

SUCCESS FACTORS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN TOURISM  
BUSINESS IN LANGKAWI ISLAND, MALAYSIA

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Philosophy

Faculty of Built Environment and Surveying  
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JULY 2019

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late father, who taught me that the best kind of knowledge to have is that which is learned for its own sake. It is also dedicated to my dearest mom, who taught me that even the largest task can be accomplished if it is done one step at a time. This is all for you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In preparing this thesis, *In the names of Allah, The Merciful Benefactor, The Merciful Redeemer*. Alhamdulillah. All praises are for Allah SWT and Our beloved Prophet Muhammad SAW, whom with His willing, guidance and blessing, I am able to successfully complete my master thesis.

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. TPr. Dr. Hairul Nizam bin Ismail, who was supported me, patience and showed his understanding through this experience with all its difficult moments from the first day until the completion of my master. Many thanks to all my lecturer who were involved directly or indirectly throughout my master journey. I am indebted to the Zamalah Scholarship team under Universiti Teknologi Malaysia for their sponsorship and encouragement to grad on time. My special thanks also goes to the key informers, who took part in my research, as they sacrificed so much time and effort and providing valuable information to complete my data collection.

All my appreciation goes to my only one mom and family, not to forget my late father, for their never ending support, prayer and financial support throughout my master journey. My sincere appreciation also goes to my bestfriends that I treasured most, Zainal, Adilah and beloved studio mates as well as my fellow postgraduate members in, FAB, UTM, for their assistance, moral support and sharing of ideas for the completion of my master thesis, and for all of the sweet memories that we have shared together. Last but not least, thank you to everyone that had contributed directly or indirectly to the completion of this thesis.

## **ABSTRACT**

Women involvement in Malaysia Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs) has significantly increased and is indisputable that half of the current Small-Medium Tourism Enterprises (SMTes) are run by them since 1980s. Women who are active in tourism entrepreneurs in Langkawi Island encounter enormous pressure from various challenges starting from the initial operation phase that has affected their survival in the tourism business. Understanding the survival success factors remains limited as in previous studies mainly focused on motivation and internal business challenges. However, the womens entrepreneurs' ability to cope with the external challenges of vulnerability factor, namely seasonality, trends and shocks and factors influencing the success of women entrepreneurs and the extent of their response to these challenges of vulnerability need to be studied. In this research, Langkawi Island was used as the case study. A qualitative approach involving in-depth semi-structured interviews focused on success factors and their experiences in response to vulnerability challenges during business operations. 17 entrepreneurs were interviewed comprising 4 who are involved with women entrepreneurs who are the pioneers in tourism business in Langkawi, while 13 are the women entrepreneurs themselves. Transcripts from the interviews were thematically analysed to determine the relevant sub-themes. The main findings showed that the survival success factors involved in entrepreneurship were found in the family traits, business environment and personal drive. Besides, the results showed that the dual role as a woman and an entrepreneurs serves as the platform for these women to achieve greater work-life balance on a daily basis. Furthermore, the data on how to sustain from vulnerability challenges showed that the most crucial factor was to adopt low risk financial sources in order to avoid financial crisis when they experienced the vulnerability impact. By adopting this measure, women entrepreneurs were able to react against to these vulnerability. Interview data on resilience showed that these tourism business have survived for more than two generations. Based on the findings, a theoretical framework was derived to gain insight of these women's entrepreneurship success factors despite the challenges of the vulnerability context. These success factors are important in assisting to direct the women of the community to participate in entrepreneurship related to high income economies based activities. As a conclusion, the framework will empower women entrepreneurs to be successful in their future business undertakings.

## ABSTRAK

Penglibatan wanita di Perusahaan bersaiz Kecil dan Sederhana (PKS) telah meningkat dengan ketara dan tidak dapat dinafikan bahawa separuh daripada Perusahaan Pelancongan bersaiz Kecil dan Sederhana (PPKS) dikendalikan oleh mereka sejak 1980-an. Wanita yang terlibat aktif dalam perusahaan pelancongan di Pulau Langkawi menghadapi tekanan yang besar dari pelbagai cabaran bermula dari peringkat permulaan operasi yang telah memberi kesan kepada kebergantungan hidup mereka dalam perusahaan pelancongan. Memahami faktor kejayaan usahawan wanita masih terhad kerana kajian sebelumnya lebih tertumpu kepada faktor motivasi dan cabaran perniagaan dalaman mereka. Walau bagaimanapun, keupayaan usahawan wanita untuk menghadapi cabaran luar faktor kemudahterancaman iaitu bermusim, arus perubahan dan kejutan dan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kejayaan usahawan wanita dan sejauh mana tindak balas mereka terhadap cabaran ini adalah perlu untuk dikaji. Dalam kajian ini, Pulau Langkawi dipilih sebagai kajian kes. Pendekatan kualitatif melibatkan temu bual terperinci separa struktur tertumpu kepada faktor-faktor kejayaan dan pengalaman mereka dalam tindak balas kepada cabaran kemudahterancaman ini sepanjang operasi perusahaan. 17 usahawan telah ditemu bual yang terdiri daripada 4 anggota yang terlibat dengan usahawan wanita yang merupakan perintis dalam perusahaan pelancongan di Langkawi, manakala 13 adalah usahawan wanita itu sendiri. Transkrip temu bual dianalisis secara tematik bagi mewujudkan sub-tema berkaitan. Kajian mendapati bahawa faktor-faktor kejayaan perusahaan mereka telah dipupuk dalam kekeluargaan, persekitaran perusahaan dan dorongan peribadi. Di samping itu, dapatan menunjukkan bahawa dwi –peranan sebagai seorang wanita dan usahawan menjadi platform untuk mencapai keseimbangan kerja dan kehidupan asas yang lebih baik setiap hari. Selain itu, data mengenai bagaimana, untuk mengekalkan cabaran kemudahterancaman menunjukkan bahawa faktor yang paling penting ialah menggunakan sumber kewangan berisiko rendah bagi mengelakkan krisis kewangan apabila mereka mengalami kesan tersebut. Dengan pendekatan ini, usahawan wanita dapat bertindak balas terhadap faktor kemudahterancaman tersebut. Data temu bual tentang ketahanan menunjukkan bahawa perusahaan ini bertahan lebih daripada dua generasi. Berdasarkan dapatan, rangka kerja teori direka bentuk untuk mendapatkan pemahaman berkaitan faktor kejayaan keusahawanan wanita dalam mengatasi cabaran luar terutamanya dari konteks kemudahterancaman. Faktor kejayaan ini penting dalam membantu usaha golongan wanita untuk mengambil bahagian dalam keusahawanan yang berasaskan aktiviti ekonomi berpendapatan tinggi. Kesimpulannya, rangka kerja ini akan memberdayakan usahawan wanita untuk berjaya dalam perniagaan masa depan mereka.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

