

Information seeking behaviour of SME entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry

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Abstract

In the era of Industry 4.0, the value of information has become even more critical to the success of small hospitality firms. For entrepreneurs in this sector, the ability to seek accurate and timely information is essential. Despite its significance, research on the information-seeking behaviour of entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry remains limited. This paper presents findings from a case study that explores the information-seeking behaviours of hospitality entrepreneurs in Kuching, Malaysia. Data was collected from ten informants through semi-structured interviews. The results indicate that entrepreneurs require information related to business operations, advisory and regulatory compliance, marketing, technology, networking, human resources, and financing. While these entrepreneurs utilize both formal and informal sources of information, there is a noticeable preference for informal sources. The study identifies barriers to effective information seeking, including a lack of networking skills, limited time, and insufficient technological proficiency. The findings suggest that hospitality entrepreneurs should enhance their information and social competencies. Additionally, educators, policymakers, information officers, and related government agencies are encouraged to support these small business entrepreneurs in meeting their information needs, particularly in the context of digitalization.

Keywords: information seeking behaviour, entrepreneur, information competency, hospitality, small firm

1. INTRODUCTION

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a vital role in job creation. They contribute to the overall economic development of a country by providing products and services. According to World Bank Group (2020), SMEs account for more than half of all jobs globally and provide more than 50% of employment worldwide. In Malaysia, SMEs are significant contributors to the tourism industry, which in 2022, contributed 14% to the national GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and accounted for 23.4% of total employment, according to the Tourism Satellite Account (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022). Among the various sectors, accommodation services are particularly important contributing 18.8% to the revenue generated by tourism. Malaysian SMEs in the services sector are those with sales turnover that do not exceed RM20 million or do not have more than 75 full-time employees (SME Corp

Malaysia, 2016). Key services in this industry include accommodation, transportation, shopping, and recreational activities (Jaafar, Toh, & Mohd Sukarno, 2011).

Tourism is an information intensive, service driven industry (Buhalis, 2000; Chang, Magobe, & Kim, 2015). For example, the tourism sector uses information and technology to understand tourism trends, to market its services, and to communicate with customers. The availability of good information will assist organizational leaders to make more informed decisions, and improve their efficiency and competitiveness (Kaye, 1995). Furthermore, the accuracy and timeliness of information are valuable for organizations that experience rapid technological changes, strong competition and high levels of uncertainty (McGee & Sawyerr, 2003).

SMEs in the tourism sector are increasingly recognizing the importance of having access to up-to-date, reliable, and timely information and technology, especially in the context of Industry 4.0 and its impact on the industry. Consequently, entrepreneurs in hospitality firms face a range of internal and external challenges. Their ability to search for, acquire, and effectively utilise information is crucial, as they are ultimately responsible for managing their firms and providing strategic direction (Benzing, Chu, & Kara, 2009). To ensure the sustainability of their businesses, entrepreneurs must develop the skills necessary to independently and efficiently seek out relevant information.

While there have been significant studies on information needs, research on the information-seeking behaviour of SME managers has largely been dominated by work conducted in developed countries, particularly in the United States and Europe. More recent research has begun to focus on SME managers in Africa (Chiwere & Dick, 2008; Ikoja-Odongo & Ocholla, 2004; Jorosi, 2006). However, findings from specific countries or regions may not be fully applicable in other contexts due to varying geographical and social factors (Jorosi, 2006). Additionally, there is limited research targeting specific disciplines within small firms and their information-seeking behaviour. Although studies have examined the information-seeking patterns of professionals like engineers (Leckie, Pettigrew, & Sylvain, 1996), nurses (Harande & Faruok, 2017) and pharmacists (Romagnoli, Boyce, Empey, Adams, & Hochheiser, 2016), there is a noticeable gap in empirical research on the information behaviours of hospitality SME entrepreneurs. Furthermore, Orresalo et al. (2022) identified a significant gap in the literature regarding information-seeking behaviour that accounts for entrepreneurs' literacy levels. Hence, exploring the information-seeking behaviour of hospitality SME entrepreneurs is vital for building a body of literature specific to this group (Lambert & Conklin, 2008) and for gaining a deeper understanding of their unique information needs. Currently, there is limited knowledge about the specific information needs and information challenges faced by hospitality SME entrepreneurs in Malaysia.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the information needs and information seeking behaviours of hospitality SME entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Specifically, this inquiry answers the questions: What is the information needs of hospitality SME entrepreneurs? What is their source of information? What are the barriers to their information seeking? This study contributes to the information seeking, entrepreneurship and hospitality literature by providing a Malaysian perspective. Understanding the information needs and seeking behaviours of hospitality SME entrepreneurs can assist in the design of relevant policies, platforms, and programme tailored to this specific group of information users. Additionally, educators and

researchers can utilise these findings to better comprehend the diverse roles and competencies requirements of hospitality SME entrepreneurs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Information seeking behaviour (ISB)

