTREPWEEK

According to a study by Wu and Chen (2019), integrating experts with entrepreneurial experience from the information industry into college entrepreneurial education courses positively impacts students' entrepreneurial skills and team collaboration efficacy, aligning with industry expectations. In a parallel effort, EntrepWeek strategically aligns with prominent entities to elevate students' entrepreneurial education. Partnering with the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM), the event conducts comprehensive Business Registration Workshops and Talks, providing participants with practical insights into business registration and ensuring a legal foundation for their business. Another significant collaboration involves with PERNAS to offer profound insights into franchising opportunities through engaging talks, equipping participants with crucial knowledge for future business ventures. These strategic partnerships collectively contribute to EntrepWeek's mission of providing practical learning experiences for aspiring entrepreneurs, fostering a dynamic educational environment.

Furthermore, pivotal support comes from the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), which offers a key partnership by providing a Go-Ecommerce portal and tailored certificates for entrepreneurship students. This collaboration not only elevates students' digital business acumen but also awards them a recognized certification, bolstering the credibility of their entrepreneurial accomplishments. Similarly, partnerships with the ADLA Group and Shopee University focus on delivering essential skills through Business Pitching Talks and Shopee E-commerce Workshops, respectively. These collaborations collectively enrich EntrepWeek, providing students with

valuable opportunities for learning, networking, and skills development under the guidance of industry experts.

REACHING OUT TO EXTERNAL ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH FLAGSHIPS

EntrepWeek also aimed at reaching its sub-community, which comprises external entrepreneurs, particularly those from the B40 group, single mothers, and *asnaf* entrepreneurs. *Asnaf* denotes the distinct categories that meet the criteria for receiving zakat, as delineated in Islamic doctrines." The foundation of this concept is based on the *Quranic* verse from Al-Tawbah (9:60), in which Allah specifies eight distinct groups who are eligible to receive zakat. These categories encompass those who are economically disadvantaged, those who lack basic necessities, individuals entrusted with the responsibility of distributing zakat, those striving to foster harmony among people, individuals who are enslaved and seeking liberation, individuals saddled with financial obligations, endeavours dedicated to advancing the cause of God, and individuals who are in need when travelling. This classification is not random but rather ordained by a divine authority, revealing the profound wisdom and knowledge of God in many issues. This notion is exemplified by a narrative from the Hadith, in which Prophet Muhammad elucidates that the qualification for receiving zakat is not determined by humans, but rather by a heavenly decree. In a recorded conversation in Abû Dâ'ûd, the Prophet emphasises that even prophets do not have the authority to decide who should receive zakat. This highlights the sacredness and distinctiveness of the eight categories of zakat receivers as declared by Allah.

The digital business module was employed to provide training and education, helping these entrepreneurs enhance their business capabilities, particularly in the context of online operations. By imparting relevant skills and knowledge, EntrepWeek aimed to empower these entrepreneurs to effectively manage and grow their businesses in the digital landscape.

To engage with external entrepreneurs, EntrepWeek collaborates with three primary flagship programs at IIUM. The first flagship is YSM Sejahtera, with its primary objective being the development of the Sejahtera community within Gombak. Through this initiative, EntrepWeek targets entrepreneurs within the youth, single mothers, and the less fortunate IIUM community members. The second flagship, TACTIC, adopts a comprehensive approach to foster technical innovation and commercialization. This flagship not only provides training for entrepreneurs in Johor, Malaysia but also conducts advocacy and public awareness programs aimed at promoting entrepreneurship.

The third flagship, *iTaajir*, functions as a research project dedicated to offering financial support to disadvantaged entrepreneurs. This initiative also focuses on enhancing the digital business skills of these entrepreneurs through training. Throughout these flagship programs, EntrepWeek employs its modules to train all entrepreneurs associated with these initiatives.

ENTREPWEEK'S OUTPUTS, RECOGNITIONS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

EntrepWeek has yielded notable outcomes, recording an impressive RM 1.6 million in student sales as of June 2023 over a five-year span. In addition to the financial success, Entrepreneurship students are honored with valuable MDEC Digital Entrepreneurship Certificates, acknowledging their achievements in the field. The program goes beyond monetary gains, fostering diverse skill

sets among students, including proficiency in social media campaigns, effective business pitching, and the development of comprehensive business plans and financial reporting.

Furthermore, EntrepWeek has garnered esteemed recognitions, underscoring its impact on the entrepreneurial landscape. The event has been acknowledged during the IIUM Grand Community Engagement (CE) 2022 Day, highlighting its significant contribution to the university community. Additionally, EntrepWeek secured a Silver Award for Entrepreneurship Week at the International University Carnival on e-learning, further attesting to its excellence in promoting entrepreneurial education and engagement. Dr. Fatin Husna, the founder of entrepweek.com, also received an award from Malaysia Digital Transformation Awards 2023, namely, the Special Mention - The Rising Digital Star Award 2023. These accolades not only validate the success of EntrepWeek but also emphasize its noteworthy standing within the academic and entrepreneurial spheres.

EntrepWeek actively contributes to three key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Firstly, it aligns with SDG 4, focusing on quality education. This is attributed to EntrepWeek's commitment to transforming digital entrepreneurship education through its modules, contributing to the advancement of quality education. The second SDG that EntrepWeek supports is SDG 8, emphasizing decent work and economic growth. This is achieved by enhancing students' portfolios to boost employability and elevating the standard of living for other entrepreneurs. Lastly, EntrepWeek contributes to SDG 9 by promoting innovation. This is accomplished through EntrepWeek's digital modules, which align with the focus on industry innovation and infrastructure development, thereby advancing the cause of SDG 9.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the transformative journey of Entrepreneurship Week (EntrepWeek) at Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences (KENMS), IIUM, reflects a dynamic evolution and a substantial impact on entrepreneurial development. The event, organized by various entities including the BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration) Council, EMSS (Economics and Management Sciences Students' Society), DeBA (Department of Business Administration), and KENMS Entrepreneurship lecturers, has transitioned from a physical bazaar to a hybrid model, embracing both physical and online components in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The EntrepWeek team, along with student councils and sponsors underscores the collaborative effort in fostering entrepreneurial growth.

The objectives of EntrepWeek, addressing issues such as employability concerns for fresh graduates and the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset, showcase a proactive approach to solving real-world challenges. The integration of expert insights, strategic partnerships with industry entities, and the emphasis on digital presence highlight the program's commitment to providing a holistic entrepreneurial education. Furthermore, EntrepWeek's contribution to SDGs 4, 8, and 9 affirms its alignment with global sustainability goals, emphasizing the program's broader impact on education, economic growth, and innovation. As EntrepWeek actively engages with external entrepreneurs through its flagship programs and attains recognitions and awards, it stands as a beacon for fostering a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem within and beyond the academic realm.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How has the transition of Entrepreneurship Week (EntrepWeek) from a physical bazaar to a hybrid model impacted its effectiveness, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What are the key objectives of EntrepWeek, and how do they address the challenges faced by KENMS entrepreneurship students, particularly in terms of employability and practical business skills?
3. How does EntrepWeek leverage digital platforms and social media to enhance entrepreneurial engagement, and what role does a digital presence play in the success of student businesses?
4. What is the significance of engaging industry experts in EntrepWeek, and how do collaborations with entities like the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM) and Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) contribute to students' entrepreneurial education?
5. How does EntrepWeek contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4, 8, and 9, and what role does the program play in advancing quality education, decent work and economic growth, and innovation

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