من النطق السامي

"الاقتصاد الوطني لأي بلد كانت هو في الحقيقة يقوم على الصناعات الصغيرة والمتوسطة، هذه هي الأسس، أسس كل الاقتصادات الوطنية".
قالبوس بن سعيد

خلال لقاء حلالة السلطان المعظم - حفظه الله ورعاه - بسيم الشامخات
بولاية بحلاء ٢٧ يناير ٢٠١٣ م
Optimize Your VENTURE

Case Studies & Research
Foreward

Our efforts and initiatives related to entrepreneurship development at SME Development Fund (Inma) compelled us to take a step further, to singularly focus on sustainable development of SMEs in Oman and thus Oman Academy for SMEs was launched in Jan 2019. It is driven by the passion to make a difference in the lives of people of Oman. As we networked with number of students, faculty and entrepreneurs we realised, much more needs to be done for developing entrepreneurship in Oman. The Academy intends to continue with existing initiatives along with new innovative, meaningful programs for SMEs. It will strive towards creating a common platform where all the stakeholders of SME space can co-exist.

There are several reasons why we wanted to bring out books dedicated to SME space. Through our books we intend to preserve our initiatives for a longer time and reaffirm that our mission, values, objectives and actions are real and in sync with each other. To continue with our efforts in creating meaningful reading material in Omani context, we have launched our second book “Optimize Your Venture” of the series “SMEs in Oman”. If our first book gives you basics of setting up a venture in Oman then the second book will give you insights to optimize your efforts making your venture sustainable.

This book includes 2 sections, the first section celebrates entrepreneurial spirit of Oman, with a collection of several local entrepreneurial journeys in the form of Case Studies. These stories of home-grown entrepreneurs will give you valuable insights. Case study is a tool to discover the reality and every market needs to have its own case studies to learn from. I hope this section of the book is helpful to every budding entrepreneur as they can self-develop by analyzing the real situations, recognizing problems and recommending a solution.

The second section of this book is a compilation of research papers. These articles are contributed by the faculty from various educational institutes in the Sultanate of Oman. Muscat College has played a vital role in compiling, scrutinizing and selecting the research papers for publishing. These papers are bound by a common underlying theme of Entrepreneurship dealing with various stakeholders of entrepreneurial ecosystem in Oman. The diversity of these papers is to reach out to broader audience of students, faculty and entrepreneurs alike.

I Hope this book makes your entrepreneurial journey a successful one.

Salah Hilal Al Mawaali
Chief Executive Officer
Oman Academy for SMEs
Foreward

I am delighted to present the first edition of “Optimize Your Venture” a collaborative effort of Muscat College and the Oman Academy for SMEs. Since its inception in 1996, Muscat College has proven to create and enrich an environment that promotes intellectual pursuits, critical thinking and excellence in research for scientific knowledge. This book contributes towards the college’s strategic goal of enhancing research activities filling the scarcity in the existing literature of entrepreneurship in Oman.

In an effort to tackle the recent economic challenges, the government has initiated a number of strategies aimed at diversifying its local economy to shift its dependence on oil sector. In Oman, the government has established a culture of entrepreneurship to support the new ventures in various fields. In spite of such efforts, the country still continues to face a number of challenges to promote an entrepreneurial culture amongst its population.

The edited collection of chapters address variety of themes and business challenges within Oman context. This book also provides real case studies of SMEs in Oman. The insights of this book will be a valuable source of knowledge of entrepreneurship in Oman benefiting students, academicians and entrepreneurs.

On this note, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the authors who contributed great source of knowledge in the book. The thanks also go to reviewers and individuals who extended support to bring this edited book out.

Dr. Yasmin Al Bulushi
Dean, Muscat College
Section 1

The Omani Case Studies

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1. Al Hosni Omani Sweets

An Entrepreneurial Journey of Murshid Al Hosni

Abstract
The case study on Al Hosni Halwa is a story of creating an enterprise through the craft handed down by one generation to the next. This case study takes you through the journey of an Omani family who created an enterprise out of the only skill they possessed through generations. This journey of Murshid Al Hosni depicts many challenges and continuous innovations adopted by him to create a successful enterprise. This entrepreneurial story was compiled by Nada Al Breiki through a personal interview with the current flagbearer of Al Hosni Halwa and later converted to a case by Seema Mehta.

Background
During early 20th century, the Sultanate of Oman enjoyed very close relations with part of the African continent, leading many Omanis traveling to Zanzibar and Mombasa for trade as well as education. Murshid gives the entire credit of the Halwa business to his grandfather, Ali bin Suleiman Al Hosni. Since 1950 his grandfather-Ali bin Suleiman Al Hosni was making Halwa at home and selling it to the neighbors. That Halwa was so popular that their home in Zanzibar was called “The Halwa Home”. In 1970s when His Majesty, Sultan Qaboos bin Said rose to power in Oman, he gave a call to all Omanis residing abroad to return to Oman and work in their own country. Many of them returned from Zanzibar including Murshid’s grandfather. With his expertise in Halwa making, he started a small shop in Seeb with just one boiler. After his grandfather this shop was inherited by his uncle Salim. The family believes that Omani halwa is a symbol of Omani culture and heritage and it needs to be preserved carefully. We are maintaining the authentic Omani flavour of this key element of Omani hospitality, while adding excitement with new variations that will ensure these deserts remain a popular treat for generations to come. As Murshid says, “It is a symbol of hospitality and tradition and is an integral part of any Omani celebration.”

Opportunity
The family dream had always been to expand abroad. In 1990, the Al Hosni family moved to the UAE partly due to its ambitions to go abroad
and partly due to challenging economic conditions in Oman. They received a lot of encouragement from people of the UAE and there they grew from strength to strength. Today Al Hosni boasts of 15 branches in the UAE and 1 in Qatar. When Murshid took over Al Hosni Halwa, the family had already established itself outside Oman. Murshid started his career by working with oilfield, but could not stay away from the family business for long, the Halwa enterprise was his true calling. He left his well-paying job to get into the family business fully and till date is unrepentant about his decision. He had the ready business which could have been easy to run and yet he could see possibility of lot of innovation and development to the way it was done then. In 2014 Murshid returned to Oman with new ideas and a strong desire of business development in heart. On his return, he started developing Al Hosni as an original Omani Halwa brand. He revamped the interiors of his shop, making it customer friendly, added many flavors to the dessert, and changed the presentation-packaging making it a delight to the eyes. In 2014, the first shop of Al Hosni Halwa was launched in Al Khod. In 2015, he established the second shop in Sohar. During this year, Murshid had planned to create a new initiative to give an instant global recognition for Al Hosni shops in the Sultanate of Oman. He came up with a very ingenious idea of creating the largest Omani dessert in the world, in the form of a map of the Sultanate of Oman, for a special occasion of the 45th National Day. So in 2015, the largest mold of Omani halwa was created. The entire event was conducted under the Guinness Encyclopedia, through Murshid’s single handed efforts. He worked on arranging all the expenses towards this event, right from the preparation, publicity as well as visit and stay of judging committee of Guinness Book of Records. The committee visited the factory and saw all the stages of cooking of halwa in detail, the ingredients used for cooking and recorded these details for evaluation. As the largest halwa was prepared and presented, Murshid thought the job was done, however, it was far from over. The judges had one most important condition, that the weight of halwa should not be less than 500 kgs. Murshid had used the traditional calculation method based on the capacity of each boiler and the quantity of halwa in it. The weight according to the factory assumptions was about 640 kg. However, the committee needed much accurate measurement methods for certification. The halwa was then taken in a large truck to the Al-Mawleh vegetable market to measure and it did cross required threshold weight. Murshid’s dream of creating biggest Omani Halwa was fulfilled.

The primary task of Murshid Al Hosni is compliance of exact processes in
halwa making and procurement of ingredients. He gives much importance to the quality of cardamom, rosewater, nuts, saffron, honey, spices and all other ingredients which go in a halwa. He is very careful and choosy with his selection of the produce. Every single ingredient is subjected to many tests. These ingredients are then taken to the family members for their opinion on the quality due to their long standing experience in the quality halwa making. With utmost care and precision each batch of halwa is created, packaged and then distributed to the branches.

While moving forward in their business Al Hosni has started offering Halwa on a mass scale for weddings at a competitive price for which they have invested heavily in the right equipment to handle large scale production without compromising on quality. Murshid has since introduced many varieties catering to different customers and their preferences. These varieties are made of milk, dates, figs, different flavours, and honey apart from variety of nuts. On a normal day, they make between 70 and 100 kgs of four to five types of halwa.

**Challenges**

Building the Halwa Empire was not easy, Murshid and his family struggled through various obstacles while reaching the stage it is today. And in fact challenges are far from over. The typical challenges Murshid faces revolves around various aspects of the operations. Longer timeframe needed to comply with the procedures involving government organisations. He feels if this time required can be curtailed it will help immensely due to the limited shelf life for their food product.

Murshid had tried to take his business outside Oman, but he could not sustain the expansion and had to close the shops for lack of good response. He feels he has failed in identifying appropriate location and needs to be more careful about the choice of location for his future ventures.

Another area of concern is logistics of the finished product and the issues related to delivery of freshest product to customers. Covering halwa while it is still hot, leads to gathering of moisture on the lid of the Halwa container and this ends up giving him sleepless nights when he tries rush last minute orders. He is constantly improvising on delivery methods to keep the Halwa at its best.

He is constantly working on the marketing methods and yet feels that his marketing efforts are insufficient, as Halwa demand varies a lot depending on the season which is mainly in the winter. Lack of awareness about
goodness of Halwa amongst different communities in Oman is another area he wants to focus on.

Road Ahead

Murshid is not looking at partnership in this business as he wants this business to continue only within his family members, handing it down from generation to generations, safeguarding the secrets of the profession.

He is protective about the distinctive Al-Hosni Halwa which is the Black Halwa, served in a yellow bowl, made with saffron, and natural dark cane sugar from Dakhliya farms. Apart from that they create Honey halwa, Camel Milk Halwa, Olive Oil Halwa and Al Kabash Halwa (ram). This specialty halwa is made up of Omani products such as meat of Omani sheep aged not more than seven months, fresh cow’s milk, natural honey, Omani garlic and black bean and used for the treatment of arthritis.

In Al Hosni’s shops Murshid has introduced some western sweets in combination with halwa for customers looking for options to the traditional halwa. He has also built the product range in a different pricing categories to suit all the pockets.

Murshid is always seeking ways to develop his product further. In olden days, they used Al Bustan wood during the cooking of halwa for stirring. Currently, various machines are used in making the halwa while keeping the quality intact. The spices are added when the machine works on the stirring getting it ready in a shorter time span and with less efforts. Murshid said that he personally adds all specially developed flavours to Al Hosani’s halwa making it unique and distinct. In fact, each factory of Al Hosni creates a distinct taste of halwa which is different from the other.

The workers in Al Hosni halwa factory are chefs, salesmen, cleaners and distributors. The supervision for cooking and adding of special ingredients is done by one of the family members. Murshid feels it is very important to have healthy relationship with the workers of his factory as only their love for this famous halwa will help maintain the quality. Currently Al Hosni halwa has 7 branches with around 15 staff each. The branches at Al-Khoud, Al-Azaiba, Sohar, As-Seeb, As-Suwaiq, Salalah serve to their loyal clientele and bowing to many requests, he recently opened the largest branch in Fanja by raising funds from SME Development Fund (Inma)

Al Hosni cares to build a strong relationship with his customers as soon as they enter his shops. Their flagship Al-Hosni shop in Al-Khoud receive many tourists and students curious to know the way traditional Omani halwa is made and served. Murshid has focused on this aspect of visiting tourist and has created a hospitality corner in his shops. Customers can enjoy the legendary Omani hospitality while tasting different flavors of halwa with Omani kahwa. The staff at the outlet receive all queries from tourist happily and take them through the process of making halwa creating a
lasting impression to spread the word.

Moving ahead Murshid is working on bringing out the largest Omani bazaar place with traditional handicrafts, making it an entertainment and cultural must visit destination for tourists and students. He says “every person has a certain skill in some field, such as sewing, cooking, and designing and so on, and it is necessary to use and develop these talents to create unique products for today. While very much in favour of owning an enterprise, he does accept importance of education. “Everyone has to complete good education because it is a weapon that protects everyone”, he says.

He intends to include traditional handmade articles and foodstuff such as Omani halwa, pottery of Bahla and Fanja, rose water distillation from Al-Jabal Akhdar and frankincense in this bazaar. Murshid is a lover of history and likes to read books on the Sultanate of Oman. He is also an ardent follower of international trends in the confectionery industry and dreams of taking his Halwa brand to International level going beyond Middle East.
Abstract

An entrepreneurial venture Bamboo Spa is a story of grit and determination of a young Omani. It throws light on creating a business from scratch and improvising and adapting the business model to convert it into a successful venture. This case study narration is by Nada Al Breiki, based on her personal interview with Moza Al Maawali and converted to a case study by Seema Mehta.

Background

Moza Al-Maawali, owner of the Bamboo Spa is an experienced banker with 11 years of expertise in the banking industry. She graduated with a diploma in insurance and banking. She started as a bank officer and went on to become the manager of elite clients. Life was good with a cushy job where she could have continued with a secured future, but she had this huge dream of creating a venture of her own and her passion lied in the wellness industry. She had always dreamt of starting a spa and had thought about it over many years. In fact she had lived the spa dream to such an extent that she had a complete picture of how her Spa would look much before she even embarked on her pet project.

The market was ready for Spa as young Omani women were looking for an independent 5* spa experience as the Omani culture did not encourage young ladies visiting Hotels Resorts for recreation.

Opportunity and Challenges

In 2010 she could no longer wait and decided to give in to her inner calling. She spent approximately 8 months on the initial set-up-a-business phase. She began her much loved project with feasibility study and identifying the requirements such as location, staff, equipment etc. Her banking experience helped her immensely in recognizing the key indicators for a successful start- up project. The Spa opened its doors in February 2011 under the name Bamboo Spa. The name promised to take the customer to the Bamboo plantations in Asia especially in Indonesia and Thailand known for its rejuvenating massages and tranquil resorts.

She started business with her personal money that she had saved over
the years. She was keen on investing in advance payments for rent for 8 months and towards the stock to be used over one year to ensure smooth running of the Spa for about a year’s time. She had kept a timeline of 5 years to convert the business into a profitable one. One of her fears was that people may not accept the concept of Bamboo Spa, as it was intended to specialize in natural treatments and most natural methods take time to give results where as customers are always looking for treatments giving results in the shortest possible time. Yet, she always believed that natural treatments for skin are always a better solution than using chemical products. After 4 years of operations of the Bamboo Spa, Moza decided to resign from her job without telling her family. She was a little afraid as she was giving up on stability and safety. Today she acknowledges that all businesses are initially unstable and every entrepreneur needs patience and ability to meet various challenges during the inception years.

She always believed that Bamboo Spa is unique in the market. She was a hands-on entrepreneur involved in each and every aspect of creating her spa. Every nook and cranny of the Spa was done up lovingly from cups, furniture to the menu card. She established policies for the Spa and created services and products not available in the market.

She started her venture at Madinat Al Qaboos but she was quick to recognise and correct the flaws in her initial location, so she soon moved to Qurum for want of a better and bigger location with visibility.

Moza is a much disciplined individual when it comes to running of the Spa. She budgets and plans all the activities a year in advance. Annually, she focuses on the things to be developed in terms of the number of products, employees and services. She is forever innovating on the quality provided bringing in new and latest techniques. The Spa offers physiotherapy and wellness services so it exudes tranquility through low lighting and soothing music to encourage relaxation. It offers Moroccan bath, Manicure and Pedicure services. The Spa focuses on providing wellness services rather than beautification and that is the USP of Bamboo Spa and hence there is only one makeup artist in the Spa to provide make up services for their regular clients.

As Moza started concentrating on revenue generation, she realized that Spa business is seasonal so to keep the momentum on, she started with marketing campaign, discounts and special offers. She quickly recognized the need to have more revenue sources apart from the services she provided and that made her start the retailing side of her business. She was already sourcing best of skincare products for her services in the Spa and many of her customers wanted to continue using those products at home as well, so for Moza it was just extending the line of the products and making it available at her Spa for retailing.

Moza sources her wellness products from around the world. Before adding them to the list of her preferred products they are subjected to many clinical
tests for their compatibility with most skin types and are reviewed for their quality before they are offered to the customer. The process of selection of products is too long to ensure that the products deliver what they promise. Today all the products that she offers at retail are sold out very quickly.

**Way Forward**

Moza always had plans to open one more branch as many of her customers came from far off at times for just a single service. But as maintaining the quality of services was her prime concern she wanted to move very carefully in that direction. In fact she had mulled over partnership as well but feels partnership can lead to failure and hence she worked long hours to manage her Spa. Moza works at her Spa like any other employee and takes care of different areas such as marketing, customer relations, merchandising and sourcing of the products, supervising to ensure standards in the services. After honing her skills at managing a spa, the second branch of Bamboo Spa was launched in Al-Khoudh in 2018 by acquiring funding from SME Development Fund (Inma). She sincerely thanks Inma for financial support extended as she had tried to raise funds for scaling up of her enterprise with many institutions without success. She is delighted with the fair funding deal offered by Inma. With the 2nd branch her work has multiplied and to meet up with this additional work pressure she has equipped herself with new IT systems to manage employees, products and novel marketing methods to reach out different segments of audience. Today, much of her marketing is done through social media. Recognizing its importance she has roped in Teetan Al-Obaidani as the Ambassador of the Spa for all her Social Media campaigns.

Gone are the days when she would open her computer to see no bookings, making her sad and bringing tears to her eyes. Today she can project the income for the day, week or a month. “This is the best stage I have reached. Now I think on how to increase the revenue and not how to get the business going. My thoughts are, how I can satisfy customers? Bring in new, better products to the Spa.” She comments.

She has created customer database and have adopted systems that save all the data for more than 10 years. Hence every repeat customer gets treated as per their history, catering to their individual needs. This database is also used for marketing of new services or products.

She is forever upgrading her skills through various courses and trains her staff personally. She visits trade fares and exhibitions to learn about the latest techniques, trends and products in the wellness industry. She makes it a point to deal with unsatisfied customers herself to understand the problem, and offer appropriate solution. All her staff are handpicked on the basis of their area of expertise and work experience. Over the years she has mastered to handle these different employees using various leadership methodologies.
“An entrepreneur should know how to be friendly as well as authoritarian at the work to get best out of the employees”. Moza is very happy with her staff as all of them are sincere, hardworking and follow Spa policies and procedures recognizing their duties. Every staff is treated like a family member.

Moza attributes most of her success to her husband as he has been a pillar of strength through the years. She acknowledges the contribution by her elder sister and her niece during the initial days of her project. She feels 80% of the success of the spa is result of listening carefully to customers and adopting many of their suggestions.

She would like to advise young students to look at starting their own business instead of searching for jobs. “Every individual needs to recognize their own interests and strengths and choose the area of business accordingly. Starting a business requires work experience and many skills as well as qualities which the young students should focus on developing” She quips. Moza says there is no alternate to absolute hard work at the beginning of the project, till regular return on the capital starts getting generated. She recommends businesses related to the service sector, such as marketing and logistics, for young entrepreneurs. Starting a business venture is difficult and full of challenges. The key is to adapt and evolve till you perfect it, are her wise words for new entrepreneurs.
Abstract

Dr Rauhiya Al-Khaiﬁ’s entrepreneurial journey is of many ups and downs giving insights on determination, perseverance and opportunities created. The story was shared with Nada Al Breiki in a personal interview and written by Seema Mehta

Background

Entrepreneurship lessons were introduced by Dr. Rauhiya’s parents pretty early on. She inherited strength of determination and perseverance from her hard working father who started his career as a dedicated English teacher and developed himself until he became the Dubiety General Director of Curriculum Development Department in Ministry of Education. These traits are essential and important qualities for any entrepreneur and make or break them, feels Dr Rauhiya. She fondly ponders over the days when her parents started a home-based business to tide over diﬃcult ﬁnancial circumstances. They supported the household with additional income with small activities. She recalls that at times her family was selling pastries and distributing them to the nearby shops. Her father while continuing to work in Ministry of Education was forever trying his hand at various businesses for supplementary income. Supply of homemade food to shops and cafes was rear in those days and ours was the ﬁrst family to do so, quips Dr Rauhiya. The Doctor was barely four-ﬁve years of age when her father rented an apartment for pastry making and cooking other foodstuff with the help of a group of workers. This homemade food was then supplied to cafes nearby. Among other ventures, her father managed to open a shop for sale of auto spare parts too, though unfortunately that project went through heavy losses and did not continue for long, eventually closing down. Dr. Rauhiya at that time was completing her university studies in medicine while taking her 1st lesson in entrepreneurship.