Information seeking is the process an individual undertakes to search for and obtain the information he or she needs. As Wilson (1999) notes this process begins when an individual recognizes a need for information and seeks to fulfil it. To meet this need, the person engages with both formal and informal sources. The outcome of an information search will either be successful, partially successful or unsuccessful. A successful search satisfies, or at least partially satisfies, the information need, while an unsuccessful search may prompt the individual to repeat the process. Information seeking involves cognitive, psychological, and physical activities (Shah, Capra, & Hansen, 2014). It requires the information seeker to not only look for information, but to analyse, make sense, compare, and share it with others. With the growing use of technology, individuals now have access to various types of information in multiple formats, which can be shared across different technological platforms. For instance, the Internet provides a wealth of information that can be accessed instantly from anywhere. Additionally, mobile devices and networking tools enable information seekers to acquire and disseminate information among various groups (Shah et al., 2014).

2.2 Information needs of entrepreneurs in SMEs

The hospitality industry is undergoing continuous and rapid changes driven by shifting customer demographics, advances in information technology, and increasing environmental concerns. For instance, millennial travellers represent a growing segment of the tourism market. A report by Boston Consulting Group estimated that millennials in the USA account for nearly 50% of all business travel spending in 2020 (Boston Consulting Group, 2013). This group is known for being tech-savvy and open to new experiences. With the advent of Industry 4.0, there is heightened pressure to integrate information technology into all aspects of hotel management, such as understanding customer preferences, managing customer experiences, and enhancing marketing and promotions. Additionally, there is an increasing emphasis on sustainability, with hotels being encouraged to adopt environmentally friendly practices (Balasubramanian & Ragavan, 2019). These trends are poised to impact the future management of the tourism and hospitality industry, regardless of hotel type, size, or location.

As a result, hotel managers will face new demands and challenges, as highlighted by Bharwani & Talib (2017). This is particularly relevant for entrepreneurs in small hospitality enterprises, who will need to navigate a rapidly evolving information landscape. With greater access to information in various formats and from multiple sources, entrepreneurs must effectively respond to this information to ensure the sustainability of their businesses. Keeping abreast of industry trends is essential, but the ability to discern valuable information and act on it at the right time is crucial for making strategic decisions.

Despite the growing importance of these issues, there is still limited knowledge about the specific information needs of entrepreneurs in hospitality SMEs. However, existing studies have begun to identify the roles, responsibilities, and competencies essential for hospitality entrepreneurs. These results translate into the information needs required to execute their tasks as entrepreneurs in hospitality SMEs. In one quantitative study of 137 small and medium hotel owner-managers in Malaysia, Jaafar, Maideen, & Mohd Sukarno (2010) found that a majority of the owner-managers did not have any formal education or related experience in tourism, hotel or hospitality management. This may result in their need for information related to hospitality management which includes rules and regulations imposed for the industry. In a follow up study, Jaafar et al. (2011) queried small hospitality operators on four issues they may face: lack of management skills and knowledge in tourism, lack of knowledge on how to apply for funding from a financial institution, lack of knowledge in tourism trends and opportunities, and lack of tourism marketing skills. However, results from the owner-managers responses were inconclusive.

Previous studies related to business information needs have established that information needs do exist for other types of SMEs as well. A study of 216 SME managers in Botswana highlighted six types of information required including competition information, customer information, economic information, technical information, socio-cultural information and regulatory information (Jorosi, 2006). Ahmad Kassim and Buyong (2010) surveyed 288 potential entrepreneurs in Malaysia and identified 35 types of information needed by Malaysian bumiputera. The top four information needed were information on preparing a business plan, planning cash flow, examining business opportunities and profit planning. In yet another study, Ahmad Kassim et al. (2016) interviewed 26 early stage SME owner-managers in Malaysia and identified 16 types of information needed. The top two information needs were business information and financial sources.

