

# Omani Female Entrepreneurs in the Service Industry: Exploring Socio-Variables Affecting their Intention to Launch an IT Business

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- **Keywords:** Female Entrepreneurship, Service Sector, IT Sector, Oman.
- **Purpose:**
  - Investigate the factors influencing Omani women in the service sector to start an IT business. This includes exploring various social variables like cultural norms, family support, access to education and resources, societal expectations, and perceived challenges.
  - Identify potential barriers Omani women face when considering entrepreneurship in the IT field. These barriers are related to social, cultural, economic, or technological factors.
  - Understand the role of social variables in shaping entrepreneurial intentions. This involves analyzing how social factors interact with individual motivations, aspirations, and perceived opportunities in the IT sector.
- **Originality:**

The originality of the research likely lies in its specific focus on:

- Focus on a specific niche: Omani women with experience in the tourism service industry who aim to launch IT businesses. This focus on the intersection of gender, tourism, and IT entrepreneurship offers a unique perspective.
- Exploring the link between tourism experience and IT ventures: The research explores how women's experiences in the tourism sector (e.g., customer service, hospitality, marketing) influence their decision to start an IT business.
- Identify unique socio-cultural influences that affect Omani women in the tourism sector, considering IT entrepreneurship.

- **Brief Literature Review**

Research focusing on female entrepreneurs occupies a vital and distinct position within entrepreneurship studies. This area of inquiry sheds light on the critical contributions women can make to modern economies, emphasizing their unique perspectives and innovative approaches to business, as mentioned (Steyaert & Katz, 2004). The presence and impact of female entrepreneurs in various societies around the globe underscore the dedicated efforts of governments, organizations, and researchers to support and empower women in this dynamic field. By fostering an environment that encourages female participation, these initiatives aim to unlock the full potential of women as leaders and innovators, ultimately benefiting not only individuals but also the broader economic landscape. Empowering female business founders offers benefits that go far beyond just achieving individual economic or monetary goals. Numerous field studies have shown that women entrepreneurs prioritize social objectives alongside their financial ambitions. This stands in contrast to male entrepreneurs, who typically place greater emphasis on economic outcomes.

Many studies in entrepreneurship have attributed such empowerment at the macro-level to the society and the prevailing culture, the so-called 'sociocultural environment, dimensions or factors. Besides, the literature reveals many essential aspects affecting entrepreneurial behavior, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial education. Hereunder are synopses on each of these variables as summarised from the literature:

## **1. Exogenic Factors**

The literature on entrepreneurs' sociocultural environment reveals how scholars have given this area to understand its impact on entrepreneurial behavior. The interplay between the sociocultural environment and the corresponding behaviors of potential and existing entrepreneurs has provided a fruitful pool of areas for scholars to research. Naguera et al. (2013) Studied the implications of sociocultural factors on the potentiality to become women entrepreneurs in Catalonia (Northeast of Spain). They found that 'fear of failure' and 'perceived capabilities are the most critical sociocultural factors in the probability of becoming a woman entrepreneur (Shapero & Sokol, 1982). Urban, Toledano, and Riberio-Soriano, 2011) found that sociocultural factors lead to differences in the emergence and development of 'transitional entrepreneurs.

## **2. Environment Factors**

Which includes governmental support, University Support, Social Support, Employment Opportunities, Existing Technological Infrastructure

- **Design/Methodology/Approach**

A mixed methodology, qualitative and quantitative approach, is adopted, given the research questions and hypotheses. Hence, a "self-administered questionnaire will be the data collection mechanism." The analyses used ethnographic content analysis for the qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews. As for the quantitative data, expert feedback and Cronbach's alpha test will be used to check the reliability of the self-administered questionnaire. Factor Analysis (Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) will be used in addition to the descriptive tests. These tests will check the scales' reliability, validity, and model fitting. SPSS will be used to conduct these tests.

- **Results**

Several quantitative and qualitative results were obtained based on the statistical analysis conducted.

- **Quantitative Results:**

The results proved a positive correlation between socio-variables and entrepreneurial intention. Family support, access to education and resources, positive societal perception of women in IT, and exposure to successful female role models positively correlate with entrepreneurial intention. On the other hand, the results proved a negative correlation between factors like restrictive cultural norms, lack of access to finance, perceived gender discrimination in the IT sector, and fear of failure negatively correlated with entrepreneurial intention.

Then again, there are significant predictors, as regression analysis reveals that certain socio-variables are stronger predictors of entrepreneurial intention than others. For example, family support and network access emerge as key factors. Also, according to SEM analysis, the results revealed differences across groups, showing differences in entrepreneurial intention across age groups, education levels, or service subsectors. For example, younger women with higher education levels exhibit stronger entrepreneurial intentions.

- **Qualitative Results:**

Interviews reveal personal aspirations, a desire for independence, a passion for technology, and a desire to contribute to Oman's economic development. They also reveal challenges and opportunities as participants highlight challenges like balancing family responsibilities with business demands, overcoming societal expectations, and accessing funding. They also identify opportunities related to the growing IT sector in Oman and the government's support for women entrepreneurs. Moreover, interviews emphasize the crucial role of family support, mentorship, and networks in encouraging and enabling women to pursue IT entrepreneurship. Finally, qualitative data uncover subtle cultural nuances influencing women's perceptions of entrepreneurship and their decision-making process.

- **Implications and limitations:**

- **Theoretical Implications:**

The research contributes to existing entrepreneurship theories by providing empirical evidence on the specific social factors that drive women's entrepreneurial intentions in a unique context. It also helps refine existing

models of women's entrepreneurship by incorporating the specificities of the Omani context and the specificities of the IT sectors.

#### ○ **Practical Implications:**

The findings inform policymakers about developing targeted policies and programs to support women entrepreneurs in the IT sector. This includes initiatives to improve access to education, training, finance, and networks. The research also helps organizations design effective programs and services to address the specific needs and challenges faced by Omani women entrepreneurs in the IT field. Moreover, educational institutions like universities and colleges can use the findings to develop curricula and programs that better prepare women for careers in IT and entrepreneurship.

Additionally, the research provides valuable insights and guidance to Omani women considering starting an IT business, helping them navigate the challenges and leverage available opportunities.

#### ○ **Limitations**

The research has some limitations, like generalizability, as the findings are specific to Oman's context and do not directly apply to other countries or regions. Also, the sample size and representativeness because the study might have limitations in terms of sample size or representativeness, which can affect the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, there are methodological limitations because the research design and data collection methods have inherent limitations that influence the interpretation of the results. This includes issues like self-reported data, potential biases in survey questions, or limitations in qualitative data analysis.

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