SMEs	-	Small Medium Enterprise
SMTEs	-	Small Medium Tourism Enterprise
ETP	-	Economic Transformation Program
TN50	-	National Transformation 2050
NTP	-	National Tourism Policy
UNTWO	-	United Nations World Tourism Organization
OECD	-	Organization of Economic Co-Operation and Development
TSA	-	Tourism Satellite Accounts
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
OTA	-	Online Travel Agents
TDC	-	Tourist Development Corporation
LADA	-	Langkawi Development Authority
EPU	-	Economic Planning Unit
LICC	-	Langkawi International Convention Centre
TALC	-	Tourism Area Life Cycle
LIMA	-	Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace
TDCM	-	Tourist Development Corporation Malaysia
CHOGM	-	Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on business women's community, who have been giving special attention in Malaysia, which has increased participation of women in workplace and in leadership position, especially entrepreneurship. Consequently, it has become increasingly used, particularly in terms of its understanding among researcher, but limited in the study with the external challenges of vulnerability. This chapter will begin by discussing with a general background to the study area and addresses the need of research. While, the statement of the problem, research question and objective are explained in the subsequent sections. The scope of study and the significance of the research are briefly highlighted. The chapter concludes with the structure of the thesis and sheds light the synopsis of the seven chapter's content therein.

### 1.2 Research Background

The women in Malaysia nowadays appeared as a major composition of the population and hence interposes toward the supply of labour and economic development. The prospects of the changing gender roles with increasing participation of women in the workplace and in leadership position, especially in entrepreneurship have been given special attention in Malaysia. In between 2010 and 2016, women's employment in Malaysia grew at a faster pace compared to male employment, about 4 percent and 2 percent compound annual rates respectively (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2016). Based on tourism and hospitality services, saw the highest rate of increase in female employment and indeed is a very positive

sign for the growth of the country. While, Malaysia holds a wide scope of tourism products that can be advertised as opportunities for local economic growth and women said to play an important role in economic development as well as stabilize the economy during the recession period (Alam et al., 2011). As a result, this will bring the positive development and help not only by the country's growth, but also by the fact that there are enormous opportunities for women in different economic activities. As claimed by Mahmood and Hanafi (2013), women in Malaysia have contributed to the country's growth self-employment and business oriented employment due to an emphasis on industrialization in the last three decades.

The emphasis on women in entrepreneurship also has been given special attention in Malaysia Planning, especially under the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) and 11<sup>th</sup> Malaysian Plan for the last five years. One of the key main concern in the government's 11<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan is to increase the women participation in the labour rate up to 59 percent by 2020. Recently, as an agenda of drafted 2050 National Transformation (TN50) policy document, the aim is still focusing on the prospects of the changing gender roles with increasing participation of women in the workplace and in leadership position. This includes in tourism entrepreneurship as one of the ways to strengthen the ability of the community, or to be more specific, business women's community, to be part of the success.

This research is so relevant to our country nowadays since business women are expected to expand their traditional operation of Small Medium Enterprise (SMEs) by taking opportunities of tourism economic growth from operations such as accommodation, transportation, services and supporting services related to tourism entrepreneurship. While one the aim of Malaysian Government's is wanting to realize the growth of women entrepreneurs as a high priority, and maintain the long term sustainability and survival aspects of the newly created business ventures. Even though various studies have been carried out pertaining to women entrepreneurs in Malaysia, there has not been any specific study carried out by researchers. It could provide models or an explanation on how they were able to sustain their business ventures in the long term and adapting the situational challenges of vulnerability such as seasonality, trends, and shocks by which consistently appear when describing resilience in business operation.

As claimed by Wood et al. (2010), the vulnerability has been discussed as the degree of risk a system faces from seasonality, trends and shocks, which is a system's ability to defend itself against disasters, adaptive capacity and recover from extreme events. This concept is recognized the vulnerability impact could disrupt livelihoods and community well-being. As also pointed by Willroth et al., (2012) as tourism begin to be accepted as part of livelihood strategy, seasonality is one of the greatest challenges faced by most tourism destinations and has a significant influence on livelihood assets and outcomes. The livelihood of the business women's community is sustain when it can cope with and recover from trends and shocks and keep up its capabilities and assets.

This was observed in an established tourism destination in Malaysia such as Langkawi Island since 1980s, women actively involved in the island economic development, to be specified in tourism business. Women entrepreneurs in Langkawi Island have undergone several phases and encounter enormous pressure from various situational challenges starting from their beginning operation and this affecting their survival in tourism business. Considering these factors, reliable knowledge should be in place to ensure the long-term survival of women entrepreneurship and SMEs. There is limited fundamental knowledge in understanding the ability of women entrepreneur in coping with service knowledge-based economic especially in tourism, which are very much influenced by vulnerability factor of the seasonality, trends and shock. This study investigates to gain a better understanding of the determinant factors of their business survival and long-term success.

### **1.3 The Need of Research**

With opportunities almost local tourism business starting since early 1980, significant numbers of women entrepreneurship with trans-generational background have managed to expand businesses the scale of Small-Medium enterprise such accommodation and with supporting services related to tourism entrepreneurship. As a result, more Malaysia women are engaged in small tourism firm which has a



favourable impact on regional development of a nation (Alam et al., 2011). In many islands in rural peripheries area performing as tourist destinations, most of the activities and services offered to the customers are mainly produced by the small tourism firm with transgenerational family tourism business (Ismail et al., 2018). However, these businesses run by local community is arguably easy to be influenced by their remote location, dependency on imported good, susceptibility to natural disaster, stresses incidence and limited resources that expose to vulnerability.

