

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MICROPRENEURSHIP IN ONLINE BUSINESSES IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

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ABSTRACT

Young Omani women are becoming empowered and are changing Omani society, congruent to the desire of the government to empower them to contribute to the country's economy. Although the patriarchal society's expectations on women's role remain and women still live up to those expectations, they are engaging in productive activities. This paper describes the characteristics of women micropreneurs, the businesses they engage in, their contribution to the economy and future plans, and the challenges they face. Young Omani women are getting educated on social media allowing them to engage in online businesses while performing their traditional duties at home. However, they face several barriers in managing their business, foremost of which is the lack of access to the market. Further, their responsibilities at home compete for the amount of time they can spend online. Additionally, while the young women are open to the use of social media, they lack competency in social media marketing, among others.

Keywords: Micropreneurship, Social Media Marketing, Women Empowerment, Omani Women Entrepreneurship, Arab Women's Contribution To Society, Arab Women Empowerment, Online Business.

INTRODUCTION

The Middle Eastern economy has slowed down in 2019, with a 0.5% decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), lower than the 0.7% growth estimated in 2018 (ICAEW, 2020). Although Oman's economy dramatically progressed in the last 50 years primarily due to its petroleum products, its budget deficit rose to 9% of GDP in 2019 with high government debts. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported that there was virtually no economic growth in Oman in 2019 (Reuters, 2019).

Unemployment remains high in Oman at 49%, making job creation an important challenge for the government (World Bank Group, 2019). The Omanization program which started in 1999 aimed to provide jobs to Omani nationals by replacing expatriates. In 2017, only 19.2% of the Sultanate's workforce was comprised of Omani nationals, 84.3% of whom are employed in the government sector exceeding Omanization targets. Despite government initiatives to increase employment of Omanis in the private sector; preference for public sector work remains more attractive due to the salary structure (Ayalon, 1993).

From 2013 to 2017, the number of females increased from 31% to 33% of the total Omani workforce in the public and private sectors (Times of Oman, 2019, 2016), most of whom are in the public sector (Ministry of National Economy, 2006, 2008). The ratio of females to

males in the labor force participation rate remained at 34.9% in 2018 (World Bank, 2019), which shows the under-utilization of women-capital in the country.

Oman's Vision 2040 (2019) focuses on diversifying into non-oil economic activities, to become a competitive and integrated economy based on entrepreneurship which hinges on private sector development (Rosenberger, 2019). To support this vision, the Ministry of Social Development launched a 'Tamkeen' program to empower women economically and support their participation in sustainable development (Oman Observer, 2019). The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, through ministerial decree no. 4/2011, granted Omani women permission to carry out commercial activities from home, thus, supporting the balance between their work and home life. An Al-Rafd Fund was created to support the business projects of young Omani men and women, with female beneficiaries reaching up to 28.4% (Supreme Council for Planning, 2019).

The business activities allowed from home included: preparing food stuff, selling perfumes, frankincense, flowers, tailoring of women's clothing, rending dresses, wrapping gifts, preparing handicrafts, organizing events/parties, video and still photography, gift-wrapping, printing, photocopying, computer services, beauty services, etc. In the first six months of year 2018, more than 800 home-based businesses were registered, showing potential in micro-sized home-based businesses (Oman Observer, 2019).

The biggest obstacle to government initiatives is the traditional mindset of most men. Oman is a patriarchal society and has gender-specific roles for women--raising children and taking care of the home. According to Oman's Ministry of National Economy (2006), only 30% of women have freedom of movement, which increases with age. This is augmented by technology. Females, regardless of educational qualification, use mobile phones for communication and entertainment. Some females are driven towards small-scale entrepreneurial activities using the social media.