As the years went by the financial conditions gradually improved for the family. Changing with the new times her father got in to supporting Hajj and Umrah, pilgrimage. Doctor Rauhiya too assisted him in this venture. While doing so an entrepreneur was already born and shaping up and Doctor thanks her parents for that. While continuing with her love for entrepreneurship, she chose a life partner who too is an owner of diﬀerent businesses. Today, her husband is her ardent supporter and a catalyst in her entrepreneurial career.
Opportunities

One small incident in the family led Doctor to get into her skin-care business of today. A member of the family developed severe acute psoriasis leading to hospitalization for six days and that condition was triggered by usage of one particular soap available off the shelf in any supermarket. This incident taught a very important lesson to the Doctor and her family, that the body can be affected by simple things such as soap, creams. In her effort to find safe cosmetics, Doctor decided to study the effects of different cosmetics on a human body for a period of six months and arrived at a conclusion that there is no alternative to natural ingredients. Whereas most of the products available in the market, were not fully natural and contained many chemical ingredients such as petrochemicals or preservatives that could lead to various skin conditions. She continued her search for 100% natural alternatives and reaching out to various brands around the world. This was the beginning of her ambition to start pioneering work of bringing global natural skincare products to the Omani community in the interest of public health.

It was in 2009, she took a plunge and opened a shop called Latafa in Al Bahja mall in Al Seeb to introduce natural and safe skincare products to the consumers of Oman. This shop had five globally renowned cosmetic brands such as Makeup from Australia, Skin Care from New Zealand, Baby Care from Germany and Soaps from France. This venture was much ahead of time as there was no awareness about quality skin care products in the Omani community and customers could not comprehend the high pricing. Doctor had invested around 40,000 OMR in this business. But business never really took off and Doctor too could not give it much needed attention due to her full time job in Armed forces Medical Services. With dwindling business and decrease in profits Doctor was unable to cover the cost to run the shop and in 2011 she closed down her much loved 1st venture. The closure itself took away some of her personal savings yet she did not lose her heart and started providing non-aromatic products for Hajj and Umrah travelers. She had named this collection as Hajj Bag. Till date her Haj bag is still very popular with her discerning customers and has become a must item for all those who embark on the pilgrimage. During the year 2018, sale of these Hajj Bags had crossed 2500 mark affirming it’s popularity.

The failure of the 1st venture did not deter Dr Rauhiya, in fact she feels that much was learned in that project and she had built some strong business contacts and network of clients as well as suppliers too. However, she continued with her job nurturing her dream of owning business all the time. And then the best thing happened. Oman woke up to importance
of entrepreneurship and started focusing on developing, nurturing entrepreneurs. During these times SME Development Fund was running its program, Senior Entrepreneurship Development for MOD personnel to develop entrepreneurial skills in individuals. Doctor enrolled herself for this course and attended 6 weeks program covering various aspects of starting and running business. During her initial venture she was not familiar with some important fundamentals of starting a business such as preparing a business plan, understanding cash flow, importance of accounting, legalities and procedures to start a business etc. While going through the SMEF’s training program, simultaneously she started building plan for her 2nd venture. She started identifying the areas that caused failure of her 1st venture at Al Bhaja mall and focusing on those troubled areas in her business plan for the 2nd venture of her organic beauty products. Thanks to SMEF that I could create “Latafa” (meaning beautiful) again based on a very strong footing, she muses.

By 2017 Oman had many different outlet offering natural beauty products however, Doctor was confident of her product line as her range was of high quality, organic, natural products with international certification. She focused on the USP of her products which was beauty without compromising wellbeing and this instilled confidence in her customers. With new learnings such as 4 P’s of marketing she created a product-line at different price bands making it affordable to all. With this she started putting together rest of the elements of her business plan to launch her 2nd venture.

But by now ways of establishing business in Oman had changed considerably. The earlier trade procedures were much easier in terms of importing goods and were not subject to as many procedures, legalities of today. Today importing products from abroad have become more difficult with many more procedures involved. She incurred hefty fees due towards testing of products in laboratories for appropriate certification. At the beginning of the journey, the doctor was frustrated with compliance of these procedures, but as the days went by, she learnt that it is important to be patient as all these procedures actually safeguard her project and helped her in getting more organized. However, she still is of an opinion that the import cost in Oman is quite high and it affects the overall product cost especially for small traders as they trade with small quantities and when these costs are spread over only a few products, it makes the final product very expensive for the end customer. Doctor feels that these clearance fees should be reduced for SMEs, making such small businesses viable.

Armed with a firm business plan and all essentials taken care off, Doctor decided to take the plunge a second time. She took early retirement from
her job after 14 years in service to focus on this project which was close to her heart. She firmly believes that the business owner must invest regular working hours in an effective manner. Her husband too served as a guide and helped her at every step. She went on to acquire different skills and understand various steps in her business such as clearance of transactions, sales, marketing, import, distribution, customer service etc.

In 2011, the mounting losses and failure to raise capital to continue her struggling business had forced the Doctor to close her shop. Even second time around the doctor faced challenges to raise funding for her new venture. It was very frustrating to raise capital from funding organizations for the business which had failed the 1st time. So when several attempts to convince them failed, she decided to sell a piece of land to get the much needed cash in order to start all over again. She invested 200,000 OMR to re launch Latafa.

At the exhibition, Ebdaat Omania in November 2017, the Doctor launched her project Latafa with a small stall to introduce her products. Even today she cannot stop raving about the amazing response she had received during this exhibition. This exhibition gave her and her brand instant recognition due the visitors and presence of large media. At that time she had only 10 products and two employees and was working from a small office space and selling her products online. However, after one year from launching she had 17 employees 11 of them were Omani. Furthermore, she now have more then 100 products, four channels of sales; retail, wholesale distribution, online and B2B business.

**Way forward:**

Doctor did not stop with one shop and soon opened other branches to cover different localities. Currently, Latafa has four branches and an operations center in Baushar. She extended her business as wholesaler and created more POS such as Carrefour, and various internet sites. Increasing distribution/sales channels brought her overall product cost down. She is extending and diversifying her product range and introduced household detergents that do not contain chemicals. These Detergents for clothes, dishes and other materials are softer on hands and Gentler on health say’s Dr Rauhiya. With her previous experience, Doctor is establishing contacts with global distributors to provide products from all over the world. Her relations with her distributors are so strong that she is able to supply products at a record speed. Despite the failure of her first project, the relations she had built during that period did not dwindle or disappear and hence Doctor was able to revive her contacts to get the required agencies when she started her 2nd venture.

Doctor had realized importance of marketing on the social networking sites such Instagram, Twitter, Whatsapp and SnapChat to attract young customers. She has collaborated with famous regional personalities to
endorse her products on various social media sites.

While looking back at her journey, she wishes to dish out some advice for the young and novice entrepreneurs. She says that even if you have had many challenges in your initial venture and even it came up to closing the shop, do not get disheartened and give up, as the experience that you get through your failure is invaluable. Patience is of utmost importance as the legal procedures for inception do take a long time to finish and are very very frustrating at times. In fact the doctor feels there should be some training in these areas for 1st timers as it can play a beneficial role for many.

She is very quick in saying, do your homework, analyze your failure, keep in touch with your suppliers and keep working on the customer base you have created. These things will go a long way in your next venture. Also start small, keep your costs low is her advice to young entrepreneurs. She also has some tips to offer regarding recruitment of staff for new entrepreneurial ventures. She feels, the employee must be able to speak and negotiate with the customer (communication skills). When it comes to employment for Latafa she did not rely on the qualifications to choose her employees, but rather went by candidate’s experience and personality while trusting her instincts. The doctor provides several workshops to her staff on how to deal with customers and product knowledge. The Doctor is a hands-on employer who likes to instill work ethics by example. She cleans the shop herself in front of her employees to instill dignity of work. The doctor herself attends several exhibitions to market her products and leads her employees by example.

Dr. Rauhiya has recruited a sales manager to follow up with the orders, supervise all branches and to have her backend office organized. In such business it is very important to maintain stock with their related expiry dates, as ignoring these can lead to huge losses. In future, the Doctor aspires to have branches internationally as she receives many enquiries from other Gulf countries. She aspires to franchise in other countries by 2020.

Latafa deals with high quality international products and Dr Rauhiya takes pride in bringing such products to the discerning customers of Oman.

She is very happy with the sales as so far they are to her expectations.

She also attributes success of the project to her training from the Ministry of Defense in collaboration with SME Development Fund where she learned how to work out a systematic project plan, legal procedures, marketing, cash flow and general approach to start up projects.

However, Doctor has not stopped after her training from SMEF, She is forever seeking knowledge to better her business be it online course in leadership or reading some books in the marketing or business management.
She is hoping that one day her brand becomes a well-known global brand. She is committed to serve the community through her natural, organic and medicinally proven products. Dr Rauhiya is a proud entrepreneur and role model to many of her former colleagues. She feels it is better than being an employee as one can satisfy their creative urge establishing and running their own business. As there are many obstacles while establishing a business, one has to be innovative and creative to find appropriate solutions. However, being entrepreneur is the most satisfying experience.
4. Engineering For Kids :

STEM education LOOKING FOR ROOTS in Oman

An Entrepreneurial Journey of Saif Al Manji

This brief case study was prepared by Mithun Shrivastava, and Arvind Hans, both Assistant Professors at Waljat College of Applied Sciences, Muscat, Oman. This case was written as a basis for class discussion, rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a business situation. Our information sources include web-based resources, and insights provided by Saif Al Manji, Founder of EFK-Oman during a personal interview by the authors.

Abstract
This case is an attempt to provide insights into Saif Al Manji’s entrepreneurial journey in setting up and nurturing EFK-Oman. It is based on a narrative discourse and involves different aspects related to his life as a young Omani entrepreneur. The case begins with presenting background information about his personal and professional life, and provides a detailed snapshot of his experiences which lead to the business idea of introducing STEM education in an exciting fun-filled learning environment amongst kids in Oman. Further, authors’ intent to develop this case study, including reasons for considering EFK-Oman as the chosen SME for the said case are cited. This is followed by a description of identified problems and opportunities which lead Saif to transform his dreams into reality in the form of EFK-Oman. A number of project-related findings based on personal discussion of authors with Saif are presented next, followed by conclusions which highlight select dilemmas faced by Saif Al Manji at present. Finally this case ends with a short discussion on some of the milestones for EFK-Oman, and significant lessons for college students and young Omani entrepreneurs. This case study intends to paint the story behind conceptualization and development of EFK-Oman on a bigger canvas, with a hope to gain attention of different stakeholders in education industry in Oman leading to increased support extended to Saif Al Manji to help him realize his dream of “Inspiring the Next Generation of Engineers!”.

Background Note
A young Omani boy performing quite well in academics throughout his school life grew up with expectations from society, especially parents to become a qualified engineer. However, the boy loved interacting with
people, and preferred the human-connect over love for machines. He followed his passion in college days and realized his true potential in terms of strong people-orientation. Passing out from the prestigious Sultan Qaboos University in Oman, the boy embarked on his journey to make his presence felt in the corporate world. Equipped with the required theoretical knowledge and conceptual background, he was all set to contribute to the business world, and started his corporate journey with first job as an HR Generalist with Daleel Petroleum L.L.C. Oman. This job provided him excellent exposure to the domain of recruitments and related disciplines in Oil & Gas industry in Oman. After few years of enriched experience at Daleel Petroleum L.L.C. Oman, he switched over to a promising job entailing new roles in government sector. But within a year, his passion for the human-connect landed him with another job as a Training Analyst with Takatuf, Oman which is a subsidiary of Oman Oil Company, and has its core competence in human capital consulting. With just one year in his new job, he was promoted to be a Training Consultant in Takatuf, Oman. While working with all these organizations in different positions, he realized a huge demand of Omani engineering graduates in Oil & Gas companies operating all over Oman, especially in Sohar, Salalah, and Musandam region. He also witnessed a significant gap in supply of local workforce comprising Omani engineers which could cater to industry requirements in the said domains. This made him realize an acute shortage and dearth of availability of local engineering talent besides the problems and challenges faced by the Oil & Gas companies in the wake of increasing Omanization. During all these years, his inquisitive mind was being challenged by these issues of national interest and finding pragmatic solutions for the same. Further, according to estimates based on survey reports from several secondary sources, the demand for engineers in Oil & Gas industry is expected to rise significantly in future. Realizing immense potential and a future marked by a galore of opportunities in engineering and related domains, he conceived the idea of preparing next generation of Omani engineers by honing their critical thinking and analytical reasoning capabilities. Taking this idea forward, he decided to bring this exposure to kids in Oman in their formative years during early ages. This lead to his hunt for a suitable curriculum based on contemporary learning pedagogies till he found his fate in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education system during one of his visits to Virginia, USA. By now the young boy’s dream and passion shaped up to establish him as one of the leading young Omani entrepreneurs branded as Saif Al Manji. With a strong vigour and determination, Saif Al Manji took up the challenging task of engineering young Omani minds by introducing them to the world of STEM education which is known to create a lasting impact on a child’s future (EFK-Oman, n.d.-a). This lead to the establishment of EFK-Oman (Engineering for Kids-Oman) with its motto: “Inspiring the Next Generation of Engineers!” (EFK-Oman, n.d.-c).

It would be interesting to construe and analyze Saif’s entrepreneurial journey of setting up EFK-Oman based on a novel idea of bringing STEM education
in Oman. This will not only inspire other young Omani entrepreneurs to follow their passion in best interests of the society and nation, but will also help them prepare to face problems besides understanding issues and challenges which are typically expected in such entrepreneurial endeavours in Oman. This case study will help college students in Oman to understand select characteristics of an entrepreneur, different phases in the life of an entrepreneur, and major functions of an entrepreneur in generic terms. Last but not the least, this case is expected to provide critical insights to different stakeholders in education, especially school education in Oman to evaluate possibilities of providing roots to Saif Al Manji’s dream of promoting STEM education in Oman in the larger interests of the society and nation.

Problems and Opportunities

During his corporate experience primarily in the domain of Human Resources, Saif identified and examined numerous problems faced by Oil & Gas industry in Oman. The companies face tough times getting suitable Omani engineers with an inner drive and passion supported by appropriate qualification for relevant jobs in the said domain. The gap in demand and supply of engineering-related Omani manpower, especially in the Oil & Gas industry is widening. The companies operating in Oman are facing challenges in the wake of increased Omanization requirements, and look forward to plausible solutions to these problems.

Further, from an educational perspective, Saif felt that a number of young Omani children are quite good at critical and analytical reasoning skills. However, they are unaware of the real benefits of studying science and technology related subjects. Saif identified lack of awareness and lack of interest amongst Omani parents and their wards, especially from a long-term perspective as the key reasons for majority of Omani children not pursuing engineering as their career option. In fact only select Omani candidates opt for engineering-related career and that too generally in their quest for a lucrative job in a relatively challenging work environment, besides some Omani parents forcing their wards to pursue career in engineering for a promising future. Further, the STEM education system seems to be somewhat missing in school education, especially during the formative years of school students in Oman. Saif observed that kids in Oman are quite good learners in their first few years of school education, but eventually lose interest due to the strong disconnect between school teaching and real world problems.

After musing over the problems experienced in professional life, Saif decided to explore the possibilities of creating awareness and interest in science, engineering and technology amongst young Omani children from their initial days of upbringing and student life. He envisioned that if young Omani kids get the right practical exposure to fundamentals in engineering, science and technology, it will evince and nurture their interest in related disciplines from childhood days. Moreover, it will benefit the Omani society
and will certainly help future generations craft a better nation. This lead to Saif’s discovery of an excellent entrepreneurial opportunity aimed at introducing STEM education in Oman through exciting fun filled hands-on learning (EFK-Oman, n.d.-a).

STEM education has a marked successful presence in the US besides a number of other developed countries and select developing countries. The history of STEM education dates back to 19th century. STEM education was originally called Science, Mathematics, Engineering and Technology (SMET) (Sanders, 2009), and was an initiative created by the National Science Foundation (NSF), US (White, 2014). This primary objective of this initiative was to sharpen and hone critical thinking abilities of students and make them effective problem solvers driven by creativity and innovation, besides improving their marketability in workforce (White, 2014). Saif didn’t take much time to realize that STEM education based programs could be one of the best suited curriculum for young Omani generation to foster sustainable development in engineering education, besides facilitating nation’s overall economic development. Moreover, such a venture would involve a high degree of human-connect typically with young kids and their parents in Oman, which has always been a passion for Saif Al Manji.

Findings
The elements of excitement and fun filled hands-on learning based on STEM education system need to be infused quite early in education in Oman. Select assessment methods such as quizzes, examination, tests and home assignments generally cause a pressure to perform amongst school students. Further, these assessment methods may not contribute much to the innovative and critical thinking skills of young minds, and therefore lead to restrained learning and perhaps lack of interest in engineering-related disciplines. Taking a learner-centered approach rather than teacher-centered approach, EFK-Oman provides an engaging environment for kids combining fun and learning together, with minimal intervention by the program facilitators. This helps kids in age groups 4-14 years to identify and conceptualize real-world problems by themselves, and are able to understand practical applications of scientific principles and theories. Saif believes that his entrepreneurial venture has a first mover advantage in Oman. Although, he didn’t take up a comprehensive concept testing in Oman, but he did a preliminary market survey to gain insights through interviews with select people and relied on his observations to take a final call about his potential venture. He also expressed that a number of decisions regarding his personal and family life also got impacted due to his increased commitments and dedication for this project. It is worth noting that the risk profile of an entrepreneur seems to get affected by his/ her stage in family life cycle, and hence it perhaps leads us to conclude that sooner the better for an entrepreneur to follow his/ her dreams and work passionately towards making them a reality. Saif initially found it quite
difficult to leave a secured job with an established company in Oman; but his passion, strong support from family, and contingency planning helped him channelize his efforts in setting up EFK-Oman. Saif analyzed potential competition and targeted customer profile for his business. In terms of competition, he presumed that his business would actually compete against all those businesses who keep kids engaged after school by offering fun-filled activities, viz.; art and craft, sports, music, dance, dramatics besides many others. The biggest challenge now was to provide relatively more excitement and fun without losing the essence of STEM education. For the said purpose, he decided to offer differentiated programs such as after-school programs, classes, camps, workshops, and birthday parties to kids (EFK-Oman, n.d.-d) according to their classification in three age groups – 4 to 7 years, 8 to 11 years and 12 to 14 years. Even price determination of different programs was not easy. EFK-Oman used skimming strategies and continued experimentation to arrive at somewhat competitive prices for all its programs.

Another significant point is that the business may not work out as planned and elements of surprise are quite probable. EFK-Oman targeted three customer groups, viz.; kids for after school programs, schools for content development and marketing, and corporates facilitating introduction of STEM education amongst kids as a part of their Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives (EFK-Oman, n.d.-b). It was anticipated that targeting first customer group comprising kids will be a big success, and will contribute to increased revenue for business. However, post-hoc analysis made Saif realize that it was actually the third customer group comprising corporates which unexpectedly expressed immense interest and supported EFK-Oman for their novel idea of introducing STEM education to kids, especially in their formative years. Further, the choice of business location is a critical decision and requires considerable thought. EFK-Oman started its operations in Panorama Mall in Bausher, but within a year or so realized that the space rent was too high and the location couldn’t generate enough footfall as expected. This lead Saif to invest much more time and resources in identifying Azaiba being considered as a better location for their business. The above mentioned points clearly highlight the dynamicty associated with business decision-making due to changes in the business environment, and improved learnings from outcomes of earlier decisions.