Generally, the growing concern on the vulnerability of tourism industry is the response options and how the ability to cope the changes associated with global and regional change known as resilience. The examples of such studies include resilience and non-linear change in island tourism (Hamzah and Hampton, 2013) and the resilience of formal and informal tourism enterprises to disasters: reef tourism in Phuket, Thailand (Biggs et al, 2012). There has been little fundamental knowledge on how the ability of women entrepreneurs in coping with service knowledge-based economic especially in the tourism business, which are very much influenced by a vulnerability factor of the seasonality, trends and shock.

Considering all these factors, reliable knowledge should be in place to ensure the long-term survival and resilient of women entrepreneurship in SMEs. As pointed by Thomas et al. (2011) in Table 1.1, tourism on gender related to business growth and failure, financial management and innovation are emerging, but limited researches in tourism imply the aspect of gender and ethnic enterprise are still requiring further understanding especially within the context of training and learning and contribution to local economies. Supporting this contention, Berinden and Corpădean (2019) also stated that in their paper for small firm of accommodation businesses, the financial management is one of the important sustainability issue for growth. Therefore, the required knowledges regarding these issue must take into the serious concerns.

Table 1.1 Research Agenda of Small Firm in Tourism on Gender

<b>Area for initiation- generally absent from tourism research</b>	<b>Emerging areas-limited research in tourism</b>	<b>Established areas-in need of further theoretical development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Small business growth and failure</b></li> <li>• Business strategy</li> <li>• <b>Finance and financial management</b></li> <li>• Supply chains</li> <li>• Innovation and knowledge management</li> <li>• Explanations of structural changes</li> <li>• Small festival and events businesses</li> <li>• International comparative studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal economic relations</li> <li>• Pro-poor tourism</li> <li>• <b>Ethnic enterprise</b></li> <li>• <b>Gender</b></li> <li>• Social and cultural perspectives</li> <li>• Local economic development</li> <li>• ICTs</li> <li>• Policy formation and participation in local ‘partnership’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability</li> <li>• Characteristics and motivations</li> <li>• <b>Training and learning</b></li> <li>• Developing economies</li> <li>• Impact of public policy</li> <li>• <b>Contribution to local economies</b></li> <li>• Small business networks and clusters</li> <li>• marketing</li> </ul>

In relation to above, several objectives have been identified to support the research goal, which is to understand on their success factors of women entrepreneurs response options the challenges of vulnerability context and how the ability to cope the changes based on their enterprise experiences. There is also a need to investigate to what extent the different groups are exposed to particular trends, shocks and seasonality, and later the sensitivity of their livelihoods to these factors. It is vital for the researcher to exploring ways to protect and disseminate what is valuable and essential to build greater resilience among these business women’s community. An understanding of causal factors of vulnerability is crucial for minimising the negative effects of future threats, developing adaptive capacities and building resilience. It is so relevant to our country nowadays since women entrepreneurships are expected to expand and survived in their traditional operation of small tourism firm by taking opportunities of local tourism economic growth from operations such as accommodation and others supported services related to tourism entrepreneurship.

## **1.4 Problem Statement**

Women entrepreneurship is widely contributes to the economic development and continuously debated in the past studies (Rowley, 2013). In women entrepreneurship literature (Mattis 2004; Rehman and Azam Roomi 2012), they also verified that the numbers of women entrepreneurs study has been increased yearly. As mentioned by Alam et al., (2011), despite the growth of women involvement in entrepreneurship, but the number of women entrepreneurs who succeed are still not satisfying. Even though the entrepreneurial studies are continually conducted, there is still lack of research done on women entrepreneurial success (Akhawaya and Havenga, 2012).

Langkawi Island, for example, has experienced tremendous development since declared a duty free island in 1987. Tourism sector has become one of the major cultural and economic forces in the Langkawi today and is noted as an important and contribution to benefit local communities (Marzuki, 2011). Langkawi Island is also being pressure by the issue of tourism business failure, despite being the country's premier tourism destination. For instance in the study of Alam et al., (2011); Kallerberg and Leicht (2013), claimed that women entrepreneurs are still in low business growth and not successful enough. Pertaining to this situation, Langkawi Municipal Council (2013b) revealed that 68 percent of local business unsuccessful especially in accommodations business between 2003 and 2013 were small medium tourism enterprises. From this point of view, it is very important to study and understand what are the kind of women entrepreneurship need to understand and aware what are the challenges that they have to adapt so as to achieve in their ventures.

Therefore, in order to fill in this gap, this study is going to find the success factor of women entrepreneurship in adapting the external challenges from vulnerability that may affect the women entrepreneurial success. In addition, Huda et al., (2014) had also suggested to study the entrepreneurial characteristics as one of the contribution to success factor by multidimensional for future research. Thus, there is a need to study on the entrepreneurial characteristics such as need for achievement, risk taking, self-confidence and creative and innovative (Lai et al.,

2010; Hoe et al., 2012;Ummah and Gunapalan, 2012; Hassan et al., 2014; and Mendryk, 2014) to face the situational challenges from vulnerability of seasonality, trends and shocks.

This was observed in Langkawi as a case study is undergoing significant transformation into tourism sector as today it's become one of the major economic activity of the island. The island additionally has experienced considerable changes in government policies, economic and social changes and physical settings between the early arrival of tourists and the present day (Omar et al, 2014). Influences, impacting as each external and internal factors, can be found in the business environment, such as globalization, technological innovation and demographic and social change, as well as the level of technology deployed, innovative ability and financial support in entrepreneurship (Mahmood and Hanafi, 2013). From this point of view, the business women's community are too exposed to the vulnerability will not only be influenced by local occurrences, but also on regional and global spatial scales (Tsao and Ni, 2016). Based on this, women entrepreneurship cannot escape from the vulnerability in their business operation to seasonality, trends and shocks, especially in the global context.