Social media can prove to be a good platform for accessing wider markets, marketing products/services, improving a firm's outlook, accessing resources, partnering with suppliers, bonding with customers, improving sales, and much more (Samuel & Joe, 2016). This paper attempts to identify the enablers and the inhibitors of women entrepreneurs in Oman, with a focus on social media and social networking. More specifically, the following questions are answered in this paper: What are the common characteristics of home-based women entrepreneurs and their businesses? How does social media support them in their home-based business-related activities and what are the challenges they face in starting and managing their businesses? Additionally, how do they view their contribution to the region's economy and what are their future plans?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurship is an umbrella concept. There is no principle set which can describe the boundaries of entrepreneurship, as its role is very dynamic in the market and interlinked with different kinds of work (Bögenhold, 2004). According to Bögenhold and Fachinger (2007) entrepreneurship takes two aspects: one is to contribute to the growth of already existing firms and the second is the creation of new micro enterprises and solo-self-employment initiating from low-income, without expectations of growth. Welter and Smallbone (2006) explained that 'necessity entrepreneurship' prevails in developing countries. Ukanwa et al. (2018) stated that low economic conditions have very limited options; therefore, necessity exists and prevails. Bögenhold (1987) was the first to differentiate entrepreneurship pursued by adverse economic

conditions, as well as entrepreneurship pursued by desire. Bögenhold and Fachinger (2007) argued that entrepreneurship takes different meanings, concepts, and forms; thus, micropreneurship can be conceptualized as a form of entrepreneurship. A micropreneur is someone who starts a business with a small amount of money; either he/she is working alone or has an employee or a number of employees. Nabi et al. (2011) contributed to the literature of entrepreneurship and explored how home-based female entrepreneurs traded their products and services. Social, economic, and different factors have a strong influence on the process of entrepreneurship in developing countries. Simultaneously, these affect micropreneurs as well.

Emerging technologies and newly developed applications of social media have attracted the attention of many researchers and scholars. Social media provides a platform and tools that help individuals create, share, and exchange any kind of information. Additionally, it communicates career opportunities, ideas, and networks among the people, organizations, and different communities. Thus, it creates possibilities for the business as well through innovative ideas and approaches (Wang et al., 2011). However, this is a little-known topic, with implications on management and organization that are still unknown. For this reason, it is important to understand how social media can really facilitate, promote, and support relationships for women in business, and if women are able to take full advantage of them. The literature review puts into evidence that there is a lack of research on the use of social media by women in business, which permits the possibility of identifying future directions for investigation.

Through social media, advertising and marketing influence the consumers and markets by providing them with information about the products and services. Thus, people get connected through the trade and transactions of the items and prices in the virtual community. In this way, business gains and creates value through networking. Relative to the environment, besides growth, female entrepreneurs need training about how to generate and avail themselves of financial resources. In this regard, additional knowledge about the clients, suppliers, banks, and employees would be of benefit (Wu et al., 2013).

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive research used the survey method to collect structured information from the study target population. Using the cluster sampling and self-selection sampling techniques, the survey was administered to women micropreneurs based in all of the major states of Oman. The survey questionnaire was translated into Arabic (native language of Oman) and administered online to the study participants, using different social networking platforms, i.e. Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook. A total of 657 respondents participated in the survey. Sixty-eight (68) response sets with more than 5% missing data and straight lining issues were removed; and remaining five hundred and eighty-nine (589) data sets were used for analysis. The data were analyzed using the SPSS software.

The data from the four-part survey questionnaire included measures to capture the demographic profile of the owners and their business outlook; their use and the barriers of social media; the barriers faced in managing their work; and their future plans. The first part included eight demographic-based questions to determine the age, qualification, marital status, location, work experience, household size and sources of income, and support for house-related work of the business owners. In second section, another five questions were asked to determine the business outlook including, the age of business, number of employees, size and sources of start-up funds, number of customers and profit margin. In section three, the types of social media sites

used by the micropreneurs were determined based on the previous literature (from Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The scales to determine the purpose and the barriers of social media were adapted from Samuel and Joe (2016); Michaelidou et al. (2011). Subsequently in section four, the personal and external problems faced by the women owners while managing their business were self-developed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Home-Based Women Entrepreneurs in Oman

Demographics

Figure 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The study sample represented women-preneurs working in different regions of Oman (Ash Sharqiyah 33%; Al Buraimi 25%; Muscat 11%; Ad Dhakhiliyah 12%; Ad Dhahirah 6%; Al Batinah 5%; Musandam & Dhofar 3% each; Al Wusta 2%) but the highest participation of online-based business owners came from Ash Sharqiyah region, as the researchers belonged to that region and target sample was easily reachable.