Conclusions

An entrepreneur’s journey is full of challenges, risks and dilemmas both in personal and professional domains, but at the same time this journey gets glorified by his/ her excitement, enthusiasm, and passion. In just 2-3 years of its presence in Oman, more than 1400 young minds find themselves on the alumni list and have been truly inspired through programs offered by EFK-Oman. Saif’s entrepreneurial journey is a true inspiration for many aspiring young Omani entrepreneurs. In fact his excellent endeavour
involving development of this novel idea in Oman has made him “Winner of the fifth edition of Entrepreneur’s Conclave 2016” as well as the “Brand Ambassador of 2017”. However, this project is still in its nascent stage, and is poised for tremendous growth. A bigger question faced by Saif is whether his entrepreneurial venture of introducing STEM education in Oman will be able to find its roots through approval and support from all concerned stakeholders, especially government bodies concerning school education in Oman? Whether his dream of “Inspiring the Next Generation of Engineers!” will get its wings in near future?

Road Ahead

The course content offered by EFK-Oman at present is a pre-designed content from their partner in US. Saif intends to customize and adapt the programs offered by EFK-Oman to suit the requirements of education in local context. However, he is still caught up with challenges of identifying people who could support him in content development, and getting the required approvals from different stakeholders for introducing such content in Omani school education. Attracting and retaining suitable talented workforce which is passionate about contributing to Omani society and nation at large is quite difficult. Till date Saif has been managing human resource requirements primarily through a talent pool comprising young Omanis who work with EFK-Oman only on a part-time mode. This might pose some problems related to the sustainability and future growth of EFK-Oman’s business. Realizing the criticalities involved in issues mentioned aforesaid, few full-time job offers have already been made to select talented people in Oman, and EFK-Oman is looking forward to an excellent team comprising the right mix of full-time and part-time professionals to drive business expansion, especially in Salalah and Sohar regions. EFK-Oman is also in the process of setting up an advisory board in order to support this endeavour from a strategic perspective. Last but not least, Saif Al Manji is also evaluating possible options for EFK-Oman’s business growth and expansion in Oman through sub-franchising strategy.

Lessons Learned

This case highlights the following significant lessons for college students and young Omani entrepreneurs.

i. Scan your business environment on a continuum for effective business idea generation. Your eye for detail, careful observation of business environment and related trends, education, experience, training, and holistic exposure can facilitate idea generation for entrepreneurial endeavours.

ii. If you have a business idea, just go for it, and put your heart and soul into it. Do not confine these ideas to your mind. Follow your instinct and act passionately. Challenges are there in setting up a new business,
but it is fun and a rewarding experience. Only your persistence and determination can make you a successful entrepreneur.

iii. You need to examine the feasibility of proposed business in terms of market, financial, technical, and organizational factors with reference to problems and opportunities identified.

iv. You need to assess financial and non-financial risks to business, and develop plans to mitigate these risks. It is important for you to examine and analyze sustainability of business in short-run and long-run, especially in terms of sources and application of funds, resource allocation, cash flow, market potential, and competitive industry structure.

v. Think and devise ways to improve the visibility of your business.

vi. Invest your time and resources in developing, nurturing and maintaining good relations with people. You need to maintain a personalized touch at all possible times. Customers don’t buy from businesses, they buy from the people. It is through people and products that they relate themselves to businesses.

References


5. National Metal Cans

An Entrepreneurial Journey of Chaitanya Gulabsi

Abstract:
Nestled in a quiet corner of Muscat’s Industrial Estate, the serene exterior of the National Metal Cans factory belies the efforts and struggles of its founder, Chaitanya Gulabsi. This case is written by Dr Gautam Dutta, Caledonian College giving insight on the setting up of a manufacturing unit in Oman. In spite of coming from a well-known and established business background of his father, Chaitanya decided to start and run his own business.

Background:
After completing his MBA and specializing in Accountancy, Chaitanya joined his father’s business in 1986. In order to gain experience and learn about every aspect of the business, he worked in all the different departments of his father’s organization; human resources, engineering, finance, marketing etc. He worked hard to learn the nuances of the business. This particular period taught him many lessons and especially humility.

After working there for thirteen years a dramatic turn took place in his life. He distinctly remembers 18 November 1998 which coincides with the National Day of Oman when certain events made him think hard, a realization akin to an awakening dawned on him that he was not a creator of a business but it was handed on a platter to him from his father. Encouraged by his wife he decided to start his own business. However, it was easier said than done. To begin with, he didn’t know where to start, or how to start, or what to start.

Opportunities & Challenges:
Richard Branson, the Australian business magnate once said, “Business opportunities are like buses, there’s always another one coming.” But, Chaitanya did not find that bus until one day when he sat looking dejected in the presence of a friend. The General Manager of Jotun paints asked why he looked so troubled. On learning about what caused the glum look, he made a suggestion. He asked the young Chaitanya to start a can manufacturing company. The idea appealed to Chaitanya who immediately set about planning the business.

Once Chaitanya set about making a business plan he realized there were
many obstacles to overcome. First and foremost, he had to understand the technical side of the business. It was a very difficult thing to do as he wasn’t an engineer. He started looking for experts who could impart their knowledge in this particular industry. Eventually, he found a company that was ready to share their knowhow with him but not without a price. In return they asked to be partners in his business. But as Chaitanya was starting from the scratch he could not offer partnership without any investment and he rejected the offer. Many days went by yet Chaitanya could not make any headway. Time was passing quickly and getting the knowledge that he wanted had become a real challenge until one day, while sitting with his brother-in-law Chaitanya expressed his desire to acquire the knowledge to start a can manufacturing business. Fortunately his brother-in-law knew a consultant who could help Chaitanya understand the technical process behind any manufacturing setup, as well as, the capital expenditure requirements for a manufacturing unit.

Following this spurt of good luck, Chaitanya’s next challenge was to acquire capital. After he managed to arrange for the initial capital for his factory, further challenge was a place to set it up. He had to look for a plot of land, to set up his factory, acquire the machinery from abroad, and get right manpower and so on. He had to come across many road blocks at each step of the setting up of this factory right from getting appropriate licenses and permits to get skilled workers and appropriate raw material. He needed to work on requirement of the raw material as ordering right quantity was crucial. Raw material plays an important role in any manufacturing unit and its procurement is very tricky. One needs to have enough quantity to be able to meet the regular requirements as lack of it keeps machines idle resulting in losses. Similarly over ordering can block your capital and warehouse space. Yet one has to procure certain minimum quantity to make it most cost effective as well. His work involved looking into the smallest aspect of his business and at the same time taking care of all the major aspects of his business. The entire process of getting rental land in Rusayl Industrial Estate, construction of the factory and its premises, purchasing the plant and machinery from India, U.K. and Italy took over eight months for Chaitanya. Things moved bit slowly than his expectations.

Chaitanya sums up his experience by saying, “Prudence is very important in business. A business person needs to find the thorns that come with the rose. To be a manufacturer is much tougher route to entrepreneurship than being a trader or coffee shop owner. The entrepreneur needs to understand the basics of production, technical processes involved, procure raw material as per the requirement, work on sales and marketing to get enough orders to keep machines running to their maximum capacity, understand logistics to deliver the final product and so on. A trader buys ready product and sales it at a profit. When he does that he has specifications of the final product while a manufacturer has to create a product to particular specifications and initial few months pass by in fine tuning the entire production process costing time and money. Another piece of advice he has for those in business
is, “There should be no wastage.” Idle machine results in loss of earning, errors in production specification results in wastage of raw material and so on. Each miscalculation or blunder is wastage of time and other resources and every manufacture should be prudent about it. After doing an initial market study, Chaitanya began his business. Getting orders wasn’t easy. To keep the production on he had to have orders and to get orders he had to be out in the market. He had to work really hard to get customers for his product. He had to oversee the factory too to maintain the quality of his product and be vigilant to avoid any wastage of raw material. A lesson he learned the hard way was that the product had to be perfect each time else the escalated cost could easily eat up profits. In the early days business was slow and soon the running costs started mounting. He was competing with the products from UAE which were much cheaper with efficient deliveries. Chaitanya was working long hours to manage all ends of the business yet he was not able to match his competition as he was on a learning curve. He was learning new technical aspects after production of each batch of cans. Designing, quality of raw material, technical processes, and any errors in one of these would affect production quality resulting in rejects. These errors were slowly affecting the working capital. Things started getting so difficult that he feared that soon he might have to give up his factory. Chaitanya gave himself one more year to go. Chaitanya is an honest and hard-working person always finds a silver lining behind even the darkest of the clouds. During the deciding year he worked on organizing finances for the working capital. The additional funding gave him new lease of life. Chaitanya had realized that to bring his factory to profitability he has to run the machines to its maximum capacity. He added another product line to his existing tins for paints. He started manufacturing cans for admixture industry. This industry was at its nascent stage yet Chaitanya recognized its potential. After this development his business began to grow and so did his success. And at the end of the year Chaitanya had managed to survive.

Road Ahead:
Today main challenge for Chaitanya is making the manufacturing process cost efficient. Lack of skilled workers is another challenge that he often faces. Currently his factory is manufacturing at 65% of its capacity due to various reasons. To make the factory efficient he has to either increase shifts increasing the number of workers or bring in new machinery which is fully automated. He has already taken the decision of bringing in more cost effective machinery. Meanwhile he has diversified by adding another product manufacturing as
well. The factory for the plastic pipes is being set up and Chaitanya is very excited as this product line has huge potential. While discussing the lower number of entrepreneurs in manufacturing in Oman he says, “there is lack of general guidance and knowledge of running a manufacturing unit in Oman. Manufacturing is very technical and initial handholding is absolutely must else it can lead to wastage of raw material and time, speeding the downfall. He says manufacturing is a long, difficult road unlike trading where returns are much faster. It is much more capital intensive as well and needs larger working capital to sustain. But he also adds that though initially the expenses are high, over the time efficiencies do scale up and the production turns profitable making most of the ventures sustainable. He also advises all those who want to walk this path, to choose a product for which procuring raw material is easier and cheaper. Before starting the venture, to understand the production process and technicalities, procurement cycles and logistics completely. It is advisable to do internship in a similar unit for a while. He feels Omanis should start units for which raw material can be sourced locally. Oman is a country of diverse resources and if entrepreneurs are encouraged to start up related manufacturing units it won’t take very long to make this country self-reliant in certain areas.
Abstract
This case study is an attempt to provide insights into entrepreneurial journey in setting up and developing a children's health centre as a SME. Different aspects of Ahmed Humaid Said Al Mafargi’s life, elicited through a narrative discourse, make the basis of this study. The study is based on a narrative discourse involving different aspects related to his life as an Omani entrepreneur. The case begins with presenting background information about his personal and professional life, and offers a detailed portrait of his experience that brought about the business idea of providing health services to children. Following this is a description of identified problems and opportunities which led Ahmed to turn his dream into reality. Findings of the study based on personal discussion with Ahmed are presented next, followed by a conclusion that highlights select characteristics of his personality that shed light on his achievement. Ahmed’s case provides invaluable lessons to young Omani entrepreneurs. This case study is captured in a personal interview by Nada Al Breiki and later written down by Seema Mehta.

Background Note
Ahmed Humaid Said Al Mafargi, 43 years old, retired from the Oman Royal Navy after 25 years of service. He graduated from high school and joined the navy. Within a few years, the royal navy sent him abroad for a two-year program in electric engineering. He worked on many projects in electric engineering, among them a project that was highlighted in Khareef; it was to build three ships in the UK.

Because he had a limited income, Ahmed had constantly thought seriously about doing some other activity that would generate an extra income alongside his salary. After intensive brainstorming different options, he found out that having a children health centre would be the best idea because there was only one centre of its kind in Al Qurum. Then he began to actually study the market to find a suitable place to establish the business and start working. He found that Al Hail was the best place as it was somehow in the middle and close to all important agglomerations such as Muscat and its suburbs, Al Seeb, Maabela, Barka, Fanja, Bidbid, and Samail. Add to this, Al-Hail had no children’s health services.
Also, he looked for the staff that could be hired for the business. “One of the reasons I chose children’s health centre as a business is because it’s a need in the market and I will be solving a problem” Ahmed said.

Problems and Opportunities
Finding business partners was a considerably tough task. In this respect, Ahmed moved gradually from his inner circle to the outer one. He started with the family members, then co-workers, and finally friends. Eventually, the right partner was found from the Ministry of Defense, a doctor who had excellent experience in health and medicine.

The second main problem was to devise a business plan and to have it audited and endorsed by a company, specialized in business planning. The search was expanded to reach the UAE for more information and clarity about children’s health centres.

The third problem Ahmed complained about was the long and slow procedures at the Ministry of Health. Clearing the required papers takes ages to complete. This problem was further fueled by the long distance between the health centre and the Ministry of Health.

As for financial support, Ahmed admits to have made a mistake in not seeking funds from funding companies. He says they still need funds for more marketing for the project and to buy more equipment for the centre.

Ahmed joined an entrepreneurship senior program for MOD, run by SME development fund and learned quite a lot from it. In his words, “I learned a lot of new information from the program such as how to do marketing properly, SWOT analysis and feasibility study, the program was very useful for startups.”

Ahmed’s business took great advantage of the absence of competition as there were only two centres offering health services to children in the entire country. Besides, it was the first of its kind in Al Hail. Another advantage that Ahmed and his business enjoyed was the availability of high experienced nurses, with more than 20 years of experience.

Findings
Findings from this case study assert that caution and prudence are essential to avoid pitfalls. Ahmed was very meticulous while studying the market and left nothing to sheer luck. Although his business was intended to be opened in Oman, his search was extended to the UAE to learn as much as possible from people’s earlier experiences.

When it came to marketing, he had it done through marketing companies, social media, and visual media, that too by experts.
Recruitment was not an exception to this. Ahmed says, “through Bayt.com, we collected many C.Vs for people from the same field and then we had online and face-to-face interviews, also we finished all the legal procedures such as those required by the Ministry of Manpower.”

Ahmed’s business provided health services to children. So far, it had been doing well in this sensitive field. He boasts that “We haven’t had or faced any medical faults,” and “the feedback from the patients after they got their treatment was very satisfying for us because the doctor sat with each of the kids for more than one hour.”

Moreover, the study reveals that the lessons Ahmed learned from the program and feasibility study helped him to start another new project in wheat planting. This project was chosen because it has a low cost among other aspects such as water and land. The project is run by his brother who is well experienced in the field.

Conclusion

Ahmed Humaid Said Al Mafargi started his business from scratch. His limited income did not prevent him from becoming a part of the business world. Actually, the need for an extra income served as strong motivation to change his life. His determination, caution and prudence have helped him to keep out of big trouble. His business is doing well, especially that it still has no competition in the area. The business has great potential for limitless expansion in the future. Ahmed’s case provides important lessons for Omani entrepreneurs.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Just like any businessman, the first challenge to Ahmed is competition. He knows that being alone in the market will not last for long, and sooner or later, he will have competitor(s) sharing the market with him. The market has only one rule: “survival of the best”, and only those who abide by that rule will survive the fierce competition.

Another serious challenge for the new business is to get funds from funding companies for more marketing and to buy more equipment for the centre.

Ahmed’s case study provides the following invaluable lessons to young Omanis who are willing to start a business:

• A first important lesson is to learn that one doesn’t have to be a millionaire to start a successful business. Ahmed’s case shows that the appropriate idea, the strong will, and the determination are of greater importance

• A second invaluable lesson is that caution and prudence are crucial. Studying the project meticulously and moving at a calculated pace are
of great importance as well to avoid heavy losses

- A third important lesson is that the choice of the operating domain is of no less importance. The domain should have minimal competition, if at all, especially at the beginning so that the new business has a chance to flourish and stand on its own feet.

- Scanning the business environment on a continuum for effective business idea generation with an eye for details, careful observation of business environments and related trends, education, experience, training, and holistic exposure can facilitate idea generation for entrepreneurial endeavours.

- One needs to examine the feasibility of the proposed business in terms of market, financial, technical, and organizational factors with reference to problems and opportunities identified.

**Road Ahead**

Ahmed’s business was operating in a very promising sector. The business was still in its infancy after 8 months. There was ample room for expansion with introduction of more specialties such as orthopaedics, neurology and ophthalmology especially for children. Expansion possibilities in this field are limitless. However, medical venture is investment centric business which needs huge funding to bring in specialised equipments and Ahmed was on a shoestring budget. He could neither gather funds for additional equipment needed for these speciality services nor could fund the marketing initiative needed. A year down the line, due to lack of operational funds and knowledge required for such speciality center he started suffering huge losses. He could see the unsustainability in the venture. Ahmed took a tough decision of closing down the centre at the end of the year. However, the entreprenure in him is still alive and he is already planning his next venture, a medical facility for visa procedures.
This is a case study of Zulfa Al Barwani, a passionate and dedicated entrepreneur who established the LILAC brand and took it to greater heights by diversifying her portfolio.

**Background:**

Zulfa Barwani was always artistic as a child. She had a love for art, interior decoration and an eye for details. She loved to explore new ideas and experiment with colour. During her younger days she would apply makeup for family and friends as a hobby and then family members and friends started realizing her talent and more requests started coming in for bridal makeup and makeup sessions for special occasions. Zulfa was trying to push past the conventional methods of makeup application which involved a lot of heavy colours and experiment with more simple colours and elegant makeup techniques that would help bring out the natural beauty of each face.

Although Zulfa was very happy with the progress she made, there was something holding her back from taking the next step. She was not confident enough to start her own beauty salon because she lacked the formal training that was required to help her start her own business. So she decided to do a few beautician courses from Lebanon and France. These courses gave her a strong foundation to build her confidence and skills. She had a better understanding of shapes of faces, skin tones and makeup techniques.

Zulfa returned back to Muscat to start her own practice. Initially she used one room in her house as a makeup room for her customers. She would ensure that her customer service was excellent and her exceptional services and skills would ensure that her customers always came back. As time passed, she started gaining the trust and confidence of many customers and her client base started growing stronger. Marketing was through word of mouth and as more and more clients noticed and appreciated her elegant makeup at weddings and functions, she started to become more and more popular among a wider audience. Zulfa was determined to provide quality service at a reasonable price and she made it a point not to reject even one customer. This positive attitude help her in the long run to further strengthen her client base.
Start of her own business and problems faced during the growth of the business:

Zulfa was a teacher and she continued to teach to ensure that she earned her monthly income though teaching to run her small practise. As days passed, she realized that as her customer base grew, her house was not convenient enough for her practise. So she decided to join a salon, where she worked for 3 years. She had a separate room where she would use to apply makeup for her customers. From the income she earned she would give a percentage to the salon owner.

Working at the salon gave her the experience to run her own salon. She started to make note of all the problems that a salon could face and she would note down each issue such as parking problems and location of salon was very important. She noticed that it was important to have a prayer room for her clients and staff. She would observe the attitude of the staff and the level of customer service. She also learned about the billing process and procedures.

So finally the day came when Zulfa decided that she had the confidence, experience and customer base to start her own business. So in 2002, Zulfa opened her own Salon in Al khuwair. She made a business plan for the next 5 years and designed her salon accordingly. She had 3 staff to start off with. She had bookings from the very first week and her business grew well. In the next 5 years her customer base grew even further and Zulfa gained a lot of confidence through her experience.

Zulfa also started a spa in another location. In the next ten years her business picked up and her profits were good. Soon her salon started getting crowded and congested. She required more space for storage and a reception area. Zulfa decided that she had to think ahead for the next ten years and this time she required a space that was triple the size of her current salon.

In 2013, Zulfa moved into 1800sqm area in Al khuwair where she housed her salon and spa together.

Opportunities she encountered and embraced during her entrepreneurship that led to new business ventures.

Zulfa always made it a point to attend a lot of beauty exhibitions worldwide. She would always keep up with the latest trends in makeup and cosmetics, hair spa and nails as well. She also learnt that she could be a distributor for big cosmetic brands and this is where she decided to set up her own makeup brand called Lilac. Lilac was formed in 2016 and was set up in Markaz Al Bahja, Seeb. Initially the brand faced few hurdles as their manufacturing unit closed down but Zulfa was determined to grow the brand so she started Lilac lashes which catered to lashes suitable for all eyes. She further tied up
with German brand- Alessandro for nail art and care and Klapp Cosmetics for skin care. Lilac has also acquired a Turkish brand known as Farmasi, an international beauty and personal care manufacturer, in beauty, personal care and wellness products.