2.3 Information sources of entrepreneurs in SMEs

A business may use information in many different forms, either qualitative or quantitative (Kaye, 1995), through various sources. The literature shows a preference for both formal and informal sources of information. Formal information sources include government departments and agencies, workshops and conferences, and trade associations. Examples of informal information sources are friends, customers and suppliers. In a study of manufacturing SMEs in Botswana, customers were identified as the most important information source, followed by newspapers (including periodicals and magazines), broadcast media, competitors, government officials and publications, trade and industry associations, electronic sources and libraries (Jorosi, 2006). Based on a study of 602 informal sector entrepreneurs from a variety of trades in Uganda, the top three sources of information were by word of mouth, personal experience and friends (including relatives, and neighbours). Other sources of information such as radio/TV, work supervisor, print media, workshops and seminars, local councils, area politicians, business associations, orientation tours, educational institutions, churches, mosques and meetings, NGOs, sign posts, cultural ceremonies, and libraries were ranked low (Ikoja-Odongo & Ocholla, 2004). These studies also showed a tendency for SME entrepreneurs to rely on informal information sources, plausibly due to ease of access. In general, libraries and electronic sources were much less preferred.

In Malaysia, a study on bumiputera SME entrepreneurs identified attending courses as their main source of business information. This is followed by business exhibitions, Internet/email, business premises, government agencies, technical training, practical training, banks, associations and libraries (Ahmad Kassim & Buyong, 2010). This phenomenon may be explained by the fact that the survey participants were potential entrepreneurs, therefore, their priority to obtain information would be from courses in preparation for starting their businesses. Mole, and colleagues in 2017 studied specifically SME owner-managers' external information sources behaviour in England. The survey included 1,202 participants between 2008-2011. Their findings suggested that certain business characteristics (i.e. firm employment size, sector activity) and certain owner-manager characteristics (i.e. education level and gender), particularly women entrepreneurs, were more likely to utilise public business advisory services. They also discovered that owner-managers who never worked with formal business supports may not appreciate the value that these formal external assistances may provide them. Notwithstanding individual SME context, it seemed that the go-to sources of information also depended on the developmental stage of the firm. Newly established firms may seek more formal sources of information such as business advisory or attend courses, compared to more established firms. Size may be a factor for smaller firms as well. Because a smaller firm will have limited resources compared to a larger firm, it may tend to source more information from informal sources.

2.4 Leckie et al.'s (1996) Model of Information-Seeking of Professionals

This study utilises Leckie et al.'s (1996) model of information seeking as the framework for the inquiry of information seeking behaviour among hospitality entrepreneurs in SMEs. The model is applicable to this study because it incorporates both information needs and the process of information sourcing, which is the focus of this inquiry. This model is developed based on the authors' research of information-seeking behaviours of three professional groups: engineers, healthcare professionals, and lawyers. The model comprises of six components: work roles, associated tasks, characteristics of information needs, awareness of information, sources of information and outcomes.

The basic premise of the model is that professionals, such as hospitality entrepreneurs, take on multiple roles and perform a variety of tasks in their daily work. For example, they serve as owner-managers, strategic thinkers, planners, and service providers for their firms. These diverse roles and responsibilities generate specific information needs, which in turn drive the process of information seeking. The nature of these information needs varies depending on several factors, including the professional's demographics (e.g., stage of the entrepreneur's career), context (e.g., specific vs. general needs), frequency (e.g., recurring or new needs), predictability (e.g., expected or unexpected needs), importance (e.g., level of urgency), and complexity (e.g., ease or difficulty of acquiring information).

Leckie et al. (1996) further identified various factors that influence information-seeking behaviour, such as the sources of information, awareness of these sources, and the outcomes of the information search. Information sources can be categorized into four types: formal or informal, internal or external, oral or written, and personal (e.g., personal knowledge and experience). Key aspects of a professional's awareness of information sources include familiarity and prior success in sourcing information, trustworthiness (e.g., accuracy of information), packaging (e.g., format of information), timeliness, cost, quality, and accessibility. The outcome of the information search determines whether the information

need is satisfied. If the need is met, the professional can effectively complete the task at hand. If not, a new search will likely begin, potentially using different sources and process the authors describe as a "feedback loop."