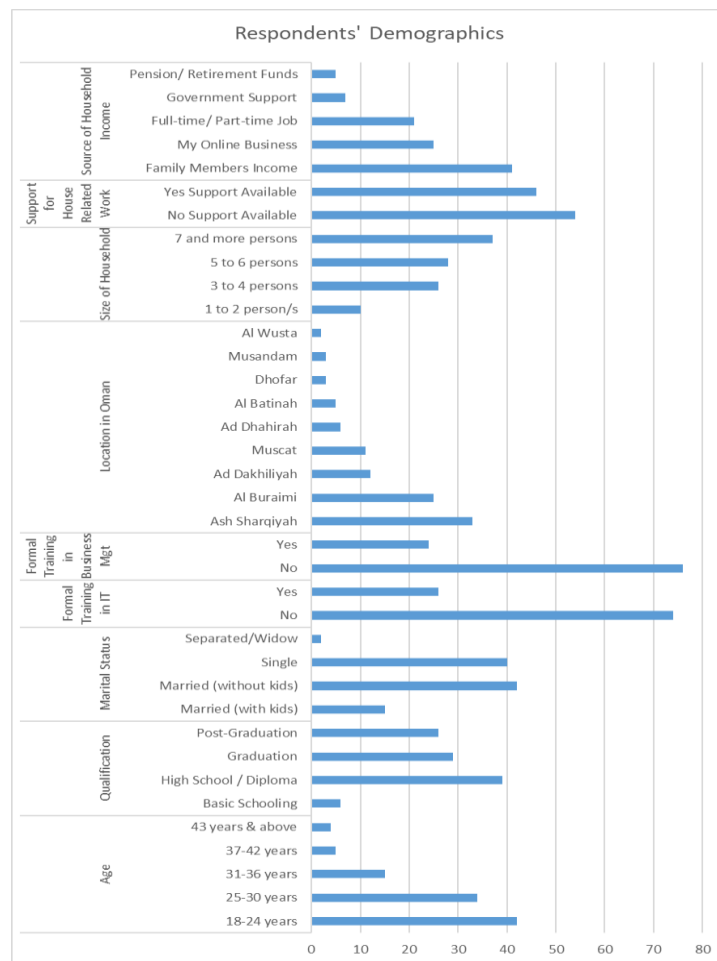


Figure 1
RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHICS

The respondents are mostly from Generation Y (millennials born between the years 1981 to 1996); Generation Z (born after 1996), and are, therefore, comfortable with technology adoption. The respondents are mostly married women without kids (42%) and single women; and most of them are graduates and postgraduates (55%), like that of the industry-employed female professionals who are better educated compared to their male counterparts.

Almost one-fourth of the participants (24%) have their online businesses as the only source of income whereas other twenty percent (20%) of them were also doing job along with running the business to become financially independent. Half of the study respondents shared that either they are getting the pension/financial support from the government or their family members are contributing financially to the household.

The participants have households of varied sizes, however, the chi-square test results (p -value = .141) confirmed that household size had no significant influence on the reason for starting online business. Some managed their house chores all alone whereas, one third of them shared that they had the support of their husbands, parents, siblings, and helpers in house-related chores, which enabled them to dedicate their time and efforts towards their businesses. This finding reveals the shift in Omani men's attitudes in the past two decades, as men are commonly perceived as non-supportive and inhibit women's economic growth and development, as reported in prior literature (e.g. Al-Lamki, 1999). However, respondents reported that they were able to strive in their own businesses because of the support of male family members, thus changing the dynamics of the Omani patriarchal society with its unwritten rules of restricting women from participating in economic development (Chavali, 2016).