In addition, the tourism industry in had provided the opportunity for local residents in Langkawi to become involved in business activities. Nevertheless, the development run by these group are usually affected by financial barriers based on the observation and past studies reviewed. The difficulty that faced by them as to obtain financial support from external sources such as financial institutions. Referred to their business scale were in unstable position and insufficiency in setting long term business objectives due to an increase in dynamic competition against large and modern competitors. Among the factors that contributed, including lack of business strategies, long term planning process due to yearly business performance because most of them are still run in traditionally management cash flow that prepared the only basic financial information to sustain the family business cash flow. These issues reduce the tendency in getting the external financial support to expansion of business.

Instead of that matters, they are also facing barriers against the growth of their business, which include the family land matters due to land division, high maintenance, manually and traditionally management, as well as lack of technology deployed to promote and marketing the business. These scenes was observed along Pantai Cenang where is along the beach all of them are subject to family land matters because most of them are relatives and run the same family business operation. The factors might influence the growth performance of the business scale to business expansion. However, the extent of business performance and success among business women's community is unknown.

Thus, other various segments of vulnerability from seasonality, trends and shocks are contributing to its resilience. It is important to view that seasonality is a temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism and express in terms of the number of visitors and the expenditure of the visitors (Jurdana & Zmijanovic, 2014). In relation to this, it is critical to pose the question of what are the best management measures that should be used in order to avoid or decrease the negative impact of seasonality and alleviate its consequences. The factors might influence by the nature (e.g., climate) and institutionalised motivations (e.g., public holidays, social pressure) as well as pull factors such events, and sporting season (Cannas, 2016).

Similarly, trends are also affecting the tourism business and these due to the national or international economic trends, resource trends (e.g., energy availability), population trends (e.g., population expansion), and tourist market trends (e.g., from mass tourism to alternative tourism) (Tsao and Ni, 2016). Additionally, shocks adding the challenge to the tourism business. They also added that, shock mostly relate to tourism's external market risks. It was largely unpredictable and unmanageable, it is serious to concern the readiness of these women entrepreneurship in Langkawi that should be trained in order to adapt the impact. Within this context, the vulnerability of women entrepreneurship or so called business women's community might have direct influence as to how they cope with the issue of seasonality, trends and shock.

## **1.5 Research Question**

With the above mentioned background, studies related to the success factors of women-owned SMEs in tourism towards their ability in facing the challenges of vulnerability context of seasonality, trends and shock are vital to be studied. The research questions are therefore developed for this study:

- (a) What are factors directing business women's community for participation in entrepreneurship?
- (b) How do they exposed and response to vulnerability of seasonality, trends and shock in tourism entrepreneurship?
- (c) How the business women's community coping and adapt to the context of seasonality, trends and shocks in tourism business?

## **1.6 Research Objectives**

This research aims to explore the factors influencing the success of business women's community and their extent to the response of vulnerability in tourism business. The following objectives are considered to achieve the research aim:

- (a) To investigate success factors in directing business women's community for participation in entrepreneurship.
- (b) To examine the vulnerability of seasonality, trends and shock and response that influencing women entrepreneurship in tourism business.
- (c) To understanding factors influencing business women's community to Seasonality, Trends and Shock in order to assist tourism development.

## 1.7 Scope of Study

According to Simon and Goes (2013), said that the scope of the study refers to the parameter or the domain of study which is needed to be clearly stated. So it is important to highlight that, this study on the understanding the success factors and the ability of women entrepreneur in coping with service knowledge-based economic especially in tourism, which is very much influenced by a vulnerability factor of the seasonality, trends and shock. It is also to understand of causal factors of positive and negative impact of vulnerability are crucial for minimising the negative effects of future threats and developing adaptive capacity and building resilience. The claimed by Masud et al., (2015), understanding of vulnerabilities context encompasses seasonality, trends and shocks and thus, resilience of women in tourism entrepreneurship is exceedingly significant.

So, in discussing the business women community and vulnerability context literature, this study concentrates on the success and causal factors of vulnerability, then the impact either positive or negative. It is important to note that community based tourism sector is highly vulnerable not only to internal challenges such as passive community and leadership problems, but also to external challenges such as economic recession, competition from other tourism products and more that could disrupt livelihoods and community well-being. As stated by Willroth et al., (2012), as tourism begin to be accepted as part of livelihood strategy, seasonality becomes one of the greatest challenges faced by most tourism destinations and has a significant influence on livelihood assets and outcomes.

Langkawi Island is the focused island in this research, while there are many island tourism destination in Malaysia. First, the island is considered one of the most established tourism destinations in the country, which has undergone several phases of development since the 1980s. Second, significant numbers of business women entrepreneurship with transgenerational background have managed to survive within 20 to 30 years in operation and expected to expand businesses beyond the scale of Small-Medium enterprise such accommodation, transportation, services and supporting services related to tourism entrepreneurship. Third, Langkawi also evolved tremendously in terms of physical and social development due to the

expansion of the tourism industry and the diversity of attractions available on the island over the last three decades. So, it is crucial and interesting to track these situational changes of vulnerability segments and how they accept and adapt in their operation which has undergone several phases of development influence to on the island that contributing to its resilience.

### **1.7.1 Langkawi Island as a Case Study**

The tourism sector is one of the main industry in Malaysia. It requires with the development and strategic planning for it to remain competent in the modern world and bring in more benefits to the country and the local communities. Specifically in Langkawi, a prominent destination in Malaysia since the 1980s, was selected as a case study due to its developments that involve the introduction of multiple products to attract different market segments. Langkawi Island is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Malaysia. The tourism industry in Langkawi also has proven itself to be a major revenue earner for the country in terms of total revenue generated. In 2016, this industry showed that the total revenue collected increased by 4.5 per cent from RM69.1 billion in 2015 to RM72.4 billion as reported by the Langkawi Development Authority (LADA). It seems tourism sector remains as the highest economic contributors to the country and to Langkawi itself.