3. METHODOLOGY

The current research asks the question, "How do hospitality SME entrepreneurs seek and obtain information?" A case study design was chosen to focus on the perspectives and experiences of ten SME hospitality entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Yin (2009) defined case studies as "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p.18). Yin (2009) further stated that a case study addresses "how" types of research questions, phenomenon occurring in real-world and in which the researcher has no control over the events. Hence, case study design is appropriate given that the purpose of the inquiry is to understand the information seeking behaviour of hospitality SME entrepreneurs.

The location for the study is in Kuching, Malaysia. The study uses a purposive sampling approach as it supports the identification of study participants that can provide the most relevant information (Maxwell, 2013). Informants comprise of those who meet the criteria of having a minimum of two years' experience in a hospitality industry and an owner/manager of a small medium hospitality service. A total of ten entrepreneurs participated in the study (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographics of Study Informants

Informant	Gender	Age	Experience Running Current Hospitality Business (Years)	Type of Hospitality Business
I1	Male	Early 40s	3	Lodge
I2	Female	Mid 30s	7	Hotel
I3	Female	Early 30s	6	Hotel
I4	Male	Late 40s	12	Lodge
I5	Female	Early 40s	7	Homestay
I6	Male	Late 50s	10	Hotel
I7	Male	Late 50s	5	Hotel
I8	Female	Mid 30s	4	Homestay
I9	Male	Late 50s	16	Hotel
I10	Male	Late 50s	2	Hotel

Semi-structured interviews are the main method used to collect data. The informants communicate either in English or their local dialects, with each session taking between 40-90 minutes. The audio-recorded interviews are transcribed and uploaded into NVivo 11 for data analysis. A thematic analysis is used and the process for analysing is according to Braun & Clarke's (2006) six steps of data familiarization, coding, theme identification, theme review, theme naming, and report writing.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Information needs

Based on the analysis of transcripts, nine types of business information needs were identified as summarized in Table 2. There were four categories of information needs: business information, advisory and regulations, marketing, technology and networking, HR matters and

financing. Entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry seek various types of information. Overall, on-going business information is required by most of the entrepreneurs regardless of the stages of their businesses. The tourism industry is information driven and information intensive (Buhalis, 2000; Chang et al., 2015). For example, some of the informants highlighted the importance of being aware of the tourism climate not only domestically, but also in the region. They realised that tourist traffic information and being updated on local upcoming events assisted them in planning for their business. A number of the informants emphasized how getting information early on locally organized events such as the Rainforest World Music Festival and Kuching Marathon helped them make necessary preparations for visitors around those dates. However, as the study noted that newly established hospitality entrepreneurs required more information associated with advisory and regulations and obtaining of resources. This pattern of information needs is similar but with slight variations to other SMEs in different industries and countries (Ahmad Kassim et al., 2016; Ahmad Kassim & Buyong, 2010; Jorosi, 2006).

Table 2. Information Needs of Hospitality SME Entrepreneurs

Information Needs	No. of Entrepreneurs (10)	Sample Quotes
Business information		
Competitor prices, and promotion	8	“We want to know what the government is doing about traffic” (I1)
Trends in tourism and hospitality, including tourism climate, occupancy rate statistics, and upcoming events in the city	6	
Sources of raw material, equipment	3	
Advisory and regulations		“...need help for example for star ratingbecause one of the uh...special thing for this star rating is either it comes from Malaysian Association of Hotels or come from Malaysia Budget & Business Hotel Association” (I5)
Advice on Tourism Service Fee	5	
Advice on star rating process	2	
Advice on halal certification process HR matters	2 2	
Marketing, technology and networking	3	“The internet side to advertise yeah, we find it hard because we’re not experienced enough...” (I2)
Financing		“I need money to extend I don’t know where...” (I6)
Extension of facilities and services	2	

4.2 Information sources

The findings from this study highlighted sources of information that could be categorized into formal and informal sources. Formal information sources for the hospitality SME entrepreneurs included trade associations, and government agencies. Internal information sources involved friends, family members, suppliers, trade partners, staff, customers and the Internet. Table 3 summarized the information sources, and sample quotes from entrepreneurs involved in the study.