Business descriptors

Figure 2 presents the business descriptors of the respondents. The study revealed that the main motivation of the entrepreneurs in starting their own businesses at home was to support their families financially (36%), thus, driven by necessity. Despite the government's 'Omanization' policy requiring the private sector to meet quotas for hiring Omani workers (The Heritage Foundation, 2019), the cross-tabulation results depicted that around 20% of the respondents (mostly single or separated) were not able to find jobs due to high unemployment rate in Oman, with the decrease in job opportunities in the public sector and skillful expatriates dominating the private sector. The government initiative promoting home-based businesses provided capital so that women could have the opportunity of becoming self-employed and economically empowered, as desired by Sultan Qaboos (Oman Vision-2040, 2019).

The types of business activities managed by Omani women micropreneurs are mostly permitted by Oman's Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI), including homemade foods, pastries, and cakes, renting women and children's clothes, selling perfumes and cosmetics, tailoring women's clothes, arranging events and supplies, wrapping gifts and flowers, weaving handicrafts, printing and photocopying, photography, and several beauty-related services. However, some are also engaged in selling women's apparel and household items, along with home-tutoring, baby-sitting, and laundry services, which are not explicitly stated in the MoCI regulations as permitted work activities (Muscat Daily, 2011). Nevertheless, these home-based activities provided the women with a source of income to help manage their daily life requirements as desired by the government.

Most of the women micropreneurs (43%) used their own funds or obtained loans from family and friends (36%) instead of using the funds offered by government under Al-Rafd,

which is a point of concern. The Al-Rafd Fund was established by the government to support the business projects of young Omani men and women (Supreme Council for Planning, 2019), which seems to be underutilized based on the results of the survey. The startup funds for setting up the business by most of the entrepreneurs are meager amounts: few of them invested almost nothing, while 68% spent less than 500 Omani Riyals. Compared to the initial investment, the findings confirmed that almost half of the businesses (49%) included in the study are earning a monthly profit of up to 100 Omani Riyal (260 USD). At least one out of each four businesses made monthly profits up to 500 OMR (1300 USD). Remaining 24% of the businesses made a monthly profit of more than 500 OMR (see Figure 2).

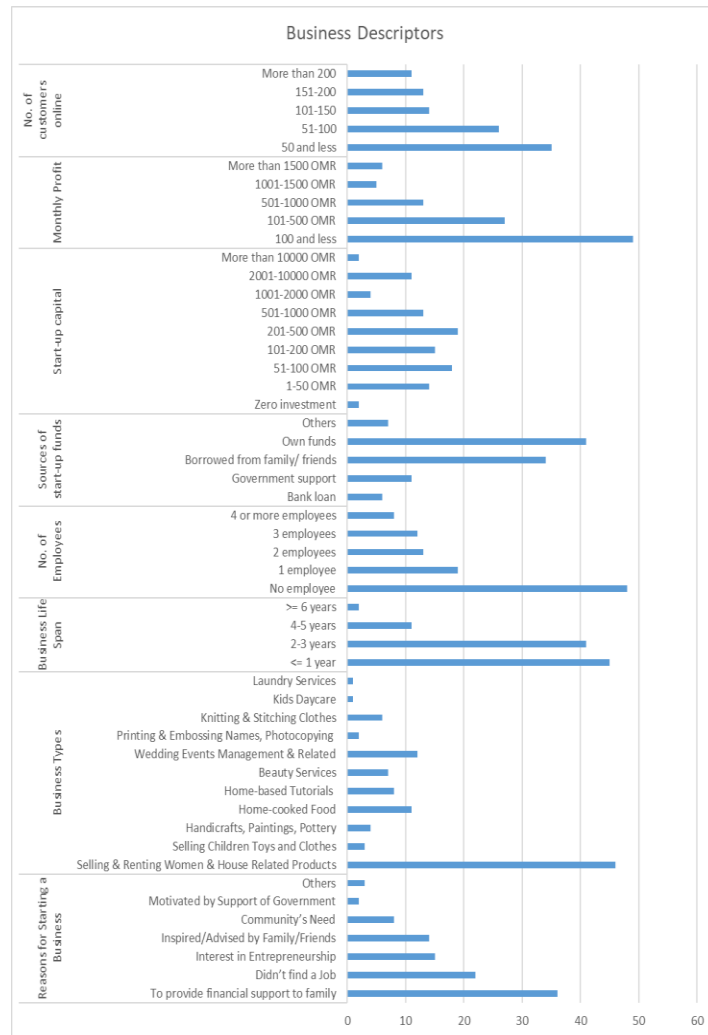


Figure 2
BUSINESS DESCRIPTORS

The life span of almost half of this business (45%) is less than one year, and the other half are two to five years old. Half of these businesses were managed by the owner alone without any employee; whereas thirty two percent (32%) of the businesses have employed one to two people for support. Only one-fifth of them have employed the services of more than two people.