Zulfa always tested all her products on her skin before she would market it to her customers. In doing so she gained the trust from her customers, who knew they were getting good quality products.

She received funding from SMEF to open up new branches. She opened another 250 sqm branch in Sur, again a salon & spa setup and called it LILAC Spa.

In 2016 she also opened a LILAC Beauty Centre and Spa in Opera galleria as well as Alessandro nail spa. SMEF also further funded her to set up kiosks for various cosmetic brands across top shopping malls in Oman such as Avenues mall and Muscat City Centre.

Zulfa also opened a bridal boutique last year known as Wajaha boutique in Al khuwair. Many of her clientele had asked her inputs on bridal dresses during their bridal makeup sessions so Zulfa saw this as an opportunity to expand into this area. She started her own collection of bridal dresses. Due to her popularity and the Lilac brand, the bridal boutique was doing well initially.

Overall, the business expanded exponentially over the years and diversified into many verticals. During the first ten years, the profits were high but as the expansion process came underway, more expenses came into the picture such as equipments, shop fittings and products to be bought as inventory for the various outlets.

Challenges faced as the business grew:
1. Since there were was a lack of local institutes to train staff in beauty courses, this posed a big hurdle in recruiting well trained staff. Trainers from aboard had to be hired to train the staff locally which was very expensive.

2. There used to be a high attrition of expat staff as they move out from the company after undergoing training. But after the NOC rule was implemented, it helped to keep the employees for a longer period.

3. The Omanisation rule required a beauty salon to have high number of Omanis and when the rule to increase the basic salary for Omanis from RO 150 to RO 325 was implemented, it affected the bottom line considerably as these high salaries were not budgeted for.

4. Getting labour clearance for certain professions that required a certain skill was a challenge.
5. Over the last few years there has been 22 salons that have come up in Al Khuwair over a radius of 4 kms. This fierce competition posed a threat to getting new customers in the area.

6. Theft of money by the reception staff was a common problem as the money paid by walk in customers could not be tracked if they paid by cash and did not have an earlier appointment. This was later found out during auditing.

Learnings:

1. Zulfa realized that it was better to advertise for an international brand that she represented as an agent in Oman. Since she used to test each product personally before marketing it, her customers knew the products were good quality and safe to use. So she gained their trust. In the past she realized that when she advertised for a brand, customers had an option to buy it online rather than come to her store which was not beneficial to the business. Hence she decided that to profit from the advertising of her products, she had to have her own brand.

2. HR contracts with staff was an area where she had to get expert advice to draft proper contracts that stated all the roles and responsibilities along with the staff salary and benefits.

3. She needed to get a proper accounting system for stock check, store inventory, accounting etc. SMEF gave her advice on how to set up her staff organisation and helped her recruit an Accounts Manager and HR manager as her team grew to a staff of 80.

4. Zulfa found out that the best ways of marketing was through a combination of advertising and PR activities. Although the LILAC name had built a name, she had to reach out to new customers as well. She would do the make up for presenters on Oman TV would advertise her name in turn giving her a good publicity. Also she would advertise in the top women magazines in Oman. She would also take up tutorials and exhibitions and give lectures across colleges and various institutes.

Today she uses social media marketing through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat, which is a very cost effective marketing strategy to reach her audience directly.

Conclusion:

Passion, dedication along with a positive attitude are the key pillars to success for any business. Even if you fall into a ditch, you need to get up, reinvent yourself to be able to cover your losses. Also do not put all your eggs in one basket, diversify your business portfolio across various verticals to help reduce risk in the long run.
Abstract
The present case is an endeavor to provide insights into four sisters’, Shatha, Wafa, Ahed, Waad Abdullah Ali Al Jabri, entrepreneurial journey in setting up and developing Meshan, an SME, dealing in one of Oman most delicious delicacies. Different aspects of the sisters’ lives elicited through a narrative discourse make the basis of this study. The study is based on a narrative discourse involving different aspects related to their lives as young Omani entrepreneurs. The case begins with presenting background information about their personal and professional lives, and offers a detailed portrait of their experiences that brought about the business idea of marketing Omani dates in innovative, creative, modern and attractive ways that appeal to customers. Following this is a description of identified problems and opportunities which led the Al-Jabri sisters to turn their dream into reality. Findings of the study based on personal discussion with Shatha are presented next, followed by a conclusion that highlights select dilemmas the new business is expected to face. Finally this case ends with a short discussion on some of the landmarks for Meshan, and important lessons and guidelines for young Omani entrepreneurs. This case study was co-authored by Ibrahim Al Balushi, National University, Muscat and Amjaad Al Hinai, Gutech, Oman.

Background Note
The four sisters, all well-educated and holding high education diplomas, are sharp, determined and very focused. They know exactly what they want, plan it carefully, and work hard in tandem to eventually get what they set their eyes on.

With a flair for developing relationships and a strong foundation in finance, Shatha takes the lead on sales efforts at Meshan. She is HACCP certified and a graduate of a recognized hospitality level sweets and chocolates program.

An MBA graduate who doubles as a developer, Wafa, the business co-founder,
gave up her IT roots to turn her undergraduate science training into a full-time obsession with flavours. As Director of Business Development, Wafa can most often be found administering Meshan’s day-to-day operations and business development activities.

Ahed, the third sister, is formally trained in Hospitality Management and holds a degree from Willam Angliss Institute in Australia. She oversees the production and quality of every date and date sweet that leaves Meshan’s facility. Ahed can most often be found on the production side of the business and overseas Meshan’s new product development and food safety.

Also a graduate of Hospitality Management Baking and pastry, Waad, the fourth sister, tries to create Pastries that are unique in flavor and shape. She draws on her training as an assistant teacher to direct Meshan’s social communications. Waad can most often be found fostering Meshan’s communication and media relation.

Hence, the four sisters complement each other, and together with such diversified experience, they make a next-to-perfect business team that can embark on any business project with much confidence and with a great potential for success.

Another important characteristic that these young Omani entrepreneurs share, which has significantly contributed to their success, is their great passion for Omani dates. Through their sharp observation, they noticed that this delicious delicacy is not presented in the market in attractive ways to customers, hence the idea of establishing a business they would name Meshan to fill this vacuum.

The term “Meshan” is a local word used to indicate a basket made from palm fronds where fresh fruits used to be carried in the past. The sisters picked up this term as the brand name of their business as they believed it reflected their products faithfully since everything they offered originated from palm trees.

Meshan’s mission is to process date treats and make date sweets that capture the essence of Arabia and achieve quality distinction, freshness and flavour. Their staff work in a friendly, cooperative and rewarding environment that encourages long-term satisfying employment.

Shatha Al Jabri and her team envision to become an iconic Omani supplier of exceptional date products that preserve local traditions, and revive the traditional taste and fragrance of date sweets whose impeccable modern presentation and flavour foster an ever growing and maturing passion for dates.
Through Meshan, Shatha and her sisters promise their customers the most refined experience of the freshest date products that satisfy the palate and whose flavours are as unlimited as the human imagination.

Meshan has become the first exotic date treat supplier in the Sultanate of Oman. It was started by Shatha Al Jabri and her sister Wafa, and supported by their two other sisters, Ahed and Waad. Meshan offers dates in different flavours and shapes, date sweets, pastry, drinks such as Omani coffee, and catering services. They started from home in 2011 and opened the first café in 2015. Meshan is growing with the wise vision of the sisters, who clearly decided on their goals and expansion path. Their ambition, determination and hard work have resulted in Meshan’s unprecedented success. They are confident, creative and highly enthusiastic about their work and the value their business is adding to the market. Their friendly relationship with customers is yet another part of Meshan’s story that offers unique memorable experience to their valued customers.

**Problem and opportunities**

Meshan’s success has not been sheer luck, neither has it been a problem-free journey. Owing to their hard word work, determination, patience, and that flair of knowing exactly how, where, and when to start to overcome a problem, they have always ended up by finding a way out of their hardships. The first major problem they faced was working from home due to customer’s lack of confidence (that time in 2011) in home-run businesses. They were wise enough to understand that people needed time to be convinced of the new products. They started small, and they were never hasty in growing, which, along with the sustained high quality of the products and the service they offered, gave their customers the time they needed to be convinced.

The second problem they had to grapple with was the long process of business and brand registration. They were patient but tenacious; they never gave up.

Finance was their third problem. The sisters initially started financing their business from their own resources. The first two years were just enough to cover their costs, and only in their third year (2013) did they start making profit. The sisters took every opportunity to participate in competitions, and won several cash prizes which helped them to fund their growing business. Only when they decided to open a café did they apply for a grant from the Al Raffad fund. Luckily, they received a lot of financial support from the Zubair Cooperation and the Ministry of Agriculture. They also got scholarships for the two youngest sisters to study hospitality management abroad.

Commenting on these hardships, Shatha said, “Our hard work, competencies and enthusiasm supported to overcome all of these issues and contributed to our learning and experience”.
Findings

The collected qualitative data consist of an interview with Shatha Al Jabri Co-founder and Director of Sales and Marketing. The interview took place in Meshan’s coffee shop in Ghala to provide more insight about the business and its activities. The qualitative data are meant to bring to light and publicize Meshan’s story along with the factors that have led to its great success.

Shatha and her sisters started this business in 2011 from home and then moved to a workshop where they could organize processing easier and faster with bigger spaces. They started slowly steadily, first by selling these delicious dates to relatives, neighbours, friends and other people they knew. Over the time, the dates they offered became gradually known to many people in society. This was due to the novelty of their products and the high quality that made customers share their experience with others. Also, their friendly relationship with customers expanded their operating circles and enabled them to attract more customers. The sisters worked constantly on honing their skills and abilities in food industry such as packaging and presenting products to customers in the most attractive possible way. Their main aim was to become noticed by customers, therefore they utilised all possible occasions to speak to people about their products and participated in local and regional exhibitions.

As stated earlier, the choice of this business has its origin in the great passion for the Omani delicious dates. Through their sharp observation, the sisters realized that Oman had high-quality dates, but they were not effectively commercialized. They could easily see that the Omani dates sold on the market were not any different from those available on farms in any way, which did not make them eligible to be offered or taken as prestigious and valuable gifts or souvenirs from Oman. The sisters strongly believed that through Meshan, they could process dates and make date sweets in a new creative ways. Shatha put it this way, “We want to offer the Omani dates in different flavours with an attractive packaging that attract customers and different than the available in the market.” And that’s what happened, indeed. They have succeeded in offering Omani dates in a unique, modern and innovative way that attracted customers. They proved to be proficient at processing dates in a significantly different, creative, innovative and lucrative way that drew in more and more customers. In addition, it was found that they have also succeeded in producing a healthy product, strongly linked to the life of the Omani people and in sustaining a business that truly reflects the local environment and represents the rich culture of Oman faithfully.

Through the establishment of Meshan, the sisters focused on reaping the advantages of being the first mover in the fresh market to offer their exotic products. They effectively filled the vacuum with great success and attracted customers, which assisted in establishing a sustainable business.
One of Meshan`s success landmarks was becoming the supplier of dates and date sweets to Oman Air. “Meshan team worked hard to meet the requirements of Oman Air in order to be selected to supply the national company”, said Shatha. This step opened great opportunity for Meshan to expand their operations, reach more customers and boost their reputation in the market, mainly at the beginning of their entrepreneurial journey. Thus, Meshan’s products have not been limited to local customers in Oman only, they have been supplied to Oman’s 65 embassies over the world during the celebration of Oman’s 46 national day.

Last but not least, the sisters have used only Omani dates from local farmers in their business, which contributes to the development of date market in Oman. Moreover, Meshan returns the date seeds to farmers who can use them for different purposes such as food for cattle. All of these supported Meshan to establish an excellent relationship with farmers who supply them with high-quality Omani dates. This is evidence that Meshan is a model for SMEs in how to add value and effectively contribute to the development of the country’s economy. Shatha put this way, “Meshan aims not only to be successful in the business results, however it focuses as well on adding value to the country, and this is achieved through various ways”.

All this shows the great reputation they achieved. Additionally, due to the unique, high quality dates and the entrepreneurial skills of the sisters, they got an opportunity to offer their products in Saudi Arabia, and particularly, to the Royal Diwan. This was another clear indicator of Meshan team’s professionalism, hard work and competency.

Conclusion
The sisters’ journey is replete with challenges, risks and dilemmas both in personal and professional domains, but at the same time this journey had its impetus in their excitement, enthusiasm, and passion. In just few years of its presence in Oman, Meshan has gained the trust of reputable Omani institution such as Oman Air and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be their supplier of pure Omani date delicacies. Shatha and her sisters’ entrepreneurial journey is a true inspiration for many aspiring young Omani entrepreneurs. In fact, their excellent endeavour involving development of this novel idea in Oman has made them the winners of many competition cash prizes that helped them support their young business to stand on its their feet at the beginning. Meshan’s story is a valuable learning experience for youth who aim at starting their business. This case study can enrich their knowledge and support them to discover a success journey of an Omani SME.

Challenges and Lessons Learned
Shatha and her sisters must always be ready to face new challenges. The market is in constant change and so are customers and their tastes.
Meshan should cope with these changes and meet the new needs. New competitors will definitely emerge and, then, Methan will no longer be alone in the market, which will raise the quality standards and, therefore, will put more pressure on the business. By then, and through continuous training and hands-on experience, the sisters will have mastered the rules of the market game and become professionals difficult to beat.

**Road Ahead**

This project is still at its nascent stage, and it has a tremendous growth potential. Shatha and her sisters are required to keep on the hard work relentlessly and hold on tightly to the high quality of both their products and services. Their eyes should be on business partnerships with more Ministries and other government and private entities like the ROP, PDO and the different divisions of the army. Moreover, the step taken in Saudi Arabia could be expanded to include the remaining GCC countries, and maybe other neighbouring countries as well.

Meshan’s Case Study highlights the following significant lessons for young Omani entrepreneurs and college students.

i. Scan the business environment all the time for effective business idea generation. An eye for details, careful observation of business environment and related trends, education, experience, training, and holistic exposure can facilitate idea generation for entrepreneurial endeavours.

ii. Challenges are part of the business games, but it is a fun and rewarding experience. Only persistence and determination can make a successful entrepreneur.

iii. It is important to examine the feasibility of the proposed business in terms of market, financial, technical, and organizational factors with reference to problems and opportunities identified. One should assess financial and non-financial risks to the business, and develop plans to mitigate these risks. It is important to examine and analyze sustainability of business in the short and long runs, especially in terms of sources and application of funds, resource allocation, cash flow, market potential, and competitive industry structure.

iv. Thinking and devising ways to improve the visibility of the business will definitely contribute to success.

v. It is also important to invest time and resources in developing, nurturing and maintaining good relations with people. One needs to maintain a personalized touch at all possible times. Customers don’t buy from businesses, they buy from the people. It is through people and products that they relate themselves to businesses.
9. Typist to Tycoon

An Entrepreneurial Journey of Taqi Abdulredha Al Abduwani

ABSTRACT

Stories of heroic struggles against odds, survival and eventual triumph have always inspired people and continued them to preserve. This case study aims to equip students who have entrepreneurial ambitions as well as educators in entrepreneurship with ideas and frameworks needed to explore further in the chosen venture. This portrays an essence of change by a distinct type of leadership. Not everyone does, but it was developed and proven through turning major mistakes into superstar successes. Idea is to reveal the secret weapon in the entrepreneurial journey of Taqi Abdulredha Al Abduwani. The importance of “fail, learn fast and succeed more” inspired him for more ventures till he found the right one. This is a biographical case, a Hands-on, Mind-on and Heart-on leadership, written by Professor Taqi Abdulredha Al Abduwani and Dr. Agnes Bernardo Ilagan

DESCRIPTION

Meet the Typist

A man of integrity with authentic manner was born in 1966 in Shinas, one of the villages on the border of Oman and UAE kept thinking that whatever is being done in life will be turned to human capital. His sense of persistence never fades because of the strong influence of his parents, 7 brothers and 1 sister. They had to work and study both for the sake of their family. They had to keep exploring something completely different from the ways they were used to.

Moving to Muscat was their first important decision after their father’s death in 1973 (reason was to look for better opportunities). They started with a very small shop in Muttrah a year after. They accepted typing jobs, clerical solutions, printing and photocopying. Most of the typing jobs were done by Taqi. Being self-employed means no starting salary as such. His perseverance and commitment to entrepreneurship go fonder. Every work was done exclusively at the simple of office with no staff and in most cases, on a freelance basis. The business was developed into a small food stuff then changing in to a retail shop and finally to a wholesale shop. All the goods available were imported from Dubai. Under these circumstances, Taqi and his brothers became multi-skilled doing the selling, purchasing and shifting the goods from Dubai to Oman via trucks etc. Alternately they were drivers, salesmen and purchasing agents handling logistics at the same time. After sometime, he had to leave the business he put up with his brothers, including the typing jobs as a part-time, to go to the UK for finishing a degree. Starting a new venture was playing strongly on his mind when he returned in 1988.
Working Towards a Bigger Goal

The man of change continued to find and choose the right ideas. He is gifted with skills in venturing. Earning profit was his target goal. The concept of innovation was embraced though he had a notion that innovation and ongoing operation most often than not are inevitably in conflict. He decided for a change, a change that created opportunities. Successful firms grow by innovating and often reinventing themselves. A believer of Peter Drucker, Taqi excelled at seeing and taking advantage of possibilities created by social, technological and cultural changes in the Sultanate of Oman.

In 1990, Deslie Institute was set up offering vocational and professional qualifications. One service was provided, that was organising seminars with speakers coming from outside the country. It was not so easy. Risks were set aside, challenges were faced fearlessly, resources were wasted due to multiple tasks and responsibilities. In short, conflict was inevitable. But Taqi did not surrender though very few concerned partners devoted resources to proactively manage the conflicts.

The PROBLEM, unfolding the case

From Imagination to Impact: Lack of ability to make ideas happen

The inclination to become a known entrepreneur lead to 1996 when the first MBA programme was proposed to be offered in Oman by a private educational institution in partnership with MDCI and University of Hull. The holistic involvement in the transfer of knowledge triggered academic spin-outs. The man of honour proved that the fundamental challenge in the success of the new venture is finding and choosing the right idea. The vanity of labour revealed, but not good enough. In and around the institution were lot of unnecessary negativity leading to conflicts. The hidden costs associated with conflicts could have been avoided by building processes and systems that will remove underlying causes of conflict. The imagination did not continue for the lack of abilities to make ideas happen.

DESCRIPTION of the OPPORTUNITY

The Unrevealed Approach

It was a passion for Taqi to create and develop a business. The unrevealed approach was then revealed, “Let’s solve the problem together” rather than “I’m right and you’re wrong.” Carol Dweck’s theories on how people develop beliefs about themselves shaped his thoughts, feelings and behaviors making him determined to pursue the vision. His own set of experiences revealed why some students are motivated to work harder till become entrepreneur, and why others fall into patterns of helplessness and are self-defeating.
It was in 1997 when he started to manage the first private college in the GCC (Kingdom of Bahrain in partnership with Manchester College of Arts and Technology (MANCAT). Again conflict was inevitable. There were fundamental incompatibilities.

**The Innovation Journey**

He looked back at his struggles within his profession and how it matched with his endeavor. He should have been the successful one knowing that he was awarded as the Young Entrepreneur of the Year 1999 in the Sultanate of Oman for his achievements in the field of education and training. He wondered why he could not get what he wanted to achieve during that time despite the fact that he participated in the various training programmes in the UK, USA, Egypt, UAE, Bahrain among others. More than this, he was a lecturer, keynote speaker, trainer and writer on soft skills, human resource development, business incubation among others.

For him, that was very unfair. There should have been fruits of hardships during the early years of his life. Taqi believed on the notion that a brilliant failure can lead to a successful business someday. It’s a matter of learning from the mistakes, waiting for the right opportunities, never to give up, be determined, and develop passion on what presently doing, acceptance of realities and utilising innovative approaches to bring difference in business.