Each entrepreneur used a combination of both formal and informal sources for information. The main government agencies they contacted were the Sarawak Tourism Board, Sarawak Convention Bureau, MOTAC (Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture) and the local councils. Formal information sources provided the entrepreneurs with information on upcoming events organized by industry players that would benefit small hospitality providers. In addition, the related agencies would include information on upcoming tourism exhibition which the entrepreneurs could participate in to promote their hospitality services. There were four

informants that did not join any trade association as they did not feel the value in doing so. Those that joined trade associations as members acknowledged the benefits that they received, for example acquiring information, advice and opportunity to network with other hospitality entrepreneurs. The trade associations also practice information sharing. The older members provided the newer members with advice on regulations, daily operation of their business and new contacts.

A majority of the entrepreneurs acknowledged going online when they require information. They would refer to government websites, other competitor websites, travel blogs, customer reviews and training websites. The findings also showed that entrepreneurs regarded other hotels or hospitality providers as an information source even though they were in direct competition with one another. Another information source is the customers, who may provide feedback on improving current services. The informants also relied on friends for information, including ideas and assistance. Results of the study also identified the staff itself as providers of information. This is particularly so with staff that has extensive work experience in the hospitality industry. The experienced staff provided different insights to problem solving, best practices and referrals. Trade partners (i.e. travel agencies) were a source of information on industry trends and provided opportunities to network with other contacts. Suppliers provided direct support to the overall effectiveness of the business in the tourism industry. They also provided entrepreneurs with current business practices and other business references.

It appears that small hospitality entrepreneurs prefer information from informal sources compared to formal sources. This preference may be due to issues of trust, time and cost (Mole et al., 2017; Yusoff, 2011). The entrepreneurs trust those who are close to them because they believe that family members and friends for example, will look out for their business well-being. Furthermore, informal sources are available most of the time. However, the information provided by informal sources may lack accuracy or comprehensiveness (Yusoff, 2011). In cases of external advisory services, the entrepreneurs may associate them with being expensive but lack value. Thus, the challenge is to not only ensure that these SME entrepreneurs are aware of advisory services, but also to convince them to make full use of such services (Mole et al., 2017).

Table 3. Information Sources of Hospitality SME Entrepreneurs

Information Sources	No. of Entrepreneurs (10)	Sample Quotes
Formal		
Government agencies	6	“We are in contact with SCB, Sarawak Convention Bureau. So we know like sometimes we do run promotions.”(I4)
Trade associations	5	“...join MAH and they will be able to advise on regulations, new legislations ...” (I1)
Informal		
Internet/Online	5	“It is just what we, there is a lot of self-learning because nowadays we look up on the Internet and they have all the information there, ...a lot of webinars, because we won’t be able to travel a lot right, so webinars are very important.” (I1)
Other hotels of hospitality providers	5	“So, I get some ideas from other business, from their success story la I don’t have experience in this business....” (I6)
Customers	4	“... we chat with the guests and that’s where we get a lot of feedback also.” (I4)
Friends	3	“Basically, I always ask them [friends], like when I have a problem in my business, I will talk to them” (I7)
Staff	3	“...my hotel staff, they are very experiencedthey have been in the hotel industry for many years...the best way to learn is from them” (I1)

Trade partners	2	“... major trends I guess our OTAs would tell ... because they oversee what’s going on in the whole of Malaysia or Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei...” (I4)
Suppliers	2	“So the supplier told us that this other company has a better quality [product], ... you can order from them” (I4)

4.3 Barriers in information acquisition

Although the hospitality SME entrepreneurs were able to acquire needed information, they still faced a number of barriers in getting them. The analysis identified factors such as lack of networking skills, lack of time, and lack of technology skills as the main barriers in acquiring information (Table 4). Some of the entrepreneurs highlighted the importance of networking skills in building rapport, gaining trust and to confidently interact with others. The lack of social networking skills may obstruct the ability for entrepreneurs to make connections, thus, reducing their access to information which could be of value to the firm. Martinez & Aldrich (2011) pointed out that 50% of small-business entrepreneurs acquired ideas for their businesses from networking contacts. Therefore, social networking skills add value to the information acquisition process.