Uses and Challenges of Online-Business through Social Networking Sites

Uses of social media in business activities

The study participants run their micro-businesses online using different social media platforms (shows in Figure 3). The WhatsApp remains the top social networking site utilized by most Omani women micropreneurs for managing their business activities. This is followed by Instagram, while Snap Chat and Facebook remained in third and fourth positions, respectively.

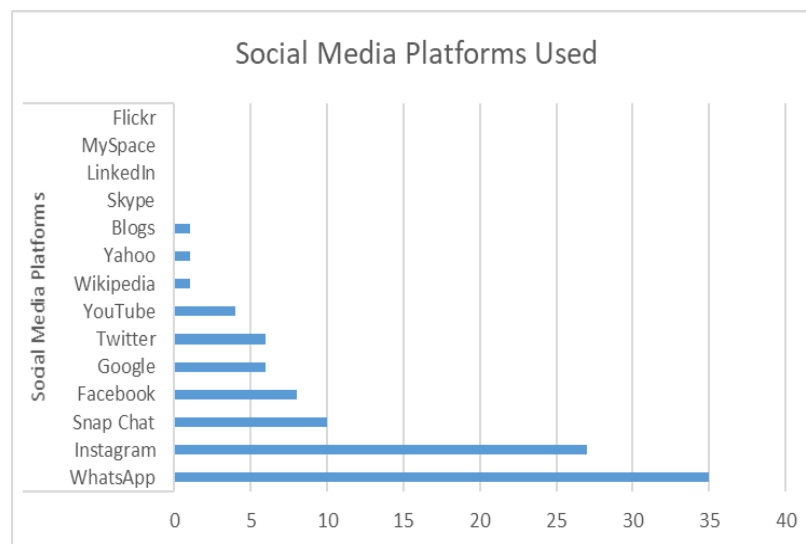


Figure 3
SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED

These social networking apps are used for gaining access to resources and selling their products and services. The networking sites help them promote their business identity, attract customers and connect with them. At least one-fourth of the women owners earned more than the average pay of women working in the public sector. In the public sector, 75% of Omani female employees earn approximately 450 OMR (USD \$1143) as monthly salary, and 91.5% of women in the family sector earn a meager amount of approximately 100 OMR (USD \$254) (Ministry of National Economy, 2008). On the contrary, the cost of living for a single person in Muscat (the Capital City of Oman) is 255 OMR and for a four-person family, the cost is 900 OMR, much higher compared to the average earnings in the public sector (Numbeo, 2020). Meanwhile, the findings highlighted that three-fourth of the study participants earned more than 100 OMR up to 500 OMR, which show the potential of micropreneurship in boosting or augmenting family income.

Table 1 below presents the mean scores for the uses and the challenges of social networking sites. The top three mean scores of the uses of the social networking sites are: 1) buying and selling the products and/or services (3.58 mean score); 2) maintaining organizational identity (3.52 mean score) and; 3) receiving feedback from customers (3.48 mean score). The mean score (3.47) for advertising and promoting products and services remained very close to the third position. Additionally, social media helped these businesses in maintaining relationships with their customers, and researching and targeting new markets.