Business survival of women entrepreneurship in Langkawi Island is too dependent to location that indicates the foremost impact on their long term survival. More precisely, women entrepreneurship located in Cenang Beach, Kedawang area are leaning to survive better compared to those businesses located in another part of the island. Despite its location away from the main administration and commercial centre area contains diverse tourism resources and products such as Cenang beach, Tengah beach, Underwater World, Rice Museum, duty-free shopping complexes and etc. It serves as a competitive advantage for many tourism ventures including small-medium enterprise by these women group, which enables them to exploit the same or similar resources. The small-medium tourism enterprise also benefit the strong tourism patterns from holidaymakers who look for budget recreational activities at the beaches. These justify why Kedawang area is more conducive to business



survival for tourism business, regardless of a greater number of competitors. In the similar vein, the finding substantiates the government efforts to revitalise Cenang beach with a holistic development to make it premier recreational beach for family and tourist alike, as outlined in the Langkawi Tourism Blueprint. It is suggested that the development plan should include Tengah beach in order to allow the tourism business in the particular vicinity to receive similar benefits as those in Cenang beach. For investors and entrepreneurs, it is important to note that planning for strategic location is one of the key surviving factors for their businesses.

This accomplishment is due to the importance of various parties, especially the establishment of LADA in 1990 and Ministry of Tourism Malaysia in introducing and promoting Langkawi as a popular tourism destination that should be visited, both by the national (domestic) and international tourists. These authority are mostly responsible for planning and implementing tourism development in Langkawi. However, local communities are keenly involved in tourism related programs and others activities to expedite tourism development on this island. They are also consequently contribute to overall national development and Langkawi tourism development itself. To date, numerous of tourism products have been industrialized as tourist attractions in Langkawi by LADA or by some other agencies. Some of the major tourist attractions in Langkawi are known widely such as Kilim Geopark, Langkawi Oriental Village, Cable Car, Laman Padi Langkawi, Langkawi Handcraft Complex, Langkawi and underwater Chenang Beach. Referring Figure 1.1 show the whole map of Langkawi Island.

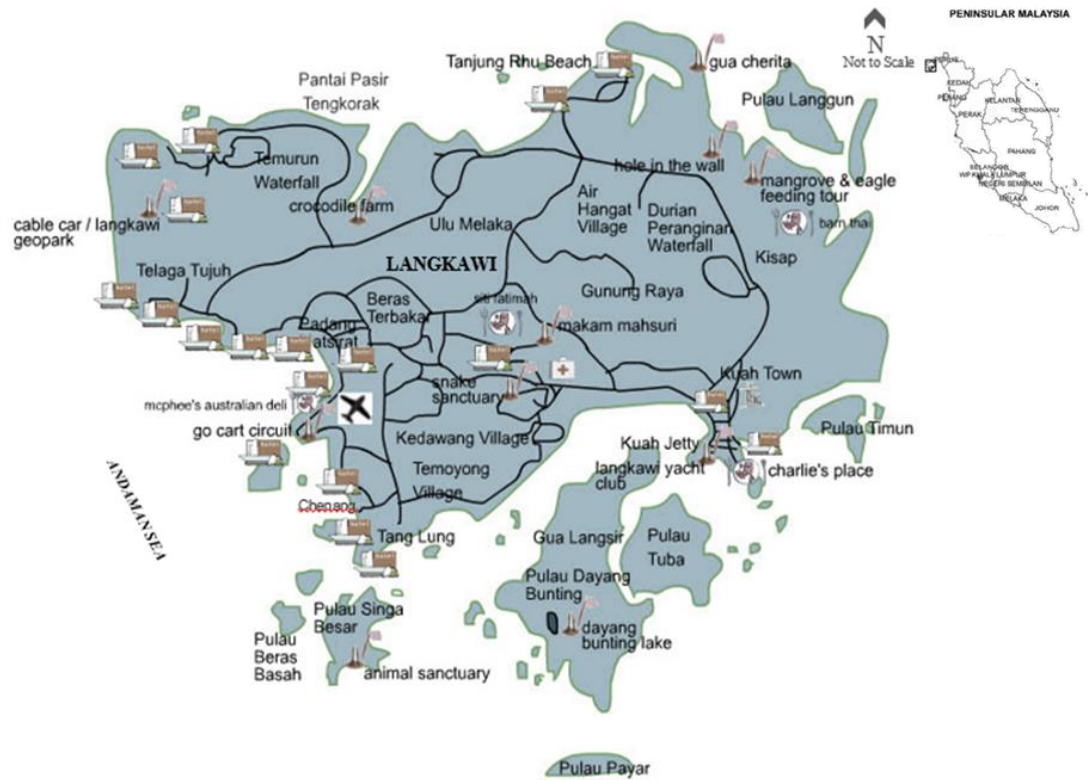


Figure 1.1 Map of Langkawi Island (LADA, 2016)

Additionally, Langkawi’s natural and man-made tourism products transformed this island into a famous tourist destination especially after it was declared a duty-free island by the Malaysian government in 1987. Overall, Langkawi has an area (including the surrounding islands) of about 478.48 km. Of these islands, only three are inhabited: Langkawi Island, Dayang Bunting Island and Tuba Island. Langkawi Island is covered by forested mountains, hills and native plants, and surrounded with limestone structures. It is located approximately 30 km from Kuala Perlis; 51.5 km from Kuala Kedah; and 109 km from Penang. It is conveniently accessible by ferry from Kuala Perlis or Kuala Kedah and by direct flight from Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru to Langkawi International Airport. It makes an ideal Island destination for short excursions among domestic tourist. The impact of these can be seen when the number of tourist arrivals from 2010-2016 to Langkawi always exceeded 2.3 million tourists. Although in 2015 there was a slight decrease of tourist arrivals especially international tourist due to the shocks of twin disasters national airline of MH370 and MH17 in 2014.

The government has seriously initiated to develop Langkawi as a tourism destination since the early 1970s by allowing the yearly international and domestic event, the number of both tourist arrivals to Langkawi has been increasing significantly. The sequence of important key events, which is relevant to the tourism development of Langkawi from the 1970s until the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is summarized in Table 1.2. The increasing tourist arrivals has spurred a corresponding increase in demand within the tourism service industry. This includes organizing internationally recognized events such as LIMA on a bi-annual basis, Le Tour de Langkawi, Langkawi Ironman Triathlon, International Paintball and the Langkawi International Regatta. The recognition of this Langkawi Geopark as the first Geopark in South East Asia as a global level bring in more visitors, researchers and nature enthusiasts. The government, private sectors and local communities have experienced a considerable amount of economic development as a result of the booming tourism industry in Langkawi Island. To capture demand from both domestic and international tourist, various programs and development especially in term of accommodation, services, supported services and transportation have been undertaken to improve the image of Langkawi since 1991.