**The Solution**

Some underlying factors in the organization remain unaddressed that lead to the conflicts at the workplace. He decided to give full attention to what was happening to his entrepreneurial journey. A dedicated team was formed to identify and determine what was lacking. Roles and responsibilities were identified as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1. The Roles and Responsibilities of the Dedicated Team**

- Divide the Labour
- Build the Dedicated Team
- Identify resources/capabilities already existed
- Identify the new resources/capabilities
- Predict and Document the Outcomes
- Plan a Customised Innovation
- Analyse and give feedback
- Measure Results
The Real Journey Begins: Adapt Different Rules

Taqi started managing the conflicts with his “save the best for last ideas”. The dedicated team mentioned above was doing different process than the rest of the performance engine. Quite often they were breaking the rules meaning they were challenging the performance engine as well. Really at this point Taqi was commercializing creativity.

In 2003, the approval from Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) Oman to upgrade the status from a training institution to a Higher Education College and the license to offer 10 undergraduate programmes of Staffordshire University, UK took place. Running with new masters would mean new struggles. The 1% innovation, 99% perspiration was quite tough to handle. This time, Taqi together with his professional partner, Dr. Issa Sabeel Al Bulushi made ideas happen, and this was the beginning of Gulf College located in Al Khuwair, Muscat Oman.

Result Analysis

The Road to Mabela

The fundamental challenge in innovation is finding and choosing the right engine. He managed the present, selectively forgot the past and continued to create the future. The new Gulf College located in Mabela was the dream and it was converted in reality. They took risks, not only thought outside the box, more than that stepped and stayed outside the box.

The following table is the result of hands-on, mind-on and heart-on leadership put forth by Taqi.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition and Membership</th>
<th>New Campus</th>
<th>Increased Number of Staff</th>
<th>Additional Programmes</th>
<th>Increased Number of Alumni</th>
<th>Increased Students Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Association of Arab Universities-AARU</td>
<td>1.land area is 24,000 sqm</td>
<td>-286 total staffs Omanisation: Admin staff - 80%</td>
<td>1. Cardiff Metropolitan University UK</td>
<td>1. Diploma in Higher Education - 612</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Arab Accreditation Council</td>
<td>3. 1,000 car park</td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Postgraduate - 1,895</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. AISB-The Society for the Study of Artificial Intelligence and Simulation of Behaviour</td>
<td>5. Restaurant/ Coffee shop</td>
<td></td>
<td>5. ARQQA-Arab Association for Quality Assurance in Education</td>
<td>2 Quality Management and Capacity Building Centres</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. ARL-LEON – Arab Education Network</td>
<td>6. Escalator/ Elevator</td>
<td></td>
<td>7. MENA-AR – Middle East and North Africa Association for Institutional Research</td>
<td>10 Students Support Centres</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. ARQQA-Arab Association for Quality Assurance in Education</td>
<td>7. Gulf Hall</td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Incubation Centre (28 conventional offices; 200 virtual offices)</td>
<td>2 College Commercial Service Centres</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. MENA-AR – Middle East and North Africa Association for Institutional Research</td>
<td>8. Roman Theater</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lessons

A Breakthrough Discovery

The innovation, benchmarking, discovery skills, holistic views, passion, risk taking, outward looking, flexibility, stamina, focus, result oriented, creativity, rule-breaking, networking, intelligence and being pragmatic are the key skills that the entrepreneurs should possess to make difference in their entrepreneurial journey.

Taqi Abdulredha Alabduwani utilised the above characteristics in a scientific approach combined with benchmarking and mentoring. He started the innovation focusing on, new yet uncertain ideas, the dedicated team and the strategies. Dividing the labour is very important. It should be made clear that each party knows exactly what the leader wanted from them. Listening to both performance engine and dedicated team, most of all respecting their decisions are great signs of heart-on leadership. Fail and learn-fast is a big deal, yet a strong encouragement for each and every member of the team. Adapting new metrics, new titles and new ideas are the uncertainties yet all these are signs of courage, determination and perseverance to sail along and never stop till realized the motives. Being positive, sensitive and collaborative are part of hands-on techniques that are absolutely beneficial to maneuver the heart-on and mind-on types of leadership. Being unafraid to take risks will encourage the performance engine with the support of the dedicated team to realise the ideas that were put unto their minds.

As he sailed on his discovery he wanted to share some thoughts for budding entrepreneurs: Subjectively evaluate the progress as often as possible. Totals should not be analysed, instead the trends should be focused on. He is happy for the improvement of the institution through his styles of leadership. He was able to bring results, the big change from typist till he became a tycoon.

*Here is now the tycoon, who started from being a typist to becoming Professor Dr. Taqi Abdulredha Alabduwani-Dean of Gulf College, Muscat Sultanate of Oman.*
10. Nawa International

An Entrepreneurial Journey of Khalid Al Suleimany

Abstract

Amidst the challenging SME business environment in Oman is a thriving company proving that there still is room for entrepreneurs’ growth in the country. This case study starts with highlighting Nawa International background and that of its key entrepreneurial leader and Managing Director Mr. Khalid Al Suleimany in terms of analyzing how this exceptional Omani entrepreneur and his outlook enabled the organization’s growth amidst a turmoil era, to say the least. Following this, both the problems and achievements will be highlighted in the discussion with an analysis of the factors that have affected the success or failure of the SMEs in the country. The Findings section overviews the business in hand and provides relevant insights casting light on the company’s important achievements. Further down, the potential challenges that business and the SME sector in Oman as a whole are likely to face are described shedding adequate light on the lessons drawn from Mr. Khalid Al Suleimany’s experience that may serve as inspirational guidelines to younger Omani entrepreneurs. This case study is authored by Dr. Maria Teresa Matriano, Mr. Al Hussein Al Musawi and Mr. Ali Nasser Al Maawali of Middle East College, Muscat, Oman.

Background Note

Behind every successful name and every global business giant are dedicated and hardworking men and women, who have worked hard to get to where they currently are. However, being at the top of the global market means possessing one of the most fundamental skills that every business owner should have, which is entrepreneurship. Every successful business owner started as an entrepreneur, who, more often than not, has gone through fire and water to be able to provide the world with better products and services. Entrepreneurship is a very brave step to take, but one that requires proper skills matched with an aptitude and personality to take on the risks. It is not easy, and there is a great chance of failing but it is maybe the defining moment to change life for the better. Each businessman and each entrepreneur has their own stories to tell: Steve Jobs started one of today’s most valuable global brands from his parent’s garage, while Mark Zuckerberg made the prototype of what would be today’s biggest social media platform from his college dorm room. On the other hand, even if the background stories of the biggest innovators of our time are quite different from one another, they share the same common spirit and that is the unabated propelling force to initiate change, innovate, and become inspirations to the entrepreneurial world.

Mr. Khalid Al Suleimany, the Managing Director is no stranger to the world
of successful entrepreneurs. Nawa International is an investment company dealing with multiple projects at the same time. It specializes in making turnkey projects by long term strategizing. That is how all the subsidiary companies were founded. Kahild Al-Suleimany, the Managing Director, holds a Master’s degree in Finance. He is a young and dynamic Omani with a long-term business vision. When taking up Nawa International LLC’s leadership, he brought over his network of acquaintances and used his sources in his business. With his super picking eye specialty, he hired experienced staff for marketing, sales, administration, procurement and logistics to technical staff, where every single department and individual was following his policy of business and track leading towards the current success of the company. Over the years, he has shown, as a managing director and an entrepreneur, that to be a respectable and successful businessman, one needs to have many key characteristics.

Problems and Opportunities

Considering that Nawa International is still a small-medium enterprise, the role of its entrepreneurs such as Suleimany is very critical. One of the most important responsibilities of entrepreneurs in Oman, particularly those of SMEs, is the structure of institutional support provided to them by the government. This involves the prevailing policies that encompass issues pertaining to licenses and a number of regulatory conditions that the entrepreneurs are required to comply with (Christina et al., 2014). Another major problem that Nawa as well as other SMEs are facing today in Oman is the lack of adequate funding sources for expansion. For most SMEs such as Nawa International, access to loans and equity are essential in ensuring future growth of the business, but when regulations suggest tighter policies and banks not offering wide array of loan facilities for entrepreneurs, it would mean that business owners need to stand on their own feet (Umar, 2016). Given the institutional policies hindering the SMEs from optimizing their potential in the Omani local market, entrepreneurs such as Al Suleimany are left on their own to work out adequate financial solutions for their businesses.

Nawa International owes its growth to the establishment of its construction divisions focusing on His Majesty’s 5 year development plan, and to another division focusing on the civil sector. Nawa International moved forward with expanding itself in uPVC windows, group of restaurants under the title of Muscat Gourmet. In the first two years, the company achieved very good heights where it served numerous clients; this allowed them to open up more branches of their restaurant Muscat Gourmet. Under the umbrella of Muscat Gourmet, they have a Burger Station which at first had only one branch, but from the third year onwards, they received favourable reviews from customers, and now they have two branches with a third one to come. Within a short period of five years, Nawa International has reached these milestones and more. The reader may visit their website, nawa.international
Findings

The study findings indicate that Nawa International LLC is an Omani Company was founded on 2009, but was set up and started off in the construction industry one later, in 2010. According to their founders, the company was established in the Sultanate of Oman in accordance with the country's "2020 Vision" and the respective 5-year Economic development Plans to undertake its role as an investment vehicle. After viewing the market, Kahild Al-Suleimany explained, the founders ventured into other markets such as construction of swimming pools, producing and selling uPVC windows and also the food and beverages market. The firm was constantly looking for opportunities in the market to add value to Oman. With this vision, they have always supported young Omani entrepreneurs who aim at achieving success. To put down roots in the market, findings show that the management rightfully and wisely decided to launch four off-shoot, subsidiary companies under their wing, Windows International (UPVC Windows & Doors Fabrication), Nawa Engineering (Construction), Nawa Pools (Swimming pool construction) and Muscat Gourmet (Food & Beverage Company). Another important finding revealed by the study is that Nawa International LLC, which has risen over the past 7 years from just a vision and strategy, is considered among the top 3 companies today in their field. Moreover, it is a fully Omani-owned SME and a company that offers a lot such as:

- UPVC Windows & Doors Fabrication
- Swimming Pool Construction
- Construction of Residential, Commercial & Industrial Projects (Oman)
- Hospitality & Tourism Investment Opportunities (Oman)
- Property Development Investment Opportunities (Oman)
- Food & Beverage Establishments (Middle East)
- Aquaculture Project Management & Consultancy (Middle East)
- Investment Consultancy for Opportunities (Oman)
- Education-Sector Investment (Oman)
- Alternative Energy Consultancy for Opportunities (Oman)
- Qualitative & Quantitative Market Research (Oman)

The company is under the chairmanship of H.H. Talal bin Tariq bin Taimoor Al Said with Mr. Khalid Ali Nasir Al Suleimany serving as the Managing Director. From day one, their vision for the company was very clear in the
following quote from HH Al Sayyid Talal Bin Tariq Bin Taimur Al Said:

"Fundamentally, we believe strongly in His Majesty’s 5-year plans for our homeland. When Nawa International was set up, it was decided from the outset that our vision correlated strongly with what is happening on the larger scale within the industries in Oman."

In his turn, Khalid Ali Nasir Al Suleimany says,

“Our primary goal has always been to be a leading name in construction in the country and later on in the region. After only 2 years in the industry, we have surpassed the targets which we had set for ourselves and have moved on to the next phase of our strategy."

Through the study, we also came to know that as a unique value in all fields and aspects, Nawa International had been awarded the second best SME award. The quality of the administration by the top management in terms of, inter alia, service, product quality, high end and easy to understand marketing and professional staff, gives the company its own unique value.

As for the received support, the current case study shows that The Oman Ministry of Commerce and Industry has provided diversified services to SME’s and investment companies through its service Unit “Al Riyada” which was established primarily to boost engagement in entrepreneurial ventures. Amongst its services is the one stop shop, or the “invest easy” initiatives, both of which serve the purpose of improving the procedures and paperwork required to start a business. Riyada also has tenders for SME’s in order to be able to capitalize on large orders and be able to improve their services. The company and its key executives such its Managing Director Suleimany, have developed the strategies that enable the company not only to thrive during unfavourable conditions of the Omanis economy on SMEs, but also to pave the way for other entrepreneurs to take a leap towards success.

The company have supported young entrepreneurs by way of inviting them to their business and promotes collaborative work to improve business plans and a variety of strategies in exchange for investment and startup support. There have been significant takeaways from the developments made by Nawa International in terms of expanding its operations. For instance, the company has established an entrepreneurial venture through its Managing Director Suleimany by encouraging young visionaries and entrepreneurs to present their vision to Nawa. In return, the company would provide support for such vision through strategic guidance and funding in order to bring the prospective business to success. Given the current situation and challenges faced by SME environment in Oman, the company is doing its part in ensuring that the SME sector will continue to flourish in the Omani business environment.

In addition, having the right outlook has been found to provide entrepreneurs with positive attitude towards success. In this sense, findings from Al
Suleimany’s case study asserts that success is not only achieved by having the right strategies in your arsenal, but also by having the right attitude that defines the overall characteristics of the entrepreneur. Based on the key characteristics and outlook discussed earlier, it is apparent that the best attributes for successful business is all about having the right mindset to do things all the time. First, it is apparent that the success of Nawa International is owed to its entrepreneurs’ passion for business. It is always difficult to find fun when work is inducing too much stress particularly when managing a large group or organization. However, having the passion for work allows entrepreneurs to persuade and inspire others to work with them and take work as part of the everyday hobby instead. Second, having a strong and well established core values helps in defining the organization’s objectives and using such objectives in carrying out the responsibilities that encompass the key to achieving success in business.

Last but not least, innovation has been found to be among the most important ingredients for success in investment companies, such as Nawa International, which deal with multiple projects at the same time. Nawa specializes in making turnkey projects as the long term strategy. That is how all the subsidiary companies were founded under its umbrella. They are now all independent operational entities. In addition, the company including its subsidiaries, has established close ties with key investment organizations within the Sultanate of Oman. This includes partnerships in governmental and non-governmental projects such as projects related to the Royal Oman Police, the Ministry of Defence, the Petroleum of Oman LLC and more. This allowed the company to provide valuable assets to all of its subsidiaries and investment projects. It includes connections with notable governmental “Pension Funds” within a number of existing ventures.

Conclusion

Nawa International and Mr. Khalid Ali Nasir Al Suleimany are examples of an organization or business and an entrepreneur that are able to achieve success not because of strategic advantage alone, but also by having the right mind-set and characteristics of a good entrepreneur. There are several ways in which entrepreneurs can explore opportunities in SME start-ups, but the challenges presented by local policies, financial structure, and economic conditions in Oman will veer away any entrepreneur from pursuing a start up. However, the case of Nawa and Mr. Suleimany suggests that positive entrepreneurial characteristics are essential aspects of achieving success in the Omani entrepreneurship. The current business and economic environment in Oman is still on the process of developing a pipeline structure in ensuring that the country’s SMEs will have a greater potential for future success. On the other hand, securing the success according to analysis of Nawa International and its key entrepreneur requires possession of positive outlook and having the right attitude to overcome challenges and lead Oman in the Middle Eastern region as a
haven for entrepreneurs.

**Challenges and Lessons Learned**

Nawa International remains at the helm of its investments, as a holding company that ensures its subsidiaries are performing according to their strategic and business objectives. Holding up to this is a great challenge for the leadership of the company. Investors, entrepreneurs and visionaries offer guidance in terms of investment and strategic partnerships with Nawa International to ensure that the company and its leadership are heading to the right direction. Hence, it remains open to business opportunities within a number of sectors including construction, hospitality and tourism, and property development among others (Nawa International).

Another serious challenge is to pass the personal attributes and ingredients of success to the growing generations who will take over one day to ensure that the company keeps on leading in the market.

Maintaining success is tough, let alone during recessions. Managers are required to be professional manoeuvres to keep their heads above water during hard times.

Success in the entrepreneurial arena demands a specific set of attributes that are essential in establishing a strong outlook for an organization such as Nawa International. This means Khalid Ali Nasir Al Suleimany, as an entrepreneur, is looking at the world differently, which encompasses attitudes that seek out change rather than adapting to change. On the other hand, to be a successful entrepreneur, we learn from this case study that one should be

**A skilled opportunity seeker.** Because Nawa International is an investment firm, one has to look for the perfect investment to get profit for the company. Through lots of studying, the company took on steps of risks and jumped into different fields such as jumping from construction into food and beverages (Nawa Construction and Muscat Gourmet), which has different business opportunities. This shows how the judgment call from the managing director and the team had to make for going into different fields at the same time.

**A daring risk taker.** To find opportunities, one needs to take risks and try. They have jumped from construction to food and beverages (Nawa Construction and Muscat Gourmet), which are two fields—completely different from one another.

**Committed to work contract.** The construction business is a tough one to manage. One must have patience to see their project being built, and from day one, the person must be fully committed to the project. Mr. Suleimany cherishes working in different projects and with different people, he is always committed in his work, providing the maximum effort available in
his disposal to achieve the goals in front of him.

**Demanding Quality and Efficiency.** To be the best in the business market, one must always provide the best and most efficient service available at one’s disposal. Nawa International not only provides you with that high end-quality and efficiency, but they also demand it from all their staff and employees. Because they want to insure that the customer knows for a fact that he/she is dealing with professionals. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Riw3g5weJRc is a video link that shows customers who have worked with the company and they explain how Nawa International urges quality and efficiency.

**Persistent.** Mr. Suleimany is a very persistent man, because once he has set his eyes on a goal, he has to achieve it. This is something which is shown in his day-to-day working hours. Since he is the managing director, he always makes sure that by the end of the day the assigned work has been accomplished.

**A Systematic Planner and Monitor.** In every company, one must always plan systematically in a way to create a system where all the employees can work with each other and achieve the maximum from one’s working day. To allow the system to move without hassles or delays, skilful monitoring is crucial.

**A Goal Setter.** When one sets a goal for himself or herself, it motivates them to make sure that that goal is achieved. Whether it is a one-day goal or a yearlong one, the goal is what drives them and their employees to achieve the success they want.

**Road Ahead**

Given the relative success of Nawa International and the entrepreneurs behind it in relation to the current state of Oman’s SME sector, it can be assumed that the business is likely to expect growth in the coming years. This is because the economy of Sultanate of Oman is highly dependent on the oil industry, which has seen significant decline in prices over the past years (Thomas, 2016). Such development in a major industry such as Suleimany’s will optimize other local industry sectors such as the SME in an oil-dependent economy such as that of Oman. In 2015, Oman had more than 50% of decline in terms of national revenue as a result of oil prices decline whose adverse effect was felt in the US$ 8.6-billion government deficit in the same fiscal year (Thomas, 2016). Given that the Omani-economy is battling a dire situation, the rest of the country’s strong and growing sectors are taking the center stage to show the sultanate government that there are ways for businesses to succeed in the country other than venturing into oil and energy-related industries. A renewed focus was given to Oman’s entrepreneur sector, which was earlier found to face potential challenges for growth because of the prevailing financial and government policies.
However, a major reconsideration of the SMEs potential in the country has encouraged His Majesty to find ways to accelerate entrepreneurship in the country. In this sense, businesses such as Nawa International and its entrepreneur can expect a more sustainable outlook towards the future of SMEs in Oman. In addition, entrepreneurs such as Suleimany can expect greater success considering the acceleration of the entrepreneurial sector.

References


11. Crafterina Oman: The Art of Business

An Entrepreneurial Journey of Jamana AL Zadjali

Abstract

Crafterina is a case study of creating an enterprise through passion for art and craft. This case describes a story of a young girl Jamana and how she converted her hobbies in a business enterprise under guidance from her mentor Dr Tahseen. This entrepreneurial journey is captured by Dr Tahseen and Mohammed Tanveer of Majan University College based on the interview given by Jamana Al Zadjali.

Background

“I always wanted to pursue my passion... had a strong desire to run my own business”

One cool morning, Jamana was driving slowly to college on Qurum Heights road to take her class but her mind was still in her friend’s daughter's birthday party she attended last night. “How excited were all the kids with their creative craft work”, she thought. Kids’ excitement took her into her own past when she won tons of appreciation from her teachers, friends and parents for her creativity. She was quite passionate about art and craft, jewelry/ornaments making since her childhood. “Could this be the passion she can transfer into a business venture?” she asked herself when she entered Dr. Tahseen's class on “Small Business management”.