Challenges of social media in business activities

The negative side of the online business is the on-screen time used for business, inaccessibility to wider-markets and the complexity of the technology, which the women entrepreneurs found challenging. More than 80% spent up to four hours daily managing their businesses, whereas 14% spent up to nine hours and a few (6%) even spend more than 10 hours. Secondly, the market size of the businesses (especially service providers) is limited, as distance made the wider markets inaccessible to the women business owners (2.81 mean score), thus, hampering the growth and expansion of their business. Thirdly, business owners and/or their employee(s) find social sites complex and uncertain (2.76 mean score). They do not have enough technical know-how for the proficient utilization of social media, nor are they certain about the impact of social media on their business health, depicting lack of training on social media usage for managing business in their respective educational programs. The regression analysis was run to determine if higher level of education of the women entrepreneurs has eased the understanding and usage of technology for conducting online businesses. However, no significant impact of education was determined on the technical know-how of the entrepreneurs.

		Mean
Use of Social Networking Sites	For buying and selling the products/services	3.58
	For maintaining organizational identity and reputation	3.52
	For taking feedback from my customers	3.48
	For advertising and promoting my products/ services	3.47
	For maintaining relationship with my customers	3.33
	For market research	3.13
	For reaching the new markets	3.11
	For comparing the prices	3.04
Challenges of Social Media Sites	Business on social networking sites requires more time	3.17
	Wider markets cannot be accessed due to lack of accessibility to distant areas	2.81
	Uncertainty & complexity of social networking sites	2.76
	Owner/employee(s) do not have the technical skills to use social networking sites	2.75
	Competitors have physical presence in the market & not use social media only	2.63
	Social media only used by young people	2.51

The physical presence of competitors in the marketplace and restricted access to the target market are also the challenges of having business online only, though stressed less by the respondents. Their competitors have wider access to customers being physically present in the market, which give them edge over their online businesses limited to young consumers who are the prime users of social networking sites. Despite all odds, Omani women, through their determination and hard-work, proved that they could play a significant role in contributing to the country's economy, even by sitting at home and taking care of their core home-making responsibilities. Also, they reaffirmed that they have intentions to further expand their businesses by getting into the shops and new markets and continuing to be self-employed.

Personal and External Challenges

The Arab culture has certain features that may create hurdles for women wishing to run their own businesses. To determine these hurdles, the business owners were asked regarding the challenges they face in starting and managing their businesses. Table 2 presents the mean scores of the personal and external challenges faced by women micropreneurs. The findings suggest that the top external problems (with highest mean values) identified by the study participants are: high competition (3.35 mean score), customers' behaviors/attitudes (3.15 mean score), payment delays by the customers, and lack of affordable raw materials (shared same mean score of 3.02), respectively.

Online platforms have made setting-up and running own businesses much more affordable and easier than ever before. Also, the traditional businesses of brick and mortar are also moving online to benefit from lean value chains and wider access to the markets. This transition has resulted in cutthroat competition for customers. Additionally, the businesswomen also complained about the customers' unfriendly attitude and rude behaviors as well as delayed payments. These payment delays result in working capital shortage and financial losses.

		Mean
Personal Challenges	Time Consuming Home Maintenance / Upbringing of kids	3.17
	Lack of Financial Resources for Starting/Managing business	3.15
	Lack of Marketing Skills	3.02
	Lack of Business Management Skills	2.92
	Lack of Financial Accounting Skills	2.90
	Family/Social Resistance	2.80
External Challenges	High Competition	3.35
	Customers Behavior and Attitudes	3.15
	Payment Delays by Customers	3.02
	Lack of Cheap Raw Material	3.00
	Slow Internet Connection	2.93
	Suppliers Related Issues	2.90
	Lack of Skilled Labor	2.89
	Lack of Transportation Means	2.86
	Difficult Government Policies	2.82
	Distant Business Location	2.80

The top most personal challenges confronted by the women micropreneurs include: time-consuming home and children-rearing responsibility (3.17 mean score), lack of financial resources for starting up and/or managing a business (3.15 mean score), and a lack of marketing skills (3.02 mean score).

Being primarily a patriarchal society, the Omani woman's role is mainly that of homemaking and child-rearing, compared to the men who are considered the family breadwinners. However, the chi-square test results (p -value=0.516) showed no significant differences among the married (with and without children) and single/separated women, in terms of the time spent on the online platforms for conducting business related activities. Every four out of ten businesswomen were spending three to five hours online and another two out of ten remained engaged with the screen for six to ten hours daily.