Table 1.2 Chronology of Tourism Development in the Langkawi Islands

<b>Year</b>	<b>Progress of tourism development in Langkawi</b>
<b>1973</b>	The first international hotel is opened (Langkawi Country Club).
<b>1975</b>	Malaysia Tourism Development Plan was produced. Langkawi is identified as one of the tourism growth potential areas in Malaysia in the Malaysia Tourism Development Master Plan prepared for Tourist Development Corporation (TDC).
<b>1977</b>	Tourism Master Plan was prepared for Langkawi Island focusing on resort and hotel development in Tanjung Rhu, Chenang Beach and Kuah. However, the plan was never implemented.
<b>1983</b>	Money was allocated for developing tourism under mid term review of 4 <sup>th</sup> Malaysian Plan 1981-1985.
<b>1984</b>	Promet Berhad with supported from the government launched the proposal to develop 1,000 acres in Tanjung Rhu, Langkawi as an international tourism spot. Three years after that, the project was down scale, the company was take over by TRI Berhad. Tanjung Rhu becomes devastated area.

<b>1986</b>	The Federal Government announced to develop Langkawi as tourism destination.
<b>1987</b>	Langkawi Islands was declared by the Federal Government as a Duty Free island from 1 <sup>st</sup> January 1987.
<b>1988</b>	The Langkawi International Airport was opened.
<b>1990</b>	LADA was incorporated by an Act of Parliament on 1 <sup>st</sup> January 1990 to coordinate the island development efforts.
<b>1991</b>	Another 350 million Ringgit Malaysia had been allocated under the 6 <sup>th</sup> Malaysian Plan (1991-1995) to improve local residents socio-economic and futher development in tourism infrastructure in Langkawi. The island organizes it first LIMA International event.
<b>1992</b>	The Langkawi Structure Plan 1990-2005 was produced for a long term development policy until 2005.
<b>2000</b>	The Government declares Langkawi as Langkawi Tourism City.
<b>2001</b>	Langkawi was declared as first ‘Tourism City’ in Malayisa on the 24 <sup>th</sup> March 2001 by the State Government of Kedah.
<b>2003</b>	Langkawi Tourism Action Council was created by Tourism Ministry and was under (LADA) administration. The first Royal Langkawi Regatta is held on the island.
<b>2005</b>	Langkawi Local Plan was produced stressing on future development especially tourism development in Langkawi until 2015.
<b>2006</b>	Kedah State declares Langkawi as Geopark Island.
<b>2007</b>	UNESCO declares Langkawi as a Global Geopark destination.
<b>2011</b>	The Langkawi Tourism Blueprint 2011-2015 is launched by the PM prepared by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in December.
<b>2012</b>	Langkawi releases its first officials branding Campaign under the theme ‘Naturally Langkawi’ positioning it as a nature and ecotourism destination.
<b>2015</b>	Langkawi hosts the 26 <sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in April. Langkawi International Convention Centre (LICC) opens for events.
<b>2016</b>	LADA is in the process of developing the second Langkawi Langkawi Tourism Strategic Plan for the 2016-2020 period after successfully achieving a commendable performance in its first strategic plan between 2011 and 2015.
<b>2017</b>	AirAsia's Chief Executive Officer, Tan Sri Tony Fernandes said the new aviation route was the company's quest to boost the island's potential as a world-class tourist destination.

Before Langkawi became a popular tourist destination, the main source of income for the local community was from agricultural and fishery activities. A total population of 103,075 people where the majority 90 percent is Malay. Most were either small-scale farmers or traditional offshore fishermen. However, tourism developments on this island have gradually transformed the economic activities of the local community. Business and service sectors which are mostly tourism and hospitality based provide new economic opportunities for the local community to garner income. The majority of local people is engaged in the tourism industry working in hotels, operating the resort and chalet, provide support services, as well as travel agencies.

Meanwhile, in terms of the business's start-up capital, most local communities obtained their financial support through personal savings including women entrepreneurship in Langkawi. This means majority of the local communities start their businesses with their own resources and are not bound by capital, and it is sufficient through private fund. In 2011, there were 1459 businesses registered with the Companies Commission of Malaysia. This figure increased to 1547 in 2012, and improved to 1633 in 2013. Until September 2014, about 1200 entrepreneurs operating in the Langkawi Island had registered with the said commission. There are a huge number of participations, and if this figure can be sustained, it will increase the socio-economics' status of Langkawi communities.

In general, the commencement of Langkawi local communities' participation in businesses is the year 2000. This is because the year 2000 was the year when the government started to actively implement development programs in Pulau Langkawi until it is recognized as a member of the Global Geoparks Network. Thus, many business opportunities are available to local communities. The developments that are taking place on the Island have brought socio-economic changes to the island's population. The changes act as a catalyst for rapid tourism growth on the Island. To further sustain growth and developments of this industry, the involvement of the local communities is deemed critical.

As noted by Omar et al. (2014), the multiple stakeholder involvement such as among the Government and private sectors, tourism entrepreneurs, and residents

in regard to the island development since the mid-1980s has resulted in Langkawi being one of the leading destinations in Malaysia. At the same time, island destination are significantly affected by changes in the global economy, especially to their local economies. Similarly, Ling (2010) claims that Langkawi has many products to offer that are not only limited to the island's natural heritage but also its culture and history. So by this opportunity, majority of local communities start their own business especially women that cover about a half of the total overall entrepreneurship in Langkawi because of its reputation as one of the top international tourist destination in the world (Salleh et al., 2014) . The development that are taking place on the Island have brought socio-economic changes to the island's population. The changes act as a catalyst for rapid tourism growth on the island. Therefore, these characteristics contribute to the appropriateness of Langkawi as case study and in understanding the women entrepreneurship ability to adapt the changes of challenges from vulnerability of seasonality, trends and shocks.

