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## The making of Sabah tech queens

Borneo Post (KK), Malaysia



Page 1 of 2

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**KOTA KINABALU:** Sabah is widely known for its scenic landscape and picturesque travel destinations.

However, it is the people of Sabah that makes the charming state a true national treasure. Sabahans are generally hospitable, polite and pleasant. They are also known as resilient adventurers who are no strangers to new frontiers and its challenges.

In the era of digital globalisation, Sabahans are gearing up for an emerging tech-centric economy. Realising that the state needs to be vigilant in their development strategy in order to be a sustainable force in the digital era, Sabah sets out to develop itself as a high-tech state and currently in the process of producing a skilled and knowledgeable society in the field of digital technology.

As one of the region's leading edutech facilities to develop tech talents for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0), airasia academy has had the pleasure of witnessing the inspiring growth of Sabahans, especially its women who ventured outside of their comfort zones to pursue their dreams in becoming highly valuable human capital in the digital economy.

With zero to minimal knowledge or exposure of the technology field, Sabahan women consisting of fresh graduates, young professionals even the unemployed and those from B40 or underprivileged groups braved the unknown and grasp the opportunity to upskill themselves under our #RatuTech sponsorship programs.

Among them is Samsiah Hassan, 26, a fresh MARA University of Technology (UiTM) graduate.

Samsiah had just completed her Bachelor of Business



Samsiah Hassan

Administration (Hons) in Human Resource Management and was taking a break after a six-month internship with Sabah Softwood Berhad when she found the Yayasan Peneraju Scholarship opportunity with airasia academy on social media.

"My brother is opening an auto detailing shop and I decided to gain some knowledge in digital marketing to help him out. My parents encouraged me to go to Kuala Lumpur and grab the scholarship so I can expand my horizons. They motivated me to challenge myself and experience new things," said Samsiah, who began her studies with a Diploma in Corporate Administration (DCA) before changing her major to Human Resources. She initially planned to continue her degree in Corporate Administration to complete her studies faster but landed on a different path.

Samsiah is thankful for her supportive parents and many others like them, who are the reason young Sabahans like her have the courage to embrace change and realise their true potential in the opportunities that comes with the digital economy.

"I really hope we foster more youths who are exposed to the fundamentals of digital technology soon. It is important for us to develop the crucial skills so we are prepared for the changes that are starting to take



Norsida Ajhari

place already," said Samsiah who encouraged her friend to enrol in airasia academy.

Her friend has successfully completed her data analytics course after facing some challenges in the early stages.

"She was confident on day one, but lost all confidence as (the course) became more technical but I pushed her to do her best and tell the trainers if she couldn't cope. After getting through her insecurities she managed to get help from them and finally completed her course," said Samsiah while adding that airasia academy's on-demand learning (ODL) platform provides a convenient yet extensive reference for students after completing the intensive crash course.

Norsida Ajhari, 25, who reskilled from industrial relations to digital marketing shares the same sentiment: "I was working during the day and had to attend the (online) classes at night. I found that the ODL was super helpful in helping me gain proper understanding of the course as I could just watch and learn on weekends even during my free time."

Norsida graduated in Bachelor of Social Sciences (Hons) Industrial Relations and Labour Studies from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) before accepting a job offer with Sabah Creative Economy and Innovation Centre (SCENIC), one



Uliantie Sarjuni

of airasia academy's #RatuTech program sponsors.

She volunteered to enroll in the program after working for six months and chose digital marketing so she can execute her tasks efficiently.

"I was completely unaware of the latest trends in marketing so it was quite a steep learning curve especially working with a technology and innovation accelerator like SCENIC. Believe it or not, airasia academy gave me my first exposure to digital marketing and it really was an eye-opening experience.

"Coming from a different academic background, the transition was a tough one but I fully immersed myself under the guidance of helpful trainers and strong support from my boss," said Nursida who now leads the Marketing and Communications department at SCENIC.

Her colleague, Uliantie Sarjuni, 38, was a Basic Physics lecturer at Cyberjaya College Kota Kinabalu when she joined the program. She was always curious about data science, thinking it would be helpful to organise her research and execute her tasks more efficiently.

"Turns out, the data analytics course that I took is far more (beneficial) than I ever thought it would be.

"I realised then that I can enhance my skills and expand my career prospects. After completing the course with

airasia academy, I had the opportunity to apply my newly acquired skills and learn more along the way," she explained.

Uliantie said that her course began with the basics of Google Workspace before becoming acquainted with data analytics under the guidance of data science experts, Dr Yu Yong Poh and Dr Tan Yan Bin who fueled her curiosity and developed her passion for something completely foreign and new to her.

"I was still a lecturer then and I started to impart this knowledge onto my students who didn't have laptops to work with, but they can fully utilise their smartphones using this amazing (cloud-based) technology. (The course) is hard but it's a game changer and I'm so thankful for the "breakout rooms" with the trainers who volunteered one-to-one sessions for us newbies to ask questions so we can catch up and comprehend.

"I believe that anything is possible. At the age of 38 and being a lecturer for 13 years, I feel empowered learning about data analytics.

"It is not only useful but opened up a highly promising career path for me. I can speak the same language as the other young tech talents, apply myself and compete in the digital economy for I am now relatable and adaptable to this tech-centric world," she beamed.

Uliantie is now SCENIC's Manager of Capacity Building and Ecosystem division.

Her responsibilities include exposing rural Sabahans to the fundamentals of digital technology and through extensive research she discovered that they are eager to learn about the tools available and how they can market their unique, homemade products and services to the rest of the world.



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KEMENTERIAN TERANG, SAINS, TEKNOLOGI,  
ALAM SEKITAR DAN PERUBAHAN IKLIM

Page 2 of 2

### SUMMARIES

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