By the time she completed her studies, she had made up her mind that she will start her own business and take her passion forward. Jamana Al-Zadjali, a business graduate from Majan University College was born and brought up in Muscat. Her degree in Business Management further enhanced her passion to start an entrepreneurial venture. She was a risk-taker and decided not to go for an employment though she had good grades in her Bachelor’s degree. Apart from having a business degree, she is certified for “Training the Trainees” funded by the United Nations.
Opportunity and Risk: Two Sides of the Same Coin

Jamana had a creative nature, and she loved creativity. She always expressed concerns regarding kids’ obsession with electronic gadgets such as mobile phones, tablets, video games, watching cartoons on TV, etc., and had an opinion that these devices are taking away kids’ creativity and love for art. They spend more time playing video games on these devices which may cause various health issues. Parents sometimes are left with no choice except to let their kids use these gadgets or watch cartoons as some parents simply don’t know how to engage their kids in more productive activities. She felt a strong need to address this issue and help out kids and their parents to use their time more effectively. “Why can’t I do something to engage these kids in art and craft”, she asked herself, once she saw her two year old son playing a game on the mobile phone. She identified this need and started to think to develop and transfer this passion into a business venture.

“The idea that will resolve a growing issue in this digital era and will help parents to up bring their kids more creatively, was the main source of motivation for me initially”, she commented. However, when she observed sign of success in this idea as more parents were showing interest, she decided to step in the market for some revenue. The risks involved putting everything at stake, financial and reputational. She did not have the resources but had the will and she felt that was good enough to take here through. She planned a business model in order to mitigate the risks. She chose an online model and promotion through social media in order to reduce the cost. She collaborated with other businesses such as Buffalo Wings and Rings so that she does not have to incur high fixed costs.

An Entrepreneurial Lens.

Like any fresh graduate, she had an idea but no adequate resources to reach out to customers. She opted for easy options, i.e., social media. She started selling her craft work and jewelry through social media, word of mouth, personal references, etc., but it was certainly not enough to sustain. She started to take party orders from different sources where she had some activities to engage kids in art work.

Things were moving but not as per her expectations. She was charging only 2 RO per kid involved in various activities at birthday parties. She wanted to expand her business. In 2015, she met her old friend who had expertise in marketing. She decided to seek her help to use more online resources to push her business further. She created her own website, had a Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram page, which helped her expand her marketing strategies.

“What next?” Collaboration as a marketing Strategy.

The revenue generated through birthday parties was still very limited.
“What next” was the big question in her mind all the time? “Why don’t you collaborate with some restaurants”, her marketing friend suggested. She immediately decided to go for it. She partnered with a restaurant called “Buffalo Wings and Rings” and started to spend 4 hours on every Friday arranging some fun activities with art and craft for kids. This partnership proved quite successful as it was a “win-win” situation for both. The restaurant started to attract more families with kids and Jamana started to get more recognition as an entrepreneur.

Revenue Model
Crafterina had only one primary revenue stream, i.e., to sell craft and jewelry items online. However, it was very limited and Jamana did not take much time to decide that she needed to focus on more varied revenue streams. Hence, she explored both direct and indirect revenue generating streams. For direct in-store retail sales, she did not have enough resources, so she teamed up with Buffalo Wings and Rings restaurant which proved quite successful as she started to generate some income without having to invest on renting out a shop or a store. The business model was simple as Jamana explained, “Each Friday afternoon, families would leave their kids (approximately 15 per Friday) for four hours at Buffalo Ring at 5 RO each for a total revenue of 75 RO. 2 RO would go to the restaurant for kids’ food and 3 RO would be for me. Since my cost was minimal, i.e., 1 RO per child, so I estimated that the remaining 2 RO as my net profit per child.”

For indirect source she relied on events such as birthday parties, and craft fairs. “If I book 10 birthday parties every month, each for 60 -90 minutes that include 10 kids at 2 RO each for a total revenue of 20 RO per party, I would generate 200 RO revenue every month. Considering 1 RO per child as an investment cost for buying raw material, I estimated 100 RO as my net profit every month.”

Road Ahead:
Initially, Jamana invested about 4000 RO to reach up to this stage as she imported craft material from the US and Europe. She reflected on her past few years’ experience in her new venture and realized that she needed to spend more time on strategizing her business, not only just doing the work involved in the business. This meant that she needed to explore more effective marketing strategies to expand her business. She also thought of reducing her initial cost by approaching more local options to procure the raw material required. More collaboration with some famous restaurants could have brought her some more revenue but for that she needed to invest more of her time. She was on a path of achieving greater heights but had to overcome the initial challenges first. In future she hopes to open her own craft studio and a creative center as she has successfully made arts as her business. Crafterina is a place where her passion and business meet.
12. The tale of an Omani Coffee Shop Entrepreneur

An Entrepreneurial Journey of Rashid Al Hosni

Changing coffee drinking tastes in Muscat, Oman

Abstract

Rashid was interviewed by Neil Marshall and Viren Lall of The Change School on the CEE programme by SME Development Fund in 2016, where he shared his journey. This case study was written by Viren Lall for live simulation for the 2nd batch of CEE faculty to understand numbers for small businesses and is published as it is for better understanding on how to run a case study during a learning session.

Coffee shops (cafés) in urban areas in Oman have been burgeoning recently, catering to a growing demand for freshly ground coffee served as espresso based or long drinks. These include (but are not limited to) Americano, filter brewed coffee, espressos, and a variety of concoctions with milk such as cappuccinos, macchiatos, lattes and flat whites. Variants include flavours such as caramel and vanilla. Most of these establishments provide fast food as well.

Meet Mr Rashid Ali Al Hosni

Mr Rashid Ali Al Hosni. Rashid is a successful restaurant business entrepreneur in Muscat. As a student he had struggled in school, but a trip to Romania clarified his capitalist ambitions. A further stint in the UK with Wigan and Leigh college exposed him to casual western eating out habits. He then moved to the US and learnt about the dynamism in entrepreneurship. When he moved back to Oman, he took a job with Shell. He was surrounded by good people, those with a vision – it changed his life. Rashid then did a BSc at ASU in Global Business and Marketing in Nov 2004. The programme taught him a lot. He then returned to Muscat and took a job with Shell, where he progressed well for three years. A capital investment in real estate that he had done with the support of his family in his early years paid off, and he suddenly found himself with some seed capital and a burning desire to be his own boss and fulfil his dream to move into the food service business. He was looking for a franchise offering and finally landed the deal to open “Subway” in Muscat. His idea was simple, find locations open a Subway sandwich
A Guide for Entrepreneurship Education

shop, which is a well-recognised brand and alongside open Italiano, a pizzeria that is based on the Italian format but was “totally” owned by him. Subway gave him visibility and footfall but not the margins he was seeking (franchise businesses can have substantial franchisee costs and minimum performance payments). Rashid has several locations with pairs of these restaurants. You may have seen one in the basement of Panorama Mall.

Over to you

Rashid has inspired every CEE faculty. Making coffee is simpler, with local staff that can be quickly trained up to be good baristas. One may consider franchising for the brand, but that is not the first preference.

Say, you want to start a coffee shop in Muscat that will sell a variety of coffee offerings along with bagels and pastries. The changing tastes of the population in the city indicate a growing trend and demand for an offering that is distinctive. It could be uniqueness in offering or choice of location where there is a high demand or little supply.

A cup of coffee typically takes 16 grams of ground coffee. Coffee beans retail between 5 OMR per Kg (Musetti) to 15 OMR per Kg (St Espresso). [See Exhibit 2]. With 60 cups of coffee per Kg, and retail prices at 1.2 OMR (Cost of espresso by a non-brand café in Panorama Mall), there is a reasonable gross margin - after all a 5 OMR bag of coffee can give you 72 OMR in retail revenue.

A phone call to Rashid was made to ask for his advice. Rashid is enthusiastic on the phone for your ambition but is unsure about the venture’s viability. He asks you to develop a quick ‘back of the envelope’ pricing for this business based on a three-year projection for opening one store, with any related costs and assumptions. He is clear that he is not going to move from his successful format and enter the café business. However, he may invest in your business or introduce you to well-regarded SME funding organisations that support entrepreneurs.

Your exercise

You and your team decide to go for it. You have already done the Artemis coffee bean exercise in module 3, where you learnt how to evaluate an opportunity using ‘Seven Domains’ and other principles but had not reached as far as developing a forecast for opening a cafe.

You are ready to develop your quick forecast on the viability of this venture. You have a choice of locations [See exhibit 3] where you can get space. You also have a choice of financing options where you can lease space or even buy the shop outright [See Exhibit 4]. To kit out your establishment you have a choice of coffee making equipment [See exhibit 5]. You are lucky enough to scout a location that is constructed to serve as a café.
Your refurbishment expenses are likely to be one month’s rental, and it will take two months from occupying to serving your first cup of coffee to a paying customer (that is when you become a business).

For this exercise, your mentors are your roving industry consultants.

How much capital do you need in order to open the doors of your coffee shop?

- Write out all the things you will need. Include assumptions and choices you make.

Now assume your coffee shop has opened for business today - what is your forecast of sales, profits and cash balance for the next 6 months?

- Write out all the things you will need? Include assumptions on growth

Simplifying assumptions

1. Although you plan to sell many varieties and combinations, you weighted average price per cup sold is OMR 1.40. For this exercise, use that as a single stock item to make your projections.

2. To compliment the coffee, you choose to sell some fast food. On the same principles above your weighted average price per item sold is OMR 1.60. For this exercise, use that as a single stock item to make your projections.

3. Please only use the options you have available in the exhibits.

Exhibit 1: Successful Subway and Italiano restaurants run by Rashid

Exhibit 2: Coffee beans

Musetti coffee beans: Good quality coffee for enterprises, but not a household brand recognised by people. Price OMR 6.50 per Kg, used by some boutique stores in London such as Euphorium (bought by Tesco a few years ago).
Lavazza coffee beans: Reasonably priced quality coffee for enterprises and retail. Some cafés show the brand. Price OMR 8.00 per Kg. Branding is good, however some people don’t like the bitter taste of the dark Italian roast.

St Espresso coffee beans: High end arabica coffee with small batch fresh roasting on a monthly basis from Guatemala, Brazil, and Ethiopia. Very popular sold for bags and used for customer consumption in the St Espresso boutique stores. Price OMR 15.00 per Kg.

Photo of the St Espresso store in Baker Street, London where you can consume or buy coffee

Exhibit 3: Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Lease</th>
<th>Buy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>monthly</td>
<td>annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panorama mall, Seeb, Muscat</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>14,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avenue Mall, Muscat</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>21,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Mall Muscat</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>18,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exhibit 4: Financing your location

Exhibit 5: Coffee Machines


Elecktra, high end beautiful Italian coffee machine. Made popular by Café Verignano 1884 in London and the rest of Europe. Visible only in a few outlets. Purchase price OMR 5000 with duty
Section 2

Compilation of Research papers on Entrepreneurship in Oman

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1. Fashion Entrepreneurship

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Introduction

Today, modern technology has made everything possible. Through social media and communications every big news or change is at our fingertips. The world is becoming more and more global, so is the world economy. Economic globalization and innovation have created an extremely important place for entrepreneurship in almost all sectors and fashion is not an exception. The emergence of an entrepreneurial economy has created new horizons and opportunities for the fashion industry. “The essence of fashion is change and consensual trends, even though individuals believe that they make choices from a range of options to create a certain style in a unique and distinctive way.” (Craik, 2009)

Fashion is ever changing and with every change it gives new opportunities for the world to engage with different kinds of products which have a lot to do with creativity and innovation but like any other business, the core of Fashion Entrepreneurship is business. This chapter explores various opportunities and challenges of Fashion Entrepreneurship and how to make it a success in the ever-changing world of hemlines. The chapter also discusses the basic working model of the industry and its relevance to the local market of Oman.

Many individuals get attracted to the business of fashion because of its glitz and glamour but when it comes to hardcore business concepts, that’s where the hitch comes. Fashion like any other business, takes time to flourish and goes through the same processes as any other business. The chapter will highlight all those aspects which are generally ignored by creative individuals. Fashion Entrepreneurship is not an Art, it is Commerce. Fashion is much more than creating clothes. To understand how the industry works we need to study its trends and transformations closely like any other business and then create a plan which gives a strong foundation to flourish.

Fashion an Overview

Fashion is a particular style of clothing or a product which gains popularity at a given time and is followed and accepted by a majority of people (Richard Sorger, 2017). Fashion changes according to the season and therefore, it is right to assume that change in fashion is a constant. It is constant search for what is new and exciting, and to be able to work in this industry is also equally exciting and rewarding. Earlier, the industry was known for its designers and editors, but advancement of technology has brought a revolution in the consumption patterns of fashion. This revolution has given way to new jobs and roles in the fashion industry. Today, to successfully
operate a business in the fashion arena, one need not be a designer, a couturier or a stylist. Fashion has reached to such a global level that it has grown beyond the limitations of geographical locations. Fashion designers are creative individuals, but creativity alone cannot drive the business, a person should be farsighted enough to understand the demands of next season while presenting the solutions for this season. This involves a lot of planning and resourcing. It is the planning part where entrepreneurs suffer the most if it is not done correctly. And to create a business plan for fashion it is important to understand that how the fashion industry works.

The fashion industry is made up of designing, production and retailing of seasonal ranges. By its very nature, fashion becomes obsolete at the end of each season, which feeds the industry and keeps the cycle moving.

The Fashion Cycle.

Fashion cycle or Fashion Product cycle is basically the life cycle of a particular fashion product or trend. “All products, including fashion products, have a finite life cycle. New styles introduced in the market last for a certain period of time, decline, and finally disappear. Although the rate and duration of use vary, the diffusion of a specific fashion tends to follow a predictable cycle, called a fashion cycle or fashion life-cycle curve” (Kim, Fiore, & Kim, 2011) Fashion cycle is the life cycle of products or styles introduced by designers on the runway or through a structured presentation. This cycle is usually represented by a bell shape curve as shown in figure 1.0

![A Fashion Cycle](image)

**Figure 1.0 Fashion Product Cycle with different stages and levels of acceptance**


The above diagram illustrates the fashion product cycle. The fashion cycle has 5 stages which are:
**Introduction:** This is the stage, where a new product or style is introduced in the market through fashion shows, advertisements or celebrity endorsements. Many times, it can be a new designer’s collection or an established designers’ new collection, so only a small number of higher end consumers can afford it and wear it because it’s availability at this stage will be limited. The price will be high, and the garments could be couture or designer-wear. For example, the new styles for spring 2019 which were presented in the fashion week in September 2018.

**Rise:** Once the product is introduced in the market by various tools, or media, then it will give rise to the popularity of that particular fashion. With popularity, demand for the new fashion or product rises because people see advertisements and endorsements from fashion influencers or celebrities or in local magazines and newspapers. The rise of the fashion industry is also expected to see knockoffs of some styles offered by high street brands like Zara, H&M, Splash and Forever 21, at affordable prices for consumers who are fashion followers.

**Peak:** After rise, there is a time when a fashion product or style reaches the peak of its popularity. At this stage, one particular style or fashion would be widely available across different price points and can be found at a variety of store types like Max in addition to departmental stores like Lulu, Carrefour and Nesto. That’s where you see it all around yourself with many people wearing it and accepting it.

**Decline:** Once a fashion product or style reaches its peak, consumers begin seeing it everywhere and then they get tired of it. Fashion-conscious consumers move towards new styles which are being introduced for the next season. At this point, retailers will not order more merchandise and may chose instead to try and sell existing stock at reduced prices to clear the inventory.

**Rejection:** Once the demand for a particular product or style starts slowing down it only declines further as people get tired of it and slowly, they start rejecting it. The rejection marks the end of a style’s cycle, indicating the look is outdated and from here on sales will begin drying up. However, the same style with a little change can be re-introduced after a period of time. Like palazzo pants of late 1960’s and early1970’s has made a huge comeback in the 2017 and 2018. The fabrics chosen might be different due to new technology of weaving and printing and cutting but the style in principal remains the same with a new look.

So, the cycle goes on for every product or style from the ‘Introduction’ phase to ‘Rejection’. However there are some fads and classics in between.

**Fad:** Fad is a term used to signify short-lived fashion (Rath, Bay, Petrizzi, & Gill, 2015). The lifespan of a fad is even shorter than that of fashion. It becomes wildly popular among targeted consumers and then disappears. Sometimes it stays for a month or two, sometimes an entire season. For
example, blue lipstick, plastic wristbands and fidget spinners came into the market as fads. Fads come into fashion most of the time due to media, at times a particular style of clothing or accessory will be in fashion due to a movie star or the celebrity sporting it or supporting it in a current hit movie. But the moment the movie will be off the theater the fashion related to that style will also vanish.

**Classics:** Classics are the kind of styles and trends which remain in demand forever no matter what the fashion is. These styles remain in fashion due to their simplicity which gives them a long-lasting appeal, like Chanel jackets, trench coats, denims, plain white shirts, and a classic black abaya. With the fashion cycle it is very clear that fashion is about movement and change. These changes in business happen strategically and then the industry must adopt these changes, according to the nature of fashion movement.

**Fashion Movement Theories**

Fashion keeps moving in cycles. Every movement brings a change to the fashion offerings and products. Designers introduce new products in the market according to fashion forecasts. Fashion forecasts are made after carefully analyzing the trends of the past three seasons. There are companies dedicated to fashion forecasting and their services can be subscribed to by others to adapt it according to their niche market and specific audiences. The movement in fashion happens gradually and so does the distribution. “The distribution of fashion has been described as a movement, a flow, or trickle from one element of society to another. The diffusion of influences from center to periphery may be conceived of in hierarchical or in horizontal terms, such as the trickle-down, trickle-across, or trickle-up theories” (Steele, 2005). The three most common theories of the fashion diffusion movement are:

**Trickle-Down theory:** This is the traditional theory of fashion adaptation according to which, people look-up to individuals from higher strata of society for fashion influence and guidance. In other words, fashion moves from affluent to not-so-affluent groups. It might start from fashion leaders, socialites or celebrities and then flows to the masses. For example, in 2011, the wedding gown of Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge by MacQueen created a minimalistic trend for wedding gowns which was very influential.

**Trickle-Up theory:** According to this theory, fashion moves from lower to upper strata of society. For example, denim jeans made for mining workers to prevent wear and tear of their cloths went on to be adapted as a high fashion statement. There are designers who have separate collections of denim couture. Denim is a big revenue generator for the fashion industry and with the advancement of technology it has become even more trendy and sought after. Today, stretch denim or lycra denim has become an essential in everybody’s wardrobe.
**Trickle-Across Theory:** This theory is also known as the horizontal flow theory. According to this theory, fashion moves laterally through the same sections of society. This is very true for our times. People choose to follow and admire others from their peer groups and try to imitate them in a bid to accepted or sometimes even just to satisfy their own fashion consciousness. For example, a person might easily get inspired by new purchases made by their room-mate or friend and decide to buy the same product.

Fashion movements happen according to these three theories, but it always follows the fashion principles which are similar to product principles. The business of fashion has diversified over the years and this diversification of the business has added new dimensions to the fundamental principles of fashion. These are the basic principles according to which forecasting is done and trends are created. These principles act as guidelines also to predict future fashion or forecast trends. There are five principles for fashion:

**Consumers establish fashions by accepting or rejecting it:** Like in any other area of work, fashion revolves around consumers. No designer can be successful without the support and acceptance of consumers. Designers can introduce new fashions and styles but if a proper study of consumer buying patterns has not been undertaken then the product will not likely to be what consumers wants. Consumers are the ultimate guide to establishing fashion as they are the ones using the finished product or garment.

**Fashion is evolutionary in nature, not revolutionary:** Fashion evolves constantly because human nature is like that. Any drastic change in the existing product might result in failure. Fashion moves in predictable cycles; to know what is next, one must look at what came last. To the casual observer it appears as though fashion changed suddenly, but these changes occurs at a gradual level. Throughout the history of fashion there were only two times when fashion changes were revolutionary; one was with Cristian Dior in 1947 with his Corolle line which was dubbed as the 'New Look' by legendry fashion editor Carmel Snow (Potter, 1994) and the other abrupt change was in early1960’s by Mary Quant who introduced mini skirts. Fashion designers, retailers and buyers understand and accept this principle and create their collections accordingly. When developing new ideas, they always keep the last season’s offerings in mind.