### **1.7.2 Tourism Life Cycle in Langkawi Island**

Langkawi Island had passed through for several stage of cycle in tourism. Based on the longitudinal study, the evolution of tourism development in Langkawi Island was synthesised and initially described using Butler's tourism area life cycle (TALC), (1980) as the conceptual framework. The TALC model is widely used by tourism scholars to explain the evolution of tourism destination over time. In the mid-eighties tourism development in Langkawi Island was only geared up, but the initial tourism activities on the island have already started in the 17th century. Langkawi was also identified in Malaysia as a potential tourism destination to be developed. This section briefly outlines the phases of Langkawi's tourism development and how it fits into the larger context of Malaysia's tourism industry. With the potential of developing Langkawi, the Government hoped that more economic activities could be generated on the island and the local people would reap the benefits by involving in the tourism business especially accommodation, transportation and product to the tourists.

According to Omar et al. (2014), in their research found that up to present, Langkawi Island has consistently experienced the first four phases are briefly explained based on TALC model. The four phases essentially it has undergone four distinct phases of development which are Exploration: early 1642 until 1947s; Involvement: 1948 until 1983s; Development: early 1984 until 1999s and Consolidation from around 2000 to date. Table 1.3 refers to the evolution of tourism development in Langkawi Island are shown below. By using this, the researcher can track the changes in Langkawi's tourism evolution in term of its tourism product and services started and the events that have significantly impacted the island's tourism services development.

Table 1.3 Tourism Life Cycle in Langkawi Island (Omar et al., 2014)

Phases	Evolution Storyline
Exploration (1642-1947)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Received visitors among Dutch soldiers that served in the region in 1642</li> <li>• It is fairly safe to assume that Langkawi's values in terms of its natural environment were still intact; clean environment, pristine landscapes, friendly local people and unique local tradition.</li> </ul>
Involvement (1948-1983)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Langkawi was involved with tourism when it established a first hotel called Fairwinds Hotel on the island in year 1948</li> <li>• The number of tourists were insignificant and therefore had little impact on the environment and social life of the island community.</li> <li>• The first Malaysia tourism master plan prepared by the Tourist Development Corporation Malaysia (TDCM) in 1975 (TDCM, 1975), Langkawi was among the potential tourist destinations to be developed based on the specific requirements by the Government.</li> <li>• The island was also recommended for development with limited hotel and resort development. The hotel buildings and other tourist facilities should be low rise and low density in order to maintain the attractive and idyllic setting on the islands.</li> <li>• During this period, tourist facilities and infrastructures were somewhat limited. The only modern international-standard hotel facility available on the island during that time</li> </ul>

	<p>was the 100-room Langkawi Country Club. The 2nd Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak (1970-1976), officially opened Langkawi Country Club in 1973.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With this international-standard hotel facility, the Government hoped that more economic activities could be generated on the island and the local people would reap the benefits by involving in the cottage industry and by selling craft products to the tourists.</li> <li>• Following the recommendation from the Tourism Master Plan 1975, TDCM prepared a tourism master plan for Langkawi with the assistance from a group of American consultants based in Hawaii in 1977.</li> <li>• The success of the plan depended upon the Government solutions on multiple factors such as infrastructure development, investment incentives, and coordination between Government agencies in developing the island.</li> <li>• In the early 1980s, there was a proposal by the Promet Berhad (Promet-short for Progressive Methods Berhad), a private company that received full support from the Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, to develop major tourism resorts in Langkawi.</li> <li>• In 1986, the company negotiated a mega project, Langkawi Resort city, with potential investors to be developed at the Tanjung Rhu area. The company owned over 400 hectares of prime land on Langkawi and the Government provided various investment and tax incentives such as duty-free status to the company then known as Promet (Langkawi) Resorts Sdn Bhd</li> </ul>
<p><b>Development (1984-1999)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Langkawi was undergone through a significant physical transformation to cater for increasing number of visitors. Langkawi's development as a tourism destination progressed significantly during the time of Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister (1981-2003).</li> <li>• Following the declaration of Langkawi as a duty-free island in 1987, the total arrivals at the end of 1988 was significantly increased by at least 40 percent. In 1988, Langkawi opened its international airport located at Padang Masirat and therefore, the number of arrivals by air increased tremendously.</li> <li>• Based on the Langkawi Structure Plan 1990-2005 (Langkawi District Council, 1992), at this stage, there were three main tourism products</li> </ul>



	<p>that could potentially attract visitors to the island such as beaches and other areas around the island that possessed natural landscape environments, historical elements such as myths and legends, and shopping activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1987, Langkawi Island was accorded the status of a duty-free island (tax free status) by the Government. The purpose of declaring the island as a duty free was not only to speed up the island development but also to transform it into an international tourism destination.</li> <li>• As a result, the island was able to host the 10<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Heads of governments meeting (CHOGM) retreat meeting to Langkawi Island in 1987. It was the first international-scale event ever held on the island.</li> <li>• The draft of the Langkawi Structure Plan (1990-2005) for public display at Kuah in 1991 (PMO, 1991), LADA was established by the Government as a special body to mediate the efforts from both the Federal and State Government of Kedah in developing the island.</li> <li>• The need to have such an establishment like LADA in order to coordinate various development activities in Langkawi was already expressed in the first Langkawi Tourism Master Plan 1977.</li> <li>• The master plan prepared for TDCM recommended the Government to establish a Langkawi Authority and a development corporation to coordinate with various Government agencies at the District, State, and Federal levels and also between private enterprises and the residents of Langkawi.</li> <li>• During this phase of development, special events emerged as one of the major</li> <li>• Attractions in Langkawi. Many events continue to be organized and initiated on the island such as Langkawi International Dialogue (LID), the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA), Iron Man Langkawi, and Le Tour De Langkawi.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consolidation (2000-To Date)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the island population depend upon tourism businesses for income generation. The tourist arrivals continue to show an upward trend despite slight variations due to uncontrolled events and other external factors</li> <li>• The island recognition by UNESCO in year 2007 as a global Geopark destination boosted</li> </ul>

