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We must find our own model in e-commerce

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WHEN e-commerce experts say that Malaysians are not ready for e-commerce, it is tantamount to saying Malaysians are not ready for driving.

Just because the majority of Malaysians do not embrace the American or western e-commerce model does not mean that Malaysians are not ready.

Just because the majority of Malaysians do not buy powerful V8, six-litre gas guzzlers does not mean they are not ready for driving.

A "more correct" and less insulting statement would be:

"Malaysians have not found an e-commerce model that they are ready to embrace".

Or, "No one has developed or implemented an e-commerce model that is acceptable to Malaysians in general".

Like most other instances, we in Malaysia are generally good at copying American and Western ideas and things and not very good at creating our own things.

The success of Amazon.com and eBay is being copied by many Malaysians with similar services and Malaysians are expected to use these services readily. If they don't, the immediate conclusion is 'Malaysians are not ready'

Just as many Malaysian success stories cannot be duplicated overseas, the reverse is also true.

One cannot impose an American e-commerce model on the rest of the world but should instead develop one that suits the marketplace.

After all, just because there are hundreds if not thousands of unsuccessful e-commerce models in the US, we don't say Americans are not ready for it.

Take e-commerce as a function like eating and breathing. We can eat Chinese, Indian or Malay food or Western food.

It does not mean that we all have to eat steak or hamburgers to appreciate food.

There is no definitive definition for e-commerce. The word is assumed to derive from the words "electronic" and "commerce".

So as long as a transaction incorporates some electronic element and a trade element it can be considered e-commerce.

After all most of us are ultimately interested in the transactions that generate trade and profit and not in splitting hairs over a simple definition.

I cannot help but quote Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who on Sept 1, expressed his disgust at Malaysians who do not have a mind of their own.

He said "They do not have a mind of their own. Anything the foreigners say, like parrots, hanya pandai berkata-kata ... Don't they think of anything on their own? Are Malaysians without capacity to think on their own?"

So I hope that in future we read fewer statements in the media on "Malaysians are not ready for e-commerce" but more of "no one has found a successful e-commerce model for Malaysians yet".