**Fashion is not based on price:** Fashion is not always based on price – a product or style need not necessarily be fashionable simply because it is expensive. However, new high fashion styles which designers introduce each season are highly priced. The globalization of fashion diversification has made successful fashions available at every price point.

**No amount of promotion can change the direction in which fashion is moving:** Promotional efforts cannot dictate what consumers are going to buy. It can suggest, but cannot force consumers to buy something
against their will. Also, promotional efforts cannot renew the life of a fading fashion. This is the reason stores offer end of season or clearance sales, to clear out the stock of fading styles to make space for newer styles.

**All fashion ends in excess:** It is human nature to get bored of things which they see frequently. The same holds true for fashion and styles. The moment a particular style has been accepted by people it reaches its peak then gradually over time declines. This happens because people get tired of it and it does not excite them anymore. The same is true for any other product.

These all principles clearly indicate that fashion evolves according to the demands of the market. Neither pricing nor promotion can force consumers to buy new fashion. The success of fashion merchandise is to scientifically predict the changes in fashion by carefully observing and researching buying patterns of the targeted demographics.

**Fashion Seasons:**

Changes in fashion can occur due to seasonal changes as well. Fall and winter have longer durations in Europe unlike Asia or Middle East where spring and summer have longer spells. Generally, designers offer their collections six months in advance. For example, in March the fall collection will be shown and in September the spring collections will be shown for the next season. In Middle East, there is a big market of occasion wear which caters to weddings and special occasions like Eid. Middle Eastern fashion offerings can be inspired by western offerings of the same season. The only difference one can find is the length of dress and the sleeve length. For women’s wear it is always a plus if a dress includes a complimenting or matching hijab also. The colour palette, cut, silhouette and embellishments can be inspired from international offerings but have more modest versions for the Middle East markets. Fashion remains the same, but the style adaptation changes according to demographics.

**Fashion Business**

Fashion or design is just one half of the fashion business. “The business of fashion is not built on design function alone. Areas such as forecasting, product development, manufacturing, retailing, marketing, branding and promotion combine to create a multi-billion dollar industry that employs millions worldwide.” (Grose, 2012) The business of fashion like any other business needs proper planning so that all aspects operate smoothly. It needs a lot of research and planning on consumer buying patterns and planning about supply and meeting consumer expectations. The marketing mix is equally importance in the fashion business as in any other business. Fashion entrepreneurs use the four P’s of marketing, which are product, place, price and promotion.
Product: “Is it the best it can be in terms of what customers want? Get feedback about it; improve it; use research to anticipate evolving physical (tangible) and mental (intangible) needs and wants” (Rath, Bay, Petrizzi, & Gill, 2015). Product is an extremely important part of the business and in order to be a good fashion entrepreneur one should be able to offer consumers what they want. Remember, the fashion business is all about consumers not about the one who is running it; therefore, the company has to offer products which are favored by consumers. To know the buying patterns of consumers, research can be done through feedback gathering from consumers. Customers can be requested to complete a simple form manually or online which can help the business to understand consumers better. Sometimes feedback can also be collected verbally by meeting consumers face-to-face which is also very effective. The given feedback then, can be analyzed and action plans can then be prepared and the feedback can be incorporated into the product accordingly. It will make consumers feel valued and will add value to the product as well.

Place: It is about providing the product to the consumer at the right place and at the right time with more convenience. For example, if a brand is having two outlets - one in Ruwi High street and the other in Mutrah Souq, the brand could be the same but according to the location merchandise can be different. The majority of people who come to Ruwi High Street might be residents of the area or surroundings but if you have an outlet at Mutrah Souq, visitors from foreign countries also might be coming to that outlet since the Souq is close to the port. So there, one might have to keep the kind of products which can be purchased by consumer as souvenirs, hence location or place is very crucial here.

Price: “According to economists, price is the point at which exchange between buyer and seller takes place, where supply and demand are equal. Anyone who has witnessed sales of out-of-season garments or clothing that have not enjoyed the popularity hoped for, will notice that reductions occur to a point at which the stock is bought. However, price as an element of the marketing mix that involves much more than the perspective of the economist.” (Easey, 2009) Price of the product is basically a relationship between its production cost (including logistics and other expenses) and a certain return on capital and the resources invested in the business. Pricing can influence the number of products from a collection to be sold at a time. For example, pricing a handbag at OMR 6 each may mean that the entire stock is sold within four weeks of launch within a retail outlet. A higher price of OMR 10 may mean that the same goal of selling all the stock takes eight weeks. Admittedly, in the latter case, an extra OMR 4.00 profit per piece has been earned, but at the cost of holding stock for a longer period. If stock has to be kept then the season might change or new collections might come to the market. To clear up stock, clearance sales may have to be organized where it will be sold on reduced price and which might be more or less similar to the first situation. The point is, a lot of thought and research is also involved in pricing. The price of a product should not be
less or more. It should be appropriate and competitive.

**Promotion:** The term promotion is used to refer to the marketing or advertising one might offer the products or fashion goods. These goods may be available at a great price-point and convenient place for the consumer, but it has no use if the consumer does not know about it. In order to make the business visible one must engage in promotional and marketing activities. Promotion of the business can be undertaken through advertising, sales promotions, public relations campaigns and direct marketing efforts.

Entrepreneur can decide which tool to use for promotion according to the nature of their business. For a small business one need not to go for advertising in commercial magazines or newspapers or even use television. Word of mouth can generate a lot of business for small brands. Today, promotions can also be done on social media channels like Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp. These are cost effective and reaches many people. Some brands even collaborate with local influencers and bloggers to blog and post about their products, which is very cost effective and relevant to the new generation.

The four P’s of the marketing mix are affected by Business Environment as well. The business environment includes macro and micro environment which affects businesses directly or indirectly. The good thing with the fashion business is that no matter what happens around the world consumers will never stop buying clothes. This shows that if there is proper planning involved in the business it can be sustainable for a very longer period of time.

**Fashion Entrepreneur**

Fashion Entrepreneurs are those people who are having business of fashion. To be a fashion entrepreneur one need not to be a designer However, a great sense of business and little fashion focus can also be the key to run the business successfully. Fashion Entrepreneur can be:

**Fashion Designers:** Fashion designers are the product managers and innovators and the business revolves around them. But creativity alone cannot run the business. A designer must be business savvy as well and should be able to understand the language of balance sheets and the concept of demand and supply.

**Manufactures:** Product manufacturers can also be entrepreneurs. They manufacture the product or fashion merchandize in their factories and then sell it to different buyers on a wholesale basis or retail it from their own showrooms.

**Retailers:** Retailers have a really big role in the fashion business. These are individuals who are owners of retail outlets where they sell merchandise which can be sourced from around the world based on the nature of the
business. Oman, specially Muscat, has a lot of retail outlets which offer various of goods.

**Fashion Entrepreneurship in Oman**

The Sultanate of Oman has diverse nationalities and cultures. The capital city Muscat, is very lively and vibrant. Muscat has many malls and souks which are full of retail outlets of designers, manufactures, and retailers.

Being a Fashion designer, one should have a formal education from a good fashion college which really helps to understand the way fashion works. A designer conceives and develops the idea of a collection and then it goes into manufacturing and finally is brought to the showrooms for retail. There are design showrooms in Muscat, but there are very few of them. The majority of outlets here are those which comes under the category of retail outlets. These outlets sell the erchandise sourced from places like Turkey, KSA, Egypt, India, Pakistan and Thailand. The retail business is booming in Muscat. People are eager to spend on lifestyle and fashion products. Fashion has an allure of glamour which attracts everyone.

Every year, many college graduates start their fashion retail business, but after a few seasons many of them switch to other ventures or close down the business. The reason is a lack of planning. The business plan should be clear about the four P’s and of course the merchandise. What kind of products should be offered to what kind of target buyers. Keeping low income demographic in mind works more than keeping high-end customer in mind during planning. Low-end products can appeal to the high-end customers if the quality is good which can increase the demographic of a business but to target only high-end consumer limits the opportunity for the brand or outlet to be accessible for all. A normal customer may buy high-end product, only not frequently, but a high-end customer can buy low-end products often.

The business strategy should also have clear guides on inventory management. Fashion changes according to taste and increasingly this change is happening at a faster pace. To stay relevant and up-to-date, retailers have to update their collection or merchandise. To do this, they must be able to clear the old stock and make space for new. This is where end of season or clearance sales come so that the inventory could be at a minimum. Visual appeal through window displays must be refreshed and renewed frequently to attract consumers and keep them engaged.

A retailer must be very clear about mark ups and mark downs. This clarity will come from surveys and research on target markets and audiences. These may reveal different trends for different places. For example, an outlet located at Mutrah Souq can have an item priced differently from the same item being sold at Muscat City Center, simply because the demographic or the target consumer is going to be different.
The big drawback with having fashion business for high end clothing in Muscat is that it is easy for people to simply travel to Dubai and purchase the very latest in high fashion at reasonable prices. This concern can be met if the prices offered at Oman are competitive and if the products are made in Oman. This will eliminate the cost of shipping and importing thereby bringing down the selling price too.

Omani Fashion Entrepreneur - A Success Story

In order to understand more about entrepreneurship in the fashion industry in Oman, Ms. Ruqaiya Raffa Albusaidi, (one of Oman’s well-known fashion designers) was interviewed for her views on the matter. Ruqaiya holds a degree in fashion design from the Middle East College, Muscat and has been in the fashion business for the past 5 years. She also holds a B.Sc. degree in Fashion Design and Technology, validated by Coventry University UK.

She has launched her own brand ‘ruQi’ Fashion House in year 2013. The name of her venture was drawn from her own name and roughly translates to ‘high end class’ in Arabic. She meticulously designed her logo to reflect her brand DNA, which is simple yet chic. Her logo is clearly visible and very much in sync with her brand’s aesthetic. Even before acquiring her showroom, she was already operating from a friend’s showroom using a small space to retail her merchandise.

After gathering some experience, she moved out and rented a studio and workshop with the help of funding from her family. Initially Ruqaiya had her showroom in Al Khoud and her workshop was in Al Seeb. It was quite difficult for her to manage the logistics. Consequently, after a year, she moved to a new and bigger place in Al Mawaleh, where she could have both the showroom and workshop together. Ruqaiya’s brand is vertically integrated, which means her business owns all the manufacturing. She does not offer her brand’s products on wholesale. Her brand has a long-term approach towards product development at various price point for various demographics.

In the beginning when Ruqaiya was new to business, she had very different idea of what fashion was. She soon realized that fashion in Oman was very different from the global fashion industry, and therefore, she needed to be more locally focused in terms of her brand aesthetic and approach. At first, Ruqaiya launched a line of Jalabiyas, priced between 80 to 120 OMR, which is the normal price range for designer wear. However, she observed that consumers felt that her designs were expensive. Ruqaiya explored ways to controls cost and manage profits but realized that producing designer wear was expensive due to high raw materials and processes costs. She made only two or three pieces of each design to ensure that it maintained its exclusivity. Soon, she realized that she couldn’t follow the standard process of sampling followed by fashion designers around the world. They would create a collection of around 30 garments, as samples, all with different
designs under same theme and then take orders to make copies of each sample in different colors and sizes. This process was very expensive and involved a lot of inventory. It took one year for her to figure out how to manage this process so that she could sell her product at affordable price-points.

She launched her affordable line of fashion, which is in the ready to wear category, one year after launching her brand. Her affordable range is priced between 30 to 60 OMR and she makes more copies of the same style in different colors and sizes. For her affordable range of Jalabiya and Abhaya’s she follows the design process which is quick and less complicated.

To create brand visibility, Ruqaiya initially did some fashion shows. She was lucky to secure a spot for her brand at the Muscat Fashion Week 2012 where she got an opportunity to preview her graduating collection. This platform gave her the exposure she needed and ensured her place among the leading fashion designers in Oman. Her graduating collection was called ‘Farasha’ which means butterfly. She was inspired by the freedom, elegance and colors of a butterfly.

At the beginning, Ruqaiya did fashion shows which involved a lot of money and continuous work for long hours. After doing a few such shows, she realized that while fashion shows are good to create brand hype, they do not increase the consumer base. She found the same result from the advertising she did with commercial fashion and lifestyle magazines because the reach of these channels were limited whereas the costs were high. Ruqaiya also explored participation in exhibitions, which she realized might be a better platform to provide exposure to her brand and attract consumers.

Apart from exhibitions, Ruqaiya shared that social media communication really helped her in her marketing and promotional efforts. Currently, she has 58.8k followers on Instagram. She also collaborates with local influencers to attract consumers and this has worked extremely well for her. Ruqaiya’s Instagram page displays her brand’s core values which are creativity and master craftsmanship. Her online presence on social media helps her to be relevant, build loyalty and increase her reach and customer base.

She is constantly facing competition so she designs her strategies accordingly. Her online presence comes with the problem of an increase in the possibility of her work being copied. Having asked about her strategies for dealing with those who duplicate her work, she calmly says that she feels blessed to be able to create designs which appeal to people and so much that they duplicate it. She thinks if people are copying her designs, it means she is creating something which is relevant and appealing. She sees the designs of niche designers like Elie Saab, Reem Acra, Rami Ali and Zuhair Murad being copied frequently, and feels that if her designs too are being copied it proves that she is favored and liked by many. There are times however, when she gets upset to see her work being sold as cheap duplicates of her designs. She has her lawyers take care of all issues relating to the duplication and plagiarism of her work.
She personally supervises the design, pattern, silhouette and aesthetics used during photoshoots. Her creativity and skill allow her to create designs which are hard to copy. Ruqaiya has a team of talented employees who work for her. Some of them are employed by her and others are freelancers who are brought in for their specific skills as required. Ruqaiya herself is also an excellent make-up artist and her skill is very popular among her clients. Today, she has a team to help with make-up and hair styles.

The case study of her brand is very clear about the fact that fashion offerings in Oman are influenced more by local culture than international forecasts. Fashion offerings in Oman are more modest than those in the west. Planning is a very important part of her business as she has to adapt her designs to suit local fashions and also at times according to fabrics available in the market. For some collections she imports fabrics based on consumer demand. The challenge which she and other fashion entrepreneurs face in Oman is, how to control costs since there are only few manufacturing facilities here. The solution to the problem could be to use locally sourced materials like fabrics, trimmings and fasteners. By using materials which are locally available one can minimize shipping and other overhead expenses.

**Conclusion**

Fashion is an industry which is full of opportunities. People will continue to buy clothes and inevitably participate in fashion to some degree, no matter what the economic situation. “A new age of fashion has arrived. Modest fashion is trending across cultures and national boundaries, especially as mainstream brands are waking up to the Muslim market. Muslim women in particular are driving this market forward and are innovatively pushing boundaries within the fashion sector” (State of the Global Islamic Economy Report, 2017). Modest fashion as a trend is growing around the world and Oman is not an exception.

Today, the fashion industry has many opportunities for budding entrepreneurs and international brands have ventured into the modest fashion space. Dolce and Gabbana launched a collection of high fashion Abayas exclusively for the Middle East markets in 2016. Burberry launched a special Ramadan collection recently and H&M launched an entire collection offering modest fashion.

The fashion sector is booming and presents numerous opportunities for local entrepreneurs. While brands like CH Carolina Herrera and Michael Kors are entering the Middle East market, there is a huge opportunity for local entrepreneur to flourish because they understand consumer needs better then outsiders. With proper planning and research, the business of fashion can prove to be lucrative for fashion entrepreneurs in Oman.
References


About the author

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2. Revisiting Entrepreneurship in the Context of a Digital Economy

Authored by Babu Charles Earnest Charles Vettri Arasu

Introduction
This chapter attempts to examine the shift in contexts characterised by disruptiveness and agility and the momentum created by digitisation of the economy over the past two decades. It starts by examining the context, its historicity as illustrated by scholars and the scope created by disruptiveness to businesses leading to hitherto unprecedented transformations. The consequences of not catching up fast to these robust scenarios is examined as are the factors that lead to the survival of the most commonly understood traditional businesses. The author will start with visiting the concepts that we are growing to get familiar with our day today experiences. These concepts are the foundations of how we imagine our world and the experiences that we encounter. The author starts by exploring the core characteristics and contexts that influence our idea of entrepreneurship and how it is inevitably bound to influence our actions to it. The author briefly examines entrepreneurship and its relationship to development, discusses the idea of a digital economy and the consequent disruption caused by exploring the characteristic of disruptive innovation in the digital economy. He then examines the sustainable dimensions of the digital economy. The author questions the factors that shapes a digital enterprise and the impacts of a digital economy on entrepreneurship. He further questions the business consequences of a digitally transformed economy. He then explores the consequence of the digital economy and its determinants to the oil and gas sector and consequently, how the MENA region is engaging the digital economy and reflects on demography and digital economy dividends to MENA, as well. Finally, he dwells on Oman’s digital economy scenarios and highlights Oman’s National response to youth skill development to engage Industry 4.0., examines Oman’s engagement of the Blockchain momentum and In Country Value (ICV) dividends of Oman influenced by digitisation to highlight Oman’s strategic advantage. The author concludes by summarising how the advent of the digital economy is displacing traditional industries including oil and gas sector, what are the prospects and how the world is catching up to it, procreation of digital enterprises and its contributions to development, demographic dividends, ICV and influence of digital economy and Oman’s strategic position, strategies and future.

A Brief Overview of Perspectives on Entrepreneurship Contribution to Development.

The author, here, is keen to very briefly examine the concepts propounded
by two major economic and management theorist of the century. They are Joseph Schumpeter and Peter Drucker. Schumpeter viewed “capitalism as a dynamic and evolutionary” and process of “Creative Destruction” as an inherent dynamic and essential fact of capitalist development. He interprets the history of productive apparatus as a history of revolutions, a process of “industrial mutation”... that incessantly revolutionises the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one” (Schumpeter, 1942, p.23). Peter Drucker idea of “entrepreneurial economy” that characterised America in the mid-seventies, a shift from ‘managerial’ to an ‘entrepreneurial’ economy saw an America growing bigger in terms of its institutions such as Fortune 500, universities and healthcare (Drucker, 1985, p.1). This scenario changed in the late 1960s, new sectors emerged as job creators. Small and Medium institutions, businesses and majority of them new businesses that did not exist 2 decades ago created all the jobs. Drucker observation leads us to infer that traditional institutions were giving way to new, emergent and supposedly innovative institutions that harnessed the technology of the times. The shift overtook three centuries old technological processes that were predominantly mechanical. The new processes influenced by the “model of technology” was “organised around information” rather than energy (Drucker, 1985, p. 4). Drucker goes on to celebrate high tech as provider of “excitement and headlines”, creating “vision for entrepreneurship and innovation in the community” subsequently also constructing the “receptivity”. It enhanced the “willingness of young, highly trained people to go and work for small and unknown employers” (Drucker, 1985, p.5). It also transformed the American venture capital to surplus by this time. In later part of the chapter, Drucker acknowledges that high-tech industries as “makers of the future rather than the makers of the present” and further observes that the mid-sized companies grew 3 times faster than the Fortune 500. Drucker reiterates that entrepreneurial management, which he calls it as “new technology”, creates the possibilities.