Secondly, women reported difficulty in starting their businesses and managing the working capital, primarily due to expensive materials from suppliers and payment delays by the

customers. Thirdly, the women lacked marketing skills, so they were unable to adequately promote their products and services to the potential market segments. In micro-sized businesses, the owner is usually doing the planning, marketing, accounting, and many other jobs on her own, especially in the earlier days where survival of the business is the main goal to be achieved. The entrepreneurs might not be expert in all of the roles and hiring the services of professionals is expensive. A few other problems included, slow Internet connection, supplier-related issues, difficult government policies, lack of business management and accounting know-how, which further complicate the management of these micro businesses.

Subsequently, a series of non-parametric independent sample tests were run to determine the ingroup variances in terms of personal challenges reported by the women entrepreneurs. The Kruskal-Wallis test was run to determine if any difference existed among the challenges faced by the businesswomen from different age brackets. The results confirmed that businesswomen who were younger than 35 years faced more problems in accessing finance for their business (chi-square = 9.260; p-value = 0.01*) compared to the elder one. However, participants aged 25 and above reported more about the enormous time consumed in conducting business online (chi-square = 10.640; p-value = 0.005**), primarily due to the early marriage custom in the region which compels the women to dedicate most of their time in home management and child rearing responsibilities. Additionally, women entrepreneurs falling in the age bracket of 25 years to 36 years analyzed themselves as less skilled in business management (chi-square = 10.523; p-value = 0.005**), account-keeping (chi-square = 6.257; p-value = 0.04*) and marketing (chi-square = 9.260; p-value = 0.01*) related activities compared to older businesswomen. The reason can be attributed to the experience and maturity of the latter. Nevertheless, no significant differences were found among the women entrepreneurs from different age brackets in terms of the family and social resistance faced by them while running their own businesses (p-value = 0.402).

Later, an independent sample test was run to assess the ingroup variances existing among the personal challenges reported by participants based on their marital status. No significant differences were reported between the married (with or without children) and single/separated businesswomen in any other personal challenges except the excessive time spent in managing business online. The chi-square results remained significant (chi-square = 12.356; p-value = 0.006**) confirming that married women with kids and without kids experienced more problem in managing their time online due to their responsibilities of home and children management.

In addition, independent sample test was run to determine if qualification differences among the businesswomen influenced the challenges, they faced in running their businesses. No significant ingroup variances existed across the challenges, except family and social resistance in owning a business. The female with primary schooling faced lesser resistance from the society and family in owning and running their businesses compared to the businesswomen with degree certificates (chi-square = 7.732; p-value = 0.05*). This can be primarily attributed to the people's expectation from educated masses to work in reputable firms instead of running one's own small business. Also, womenpreneurs from Al Batinah (mean rank = 326.14) followed by Muscat (mean rank = 300.80) reported higher family and social resistance (chi-square = 15.533; p-value = 0.05*) compared to the participants from other regions of Oman. On the other hand, participants from the regions of Wusta (mean rank = 180.83) and Dhofar (mean rank = 204.32) have minimum such resistances and obstructions in running their own businesses.

In essence, the ingroup variances based on age, education, marital status, and region existed among the perception of the study participants regarding the challenges faced by them in running their online businesses.

Perceptions of Contribution to Oman's Economy and Future Intentions

Perceived contribution

The research findings highlighted that 62% (i.e. 364) of women micropreneurs believe that their business activity is contributing to the economy of their country while 11% (64) think otherwise (shows in Figure 4). It is also interesting to note that about a quarter of them do not know if they are contributing to the economy or not. Perhaps, they think their businesses are too small to even make a contribution. The chi-square test findings (p -value = 0.005**) revealed significant positive impact of entrepreneur's qualification level on his/her perception of economic contribution to the country through their businesses. Thus, illuminating that highly qualified womenpreneurs are well-informed about how their efforts contribute to the economy of the country.