	<p>the image of Langkawi as a global tourism destination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LADA also organized a few more events to enrich the island's tourism product portfolio, which significantly contributed to the tourism activities and local income generation.</li> <li>• The Langkawi Tourism Blueprint 2011-2015 was released to the public on 8 December, 2011, by the Prime Minister, Najib Razak. The report was prepared by the Economic Planning Unit (Economic Planning Unit (EPU), 2011) as a strategic short-term tourism plan envisaging Langkawi as one of the top eco-tourism island destinations in the world, as popular as Seychelles, Mauritius, Hawaii, and Maldives.</li> <li>• Based on the Langkawi Tourism Blueprint 2011-2015, approximately RM5 billion of the Government and Private funds would be directed towards the development of more accommodations, commercial zones, and infrastructures between 2011 and 2015.</li> </ul>
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## 1.8 Organization of Research

This chapter contains five chapters referring to Figure 1.2. Chapter 1 explains the general focus and direction of this research through the explanation of research background, problem statements, goal and objectives and scope of study including Langkawi as a case study. Next, Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature on the entrepreneurship theory with increasing participation of women and the external challenges of vulnerability faces in general. At the end, the framework is based on the understanding of research approach used and variables in past studies. Chapter 3 discusses on the methodological of qualitative approach adopted for this study. Detailed descriptions of the research instrument, data collection process and data analysis are all included in this chapter. In Chapter 4, findings from the data collection are presented according to emergent themes from the analysis of the findings. The presentation of the findings is also based on the four research questions, ending with a conclusion that summarizes all the findings. The last, Chapter 5 concludes the thesis by reviewing and presenting the summarize findings of the study. It also explains some contribution interm of theory and practically.

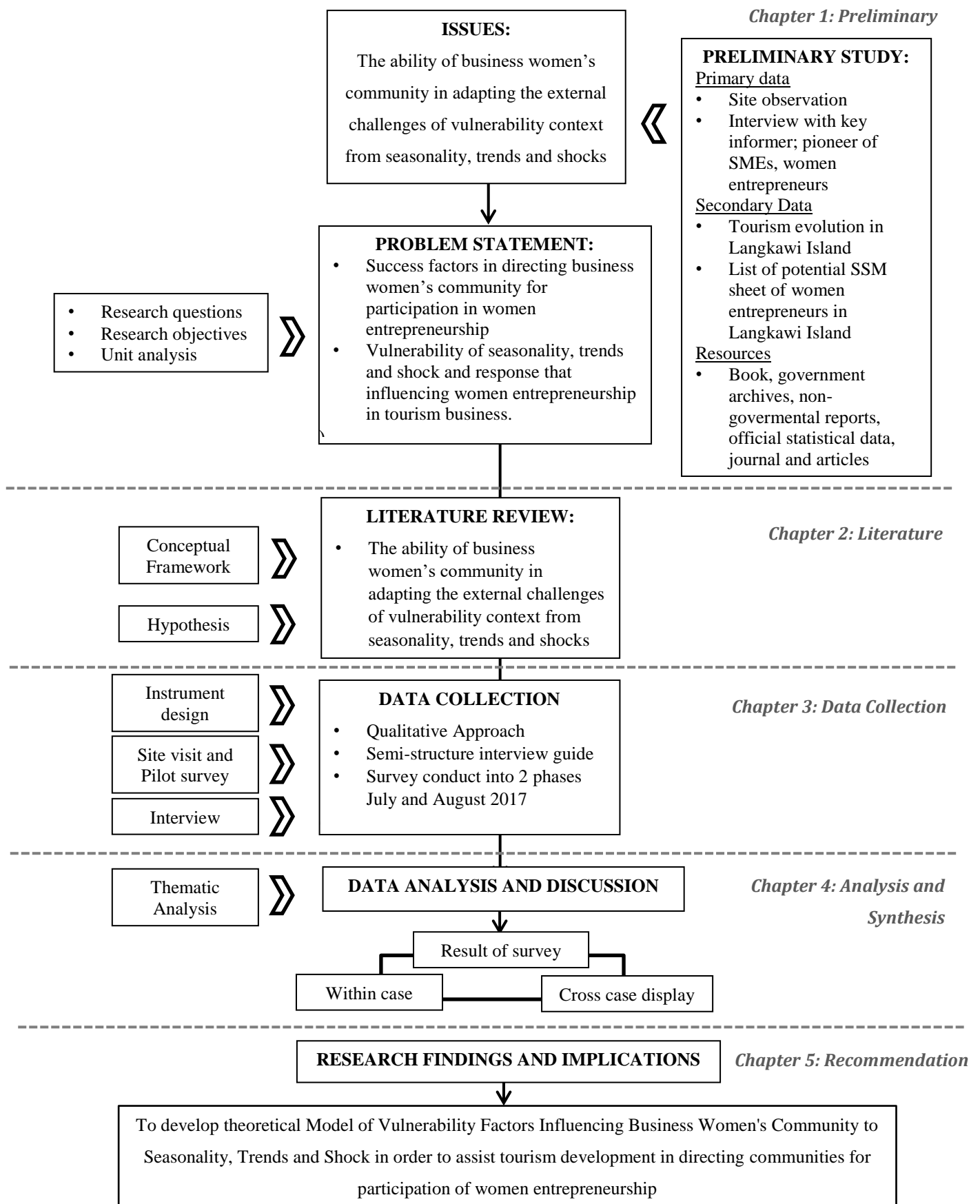


Figure 1.2 Organization of Research

## **1.9 Summary of Chapter**

In conclusion, this chapter presents the overall look about the thesis. It discusses the emerging concept of women entrepreneurship with small-medium scale enterprise and vulnerability of seasonality, trend and shocks as the external challenges in tourism business. The question arises as to how the best example of women entrepreneurship in tourism are able to provide evidence to the ability of women in managing financial and later performing as a crucial asset of wealth generation. In order to understand this, studies related to the success factors of women-owned SMEs in tourism towards their ability in facing the challenges of vulnerability context; seasonality, trends and shock is vital to be studied. The next chapter, the literature review, presents the important concepts related to this study.

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