Another barrier is that entrepreneurs of small hospitality businesses take on many roles, therefore, limiting time spent on information acquisition. This scenario may discourage the utilization of more formal sources of information, and overdependence on informal sources. Furthermore, despite the emphasis on using technology for hospitality SMEs, the entrepreneurs were challenged because they lack IT knowledge and online search skills. Some of them described their adversity in using technology and this may affect effective information acquisition online. This may result in unsophisticated search strategies that limit getting useful information and consequent failure of the information-seeking process (Savolainen, 2015).

Table 4. Barriers in Information Access for Hospitality SME Entrepreneurs

Barriers	No. of Entrepreneurs (10)	Sample Quotes
Lack of networking skills	4	“Like all these people that come, they are from different background Even if you are friendly, you don’t know what to say...” (I7)
Lack of time	3	“You know, ...our kettle is really, really so full with tasks we need to do, ...so we learn on the fly really.” (IP4)
Lack of technology skills	3	“I’m not very good with technology” (I6)

5. IMPLICATIONS

The tourism and hospitality sector is heavily reliant on information, and for small hospitality firms to remain competitive and sustainable, entrepreneurs must adopt a strategic approach to managing their information needs (Sen & Taylor, 2007). While entrepreneurs often prefer informal information sources, formal sources also hold significant value. To be effective information seekers, hospitality entrepreneurs should utilize all available information sources, emphasizing the importance of information competency. An entrepreneur who is proficient in information competency is better equipped to identify, source, evaluate, and apply gathered information effectively (Kwon & Song, 2011). Training and development programmes for entrepreneurs typically focus on bridging skills gaps (Lans, Verhees, & Verstegen, 2016), but often neglect crucial soft skills such as information competency, social networking, and relationship-building. Therefore, targeted training in these areas would greatly benefit hospitality entrepreneurs.

Moreover, with the increasing integration of technology in daily operations, sales and marketing, and customer interactions, digital literacy and technology skills are becoming increasingly important. Enhanced technology skills enable entrepreneurs to access necessary information anytime and anywhere, creating more opportunities for informed decision-making and business growth. The Sarawak Digital Economy Blueprint 2030 represents Sarawak's commitment to advancing into the digital economy and leading in the digital realm (Economic Planning Unit Sarawak, 2023). One of the strategies to digital advancement is the enhancement of digital literacy programmes for the community, including entrepreneurs. One notable initiative is the People Accessibility and Network for Digital Inclusivity (PANDei), which aims to equip individuals with essential digital skills, knowledge, and an information-competent mindset. The program features five modules that address critical areas: information management and communication, utilization of government digital initiatives, adoption of Sarawak Pay e-wallet, and cybersecurity. These modules are designed to foster digital inclusivity and ensure that participants are well-prepared to navigate the digital landscape effectively. Therefore, it is crucial to create more platforms that engage hospitality entrepreneurs and raise their awareness of the importance of digital literacy and technology skills. Collaboration among educators, information providers, and relevant trade associations is essential to effectively upskill these entrepreneurs. By working together, these stakeholders can provide the necessary resources and training to enhance digital competencies and ensure that hospitality entrepreneurs are equipped to thrive in the evolving digital landscape.

Furthermore, understanding the information needs of hospitality entrepreneurs is vital for their development and sustainability. This group could significantly benefit from a tailored business information needs module designed to facilitate their access to relevant information (Ahmad Kassim et al., 2016). Establishing a one-stop information centre, such as the Business Information Service (BIS) found in major libraries across the region, would not only help entrepreneurs obtain accurate and timely information but also enhance their overall efficiency. Additionally, an online business information needs module would provide hospitality entrepreneurs with access to essential resources regardless of their location. Therefore, it is important for educators, information officers, and policymakers in entrepreneurship to address and support the specific business information needs of this sector.

6. CONCLUSION

The outcomes of this study extend our understanding of information seeking behaviours of hospitality entrepreneurs in SMEs. Results show their information needs to include business information, advisory and regulations, marketing, technology and networking, HR matters and financing. Although hospitality entrepreneurs in SMEs depend on both formal and informal sources of information, their tendency is to rely more on informal sources. The entrepreneurs experience barriers in terms of time, networking skills and technology skills to accomplish their information needs. Information seeking activities are important to the hospitality entrepreneurs. As such, they have to be purposeful in their information seeking behaviour. They need to acquire the necessary competencies to assist them to be effective information seeker, evaluator and user. Educators, policy makers, information officers and related government agencies can assist these small firms through the creation of a business information needs module, social networking strategies and training.

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