Future intentions

The women entrepreneurs were also asked about their future business plans. Two hundred and ninety-three (50%) of the study participants confirmed that they intend to expand their existing businesses, followed by 135 (23%) businesswomen who wanted to continue with the same business activities. Favorably, 124 (21%) business owners showed their determination in starting a new business, whereas 17 of the participants (3%) intended to close down their online businesses.

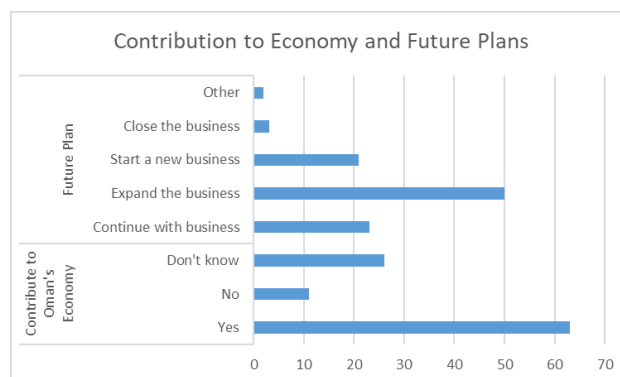


Figure 4
CONTRIBUTION TO ECONOMY AND FUTURE PLANS

The cross-tabulation results determined that businesswomen who had interest in social entrepreneurship or wanted financial security for self and family had higher intention of expanding their current businesses instead of starting a new one. However, the chi-square test findings albeit not significant (p -value = 0.08) still show slight significance of educational level of the businesswomen on their intention to expand their businesses further, compared to those who have only finished basic schooling. In general, the findings on future-plans of the women entrepreneurs show promise, as majority of them intend to stay in business.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded, based on the study's findings that young Omani women are engaging in small businesses with the use of social media. However, the patriarchal mindset and

socio-cultural expectations are limiting the extent of their engagement in entrepreneurship. While they are able to use social media to support marketing activities, they are not able to optimize the benefit of social media because of their limited know-how. Despite the challenges they are facing and their view that they are not making a dent in the economy of the country, they still have the desire to continue the businesses they started.

Young Omani women are getting educated on social media allowing them to engage in online businesses while performing their traditional duties at home. However, they face several barriers in managing their business, foremost of which is the lack of access to the market. Further, their responsibilities at home compete for the amount of time they can spend online. Additionally, while the young women are open to the use of social media, they lack competency in social media marketing.

The Omani government has launched several initiatives and programs to build the capacities and skills of Omani women to strengthen their self-confidence leading to self-development (CEDAW, 2016). Several women have been trained since 2012 and still trainings are going on. The result of this study should affirm that the Omani government's efforts are creating an impact. The government should continue to reinforce their initiatives in creating awareness and providing capacity building for the young women to support their empowerment.

Women are empowered when they themselves have the competencies to find solutions to the challenges faced in business. At the meta level, these young women should be convinced that they are contributing significantly to the country's economic development and be motivated by loftier goals beyond their traditional responsibilities at home. At the practical level, competencies in business management, particularly social media marketing and access to financial institutions/government programs, should be reinforced, through trainings on the business accounting and financing, marketing, management of affairs, labour laws, registration processes, and other opportunities available for expanding their markets and services/products. Additionally, they must be provided the trainings on the effective utilization of technology for reaching distant markets and promoting their products and services to unreachable segments of potential customers as part of their educational programs, keeping in view the wide usage of social media in the 4th industrial revolution.

The size of women micropreneurs is expanding in Oman, however, the availability of resources, technology and literacy rate is different from region to region. Therefore, it is important to conduct future studies in specific regions with higher number of participants and assess the enablers and inhibitors of women micropreneurs in less privileged areas. It would be interesting to determine in future studies the reasons why businesswomen face less social and family pressures in the regions of Wusta and Dhofar compared to other regions of Oman. So, the government can take appropriate steps to support the economic development of women in those regions.

In essence, young Omani women are changing Omani society, congruent to the desire of the government to empower them to contribute to the country's economy. Their resilience and success in their home-based businesses is a beacon of light for the government's efforts of empowering their female population and making Omanis self-employed and self-reliant (Shaibany, 2018).

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