Schumpeter called it as “creative destruction”, Drucker called it the “new technology” meaning management of the entrepreneurial economy, steering it towards growth and prosperity. Recently, Clayton Christensen (n.d) reflects on the context as characterised by “disruptive innovations”. Christensen describes it as any product or service gets itself in the bottom of a market, taking roots in simple application and relentless moves on to capture bigger markets and upset competitors even with strong foothold. Yes - rupture, disruption, creation, destruction, innovation, and entrepreneurship are all spectra of the economy that we represent today. Consolidated as disruption, digitisation of entrepreneurship completely rearranges the rules of the game creating new structures by disruption rather than destroying the old ones. Let us see how...
Digital Economy and Disruption: Consequences to Traditional Industries. Entrepreneurship has mutated as a digital variant. Digitisation is prerequisite to survival, evidenced as such as in the following lines. Fortune 500 companies, characteristic of America’s growth story are no more continuing to script the story. Between 1955 and 2017, only 60 companies have remained in the list all these years. Fortune 500 companies, 90% of them, have either vanished or merged with other companies or contracted to. (Perry, AEI, 2017). Companies, 440 in numbers, have just vanished. Amazingly, companies that were in 2017 are not in 1955. Perry (2017) mentions it as Amazon, Facebook, and eBay, Home Depot, Microsoft, Google, Netflix, Office Depot and Target. All founded in America, now, having a worldwide presence. Perry too draws analogy to Schumpeterian idea of creative destruction as he observed distortion in maintaining a stronghold in the Fortune 500 list, a consequence of market disruption and churning that has happened the last six decades. He goes on to predict that in 2077, 60 years down the line when we again can see the list to be completely revamped and today’s list will cease to exist. Antony, Viguerie, Waldeck (2016) in InnoSight report in 2016 researched corporate longevity and evidenced that companies on S&P 500 had an average lifespan of 33 years in 1965, which became 20 years in 1990 to further narrow down to 14 years by 2026 (Antony et al., 2016). The “growth of start-ups with multi-billion dollar valuations” like UBER, Airbnb, Dropbox, Spotify and Snapchat, has led to loss of control alongside record number of mergers and acquisitions activities (Antony et al., 2016). The new avatars displacing the old ones are those disrupters reach valuation thresholds quite fast. The shocks in the economy and shifts in technology are the major reason for shrinkage in lifespan. This is evident in the dramatic shift we find in valuations between 2000 and 2015. A leading industry automotive sector, another oil sector and the third one, the pharmaceutical sector, the top three giants, being replaced by companies dealing with IT hardware and software. Microsoft gained more than 50% traction from 7th position in 2000 to 3rd position in 2015. Apple gained traction much faster to reach first position in 2015 (Antony et al, 2016). Microsoft is a world leader in desktop PCs and accompanying software. Apple is a world leader in smartphone and accompanying software. Both set the stage for mobility and ubiquitousness in computing and data transfer. The third is Googles Android operating software and its counterpart hardware. Drucker’s observation of shift in models of technology predominantly organised around information is highly evident in these transitions. Schumpeterian proposition of new industries destroying old ones to create new institutions is characteristic of these shifts in business leadership and market capitalisation set in a dynamic motion. The market share of traditional business is shrinking and so are their dominant positions. Businesses that started small, but scaled fast using digital elements have set the race of digitalisation. The new avatar,
the digital business models are pressing corporate giants to regain their position, but only this time by plugging in expansive digital elements to their enterprises. This embedded hybridity is also a new avatar. This is digital disruption.

This embeddedness is characteristic of the digital economy as its very foundation is built on technology that are data-driven and subsequently, all that is created, captured, delivered and consumed is through, not only the physical store, but the omnichannel presence of the enterprise, working on the principles of digitisation.

**Disruptive Innovation: A True Characteristic of Digital Economy.**

Let us see what constitutes digital economy. UNCTAD (2017) Technical Note no8 explores the new digital economy (NDE). Contexts of transitioning into a digital economy for close to 3-4 decades was characterised by –

1. The advent of personal computers in 1980s
2. Development of digital design tools and computer guided manufacturing in the 1990s
3. Boom of offshoring and outsourcing
4. Transitioning from manufacturing to services
5. Free flow of capital in a globalised economy
6. Emergence of Multi National Enterprises (MNEs)

The convergence of the context, subsequently, enabled configuring information technology into some “semblance of interoperability and coordination” (UNCTAD, 2017). The design of IT towards interoperable means and its subsequent scope for coordination marks the beginning of the new economy characterised by digital technologies of various maturity stages. UNCTAD identifies five technologies that underpin the emergence of the new digital economy and is summarised by author as follows.

1. The advancement in robotic technology and factory automation has led industrial production to become “more intelligent, agile and flexible”. While flexibility and speed have increased, costs have come down. This has further enhanced by rise in computing power and low cost sensors, accompanying technology along with simpler algorithms and statistical process that control production process and manage risk if systems move away from the tolerance level. Predictive analysis and maintenance of problems when they “cross critical thresholds” lead to richness of data from new, diverse sources and Internet of Things (IoT).
2. Low cost sensors render embeddedness in devices to become cost-effective, generate data at various stages, level, locations and transmit even in sub-optimal energy and/or bandwidth conditions. Remoteness is not a deterring factor too. There is a gale of data from everywhere (UNCTAD, 2017). IoT, based, on these principles of higher computing power, low-cost sensor technology, embedded machine to machine and machine to human communication, analytics and high-speed bandwidth, generate volumes of data of immeasurable proportions. The collected data are stored in cloud and opens up new knowledge leading to innovation and profit. Even devices that do not transmit data of the identity of users, contains metadata that, if used effectively, would generate profits as it has stored data relating to actions, transactions, time and places.

3. Cloud computing is described as a system that enables users who are connected across digital networks through the internet to access data and resources from pool that has potential to scale and stretch to vast amounts. Anyone willing to pay for access has access from anywhere, anytime. It is distributed and no more centralized and within the enterprise. This provides lot of scope for renting storage space, platform and applications as and when required depending on needs. From a physical disk or in a downloadable format, software and platforms are available as services on the cloud. Entire computing infrastructure is available anywhere for a subscribing customer and companies now can do away with individual software development, while in fact it is available for their use up there in the cloud. Investment costs are shared and crucial services like maintenance and upgrade along with troubleshooting could be outsourced. Cloud based data, though poses risk, is a source for voluminous analysis and key feeder to big data analytics.

4. Cloud is a space for metadata received from IoT configured with sensors and devices.

It also provides scope for mining, analysing and interpreting data for an informed decision-making. Risks are mitigated by filtering risky features in voluminous data. Cloud data is available real-time in a formats that are diversified. Review by users provides excellent scope for the companies to enhance user experiences. While processing volumes of data, though data integrity is in question, encoding and data sharing methods like Blockchain encrypts data and maintains it in public ledgers with time and location specified clearly for each transaction and cannot be altered without other users knowing what is altered. Transparent verification of data means that everyone has access to the same verifiable data which increases the “speed, quality and accuracy of analysis” (UNCTAD, 2017, p.7)
5. Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered by machine-to-machine learning enable machines to predict and decide to operate in automatic ways, both supervised and unsupervised manner. Unsupervised, is a bit challenging as machines are made to learn by themselves than being pre-fed to make decisions based on logical rules. Machine learning, facilitated by faster processing and big data, enables a variety of processes.

UNCTAD (2017) observations provide the foundations to conceptualise digital economy, the dynamics within, and its implications for business in particular and societies in general. Wilsdons (2001) analysis applies the logic of digitalisation from a sustainable development point of view and both seem to agree on its total effects as contributory than as destructive. From a Schumpeterian point of view, the creative destruction is endless but at every transitions, as we see in the digital economy context, there is value addition during the creative destruction process. The world has assimilated the social value framework and digital economy encourages such incorporation.

Configuring Information technology in the semblance of interoperability and coordination is a dominant percept that author wish to further explore. Interoperability and coordination encapsulates the key characteristics of digital economy namely, connectedness, seamlessness, dematerialisation, virtualisation, analytics, automation, recasting of services, asset sharing thereby strengthening social capital, and sophistication of smart technologies and added it to it sustainable use of resources. The key feature is the disruption that it has caused by developing customer-centric, real-time, customisable, data-informed, automated and agile transitions having deep impact on pricing, marketing, consumption and competition.

Secondly, author would like to revisit entrepreneurship with specific reference to fintech sector based on the premises developed in previous sections counterpoised with contextual determinants characterising digital entrepreneurship.

By the end of 2018 real-time payments in developed market will be a reality according to Morgan Stanley Research team (2018) and calls it an “operational revolution” meaning back-end processes, the backbone of banking has the potential to be scaled, improved in efficiency, mitigate and manage operational risk leading to increased profits (Hamilton, 2018). Updating the back-end process is poised to provide seamless experiences. Evolving a competitive edge is enabled by cloud computing, Blockchain, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotic Process Automation (RPA). A robust core-banking system can save 9% in costs. Cloud computing saves infrastructure cost up to 30% and leaders adopting this technology will move to it 80% by 2020. RPA performs tasks such as automating transfer information
The Sustainable Dimensions of Digital Economy.

Virtuous or vicious, sustainable or polluting, natural green or carbon coated, a tenable solution or a hypothetical approximation, an unresolved paradox or a unopened Pandora’s box, a panacea or a placebo? Yes, digital transformation is seemingly to liberate the world with better predictability, organisation, thereby control and management. So say the digital pundits.

The author reflects on the following ideas encapsulated at beginning of the millennia when we were just beginning to realise the shift and as it explores contextual shift created by e-commerce with substantial evidence in the UK context. UK is construed as the birthplace of the industrial revolution of 18th century, hence a good analogy. The author is curious to know the transition to Industry 4.0. James Wilsdon in his introductory chapter of his book “Digital Futures: Living in a Dotcom World” published in 2001, recognises that the “two most powerful drivers of change within modern economies are the explosion of digital technologies, and shift towards sustainable development” (Wilsdon, 2001). Wilsdon explores the paradox whether digitalisation and sustainability are complimentary or conflicting in nature while exploring the very nature of technology in enabling us to deal with social and environmental challenges. In doing so, Wilsdon delineates 10 principles of sustainable e-commerce, whilst around this time the world saw both, a dotcom boom and a bust in relatively shorter period. He starts by saying that e-commerce (reincarnated as digital commerce now) “creates new opportunities for environmental and social sustainability” (Wilsdon, 2001, p. 5). The newness is the fact that a deeper digital transformation started taking shape and traditional industries have started embedding digital technologies to all their operations. This digital revolution has access to all areas, regions and sectors and spread the benefits (Wilsdon was primarily referring to UK) that profound impact caused by other revolutions of the past has not reached. Such is the power of digital economy as proponents emphasised bridging of the digital divide. The research also promotes the idea those online relationships, though not a “substitute for social networks” adds value to “real world interaction”. This infrastructure and technology accrues social capital. The digital infrastructure, Wilsdon points out, can enable minimal use of energy and resource thereby increasing environmental outputs. Virtualisation cuts down on manufacturing and transport leading to resource gains (Wilsdon, 2001, Pp. 8). Furthermore, digitalisation offers immense scope for efficiency in logistics as virtual tracking replaces real-time scenarios. A right policy mix can yield socially and environmentally sound outcomes. Wilsdon further states that the advent of e-commerce,
a new era of company-stakeholders relationships have emerged. Internet has paved way for a new form of cooperative and inclusive organising, owning and managing scenarios. Policy directions, of course, is inevitable and governments and business involvement is crucial to steer to attain sustainability objectives by aligning e-commerce in a concerted manner. Virtualisation and dematerialisation and the subsequent trickle down of changes doesn’t happen overnight and the adaptation to it by people has to ensure that they are incentivised and informed for a systematic transition to sustainable production and consumption patterns. Wilsdon’s research acknowledge the breakneck speed at which technology moves and encourages multiple forms of smart institutions to keep pace with the smart technologies. Wilsdon refers to Victorian era “institutional innovations”, considered radical at the time, developed to match the scientific and technological innovations that were emergent promoting a holistic, system-wide innovation. Yes, and this perspective fuels innovation in terms of technologies becoming smarter, inclusive and broader. Wilsdon reiterates, “We need to join the dots” as partnerships are key to sustain digital economy comprising of people, government, profit and non-profit organisations. Of course, the boundaries are blurring between traditional and the digital ecosystems and partnerships forge a deeper connection. Wilsdon concludes the 10 principles by saying that “we need to think about our attitude towards time” as faster internet reduces one year to mere four months in cyberspace (Wilsdon & Miller, 2001, p. 13-14).

In chapter 2, Mind over Matter: Greening the New Economy, Leadbeater and Willis (2001) go on to say that by 2050, only 5% employed in the traditional industries and there is a rise in service economy leading to a relatively new form of consumption (Leadbeater & Willis, 2001, p.20). They also highlight the new format, the experience economy that produces memories than goods. Production has become powerful as it embeds more and more human intelligence to it making physical products lighter by embedding intelligent software. All in all, these new ecosystem, a 24/7 economy helps save energy ratio. They pinpoint innovation as a key characteristic of the new economy as it leads to adaptation by developing creative means to generate value. It is in contrast to industrial economy, which emphasised on optimisation to find efficient means to produce using available technology. Attaining efficiency in production juxtaposed to innovating creative means to accrue value. This new economy offers new economic insights as there stems an “intellectual synthesis”, an effort to apply perspectives derived from networked economies to complex ecosystems, as in both, growth and decline is evolutionary and not unilateral. Both evolve and co-evolve in direct response to niche available within the ecosystem. The analogy drawn between both entities depict that the characteristics of diversity, tolerance and co-evolution. This new intellectual synthesis allows better assimilation of environment into the economic thinking and action. (Leadbeater & Willis, 2001, p.20). There is also a cultural shift evident as businesses are potential partners in
sustainable development through search and exploration of creative solutions to environmental problems. More importantly, the approach to capital based not merely on land, machinery, labour and raw materials as in agrarian and industrial economy anymore. It is more of intangible assets like "knowledge, imagination, creativity and trust" manifested as "brands, services and software" (Leadbeater & Willis, 2001, p.21). The new economy is thus characterised by "stealth assets" the intellectual capital that contributes to increased market valuations not thoroughly based on physical assets alone. This approach has also invited efforts to factor in the environmental costs incurred in economic activities leading to proponents of "natural capital" to be also accounted as these stocks are also depleting while widely used to spurt economic activities. Added to this thinking has emerged new forms of consumption, more in the form of services. Integrating information technology will increase productivity in manufacturing leading to decline in jobs and thus shifting to rise of opportunities in service. Consequently, Leadbeater and Willis (2001) predict that only less than 5% to be working in traditional industries by 2050. This momentum is spurted by value people place on goods for the enhanced services that they offer like, smartphones valued for its services. Furthermore, as cost of technology becomes less and less, people start providing services using such technologies converting it to a viable business, in turn environmentally sustainable. Nevertheless, not always as in tourism and travel industry. To counteract the impact alternative, innovative solutions already provide scope for minimising the effect through ancillary services and technology, for instance recycling. The new economy uses dematerialisation as an important strategy, adds value, and generates more by using less energy thus making use of energy and resources more efficient (Leadbeater and Willis, 2001, p.26).

Author has very briefly captured the essence of shifts from traditional to modern business models and on the spectrum of sustainability within and as an effect of the contextual shifts. The author, having explored idea of disruptive innovation embedded in the context of digital transformation, a core characteristic of the digital economy, moves on to examine its consequences to entrepreneurship in different sectors. In doing so, author also draw analogies of oil economy juxtaposed to data driven economy.

**So What Shapes a Digital Enterprise?**

identified include “implantable and wearable technologies, vision as new interface, our digital presence, ubiquitous computing, supercomputers in our pockets, storage for all, IOT, smart cities and homes, big data for big insights, robots, and the changes in decision making and the world of work, rise of digital currencies, sharing economy and 3D printing” (Schreckling and Steiger, 2017, p.4). These are a few aspects of transitioning from the analog to the digital, which influences not only individuals, but societies, businesses and economies as well (Schreckling and Steiger, 2017, p.4). While exploring the drivers of digitisation, Schreckling and Steiger identify four key drivers namely, 1. Breakthrough Technologies, 2. Changes in people’s attitudes, behaviour and experience, 3. Comparatively low barriers to entry and, 4. Huge amounts of venture capital (Schreckling and Steiger, 2017, p.6). Digital technologies evolve faster and diffusion created faster, as well. Schreckling and Steiger (2017) identify it as “breeding ground”, a consequence of changes in people’s behaviour, attitude and expectations. People adopt to technologies at a faster rate. Radio took 38 years to reach 50 million people. Angry Birds took just 35 days (Frey and Osborne, 2015, as cited by Schreckling and Steiger, 2017, p.6). Whatsapp gained 700 million followers in just 6 years of its existence (Anders 2015, as cited by Schreckling and Steiger, 2017). The number of connected devices will rise to 25 billion in 2020 (Gartner 2014, as cited by Schreckling and Steiger). Mobile data traffic has grown by the factor of almost 400 million in the past 15 years and at a factor of four thousand in the past 10 years alone (Cisco 2016, as cited by Schreckling and Steiger, p.6). World’s data stock is poised to double every 2 years, 99% digitized, and over 50% have an IP address (Evans and Forth 2015, as cited by Schreckling and Steiger, 2017, p.6). Customer’s adaptation is rapid as their need to be connected seeks predominance. The third driver of change, low entry barriers allow anyone with a great idea, internet connectivity and limited capital to a chance to become an entrepreneur (Manyika et al 2015, Hirt and Willmott 2014, as cited by Schreckling and Steiger, 2017). These innovators emerge from “unexpected places” and quickly overtake well-established businesses by accessing global digital platforms (Schreckling and Steiger, 2017, p.7). The fourth driver, venture capital in excess of USD 32 billion worldwide was available in 2015 (Raconteur, as cited by Schreckling and Steiger,2017) creating access to fund start-ups to develop their great ideas. CB Insights (2016) as cited by Schreckling and Steiger (2017), mention based on their research that a start-up has 1.28% to become a unicorn company (a private company valued at USD 1 billion or more based on fundraising). They go on to say that, there were 16 such unicorns in 2013, 38 in 2014, 68 in 2015, which rose to an amazing 153 companies globally in April 2016. While discussing about objects of digitisation, Schreckling and Steiger (2017) highlight discuss on three objects, 1. Processes and work, 2. Products and services, and 3. Business models
and effect on reinventing business processes and alignment to core functions and business processes. This is possible in a context where sensors, transmitters and RFID are cheaper and allows tracking of assets and even electronically tagging humans (Schreckling and Steiger, 2017, Pp. 8-9) and illustrates how TESCO in South Korea, which didn’t own a physical store, put posters through its subsidiary and customers scan QR codes and get products delivered before they reach home. Another illustration of how City of Amsterdam provide secured Wi-Fi to 1600 of its employees to access data for their work from anywhere. How an entire business model is recast is illustrated by these objects of digitsation.

So What are the Impacts of Digital Economy on Entrepreneurship?

The way forward, Accenture Digital Value Index (Dougherty et al., 2016, as cited by Schreckling and Steiger, 2017) describes digital economy poised to constitute 25% of the world’s economy by 2020 up from just 15% in 2005. Remarkable statistic indeed! Helping us rethink of the world that is waiting for us. McKinsey Global Institute (Manyika et al., 2015, as cited by Schreckling and Steiger) predict three effects of digitisation in the US namely, increased labour supply and productivity (staggering in terms of employment scenarios discussed by Drucker), improved asset efficiency and multi-factor productivity that could boost US GDP by up to 2.2 trillion. Also predicts that IoTs annual economic impact to be close to 3.9-11.1 trillion USD in 2025. Low entry barriers allow innovation and emergence of new business models that collapse boundaries that existed between sectors, fragments aggregated value chains and allowing occasional emergence of new industries (Hart and Willmott, 2014 as cited by Schreckling and Steiger, 2017). This characterises disruption and consolidate author’s subscription to the idea of embedded hybridity. Low entry barriers with access to faster internet and collapse of structural sectoral boundaries paves way for the platform based economy and scaling allowing profits to be generated at the long tail of the distribution curve and thereby, avoiding diminishing returns that traditional models are known for (Daugherty et al., 2016 cited by Schreckling and Steiger). Platform business models represent USD 2.6 trillion worldwide in market capitalisation (Daugherty et al., 2016 as cited by Schreckling and Steiger, 2017). A new world of collaborative innovation (Schwab 2016, as cited by Schreckling and Steiger) is the emergent phenomenon. These digital initiatives have cost incentives and McKinsey research estimates an annual growth and cost efficiencies up to 5-10% in next 3-5 years (Catlin 2015 as cited by Schreckling and Steiger, 2017). The 153 unicorn companies alone represent 500 billion USD market capitalisation worldwide (CB Insights 2016, Daugherty et al., 2016, as cited by Schreckling and Steiger, 2017). As mentioned before, digitisation
also has its own challenges to the extent of vanishing companies as good as 3/4rth do S&P incumbents by 2027 (Capozzi et al., 2014, as cited by Schreckling and Steiger, 2017). The prospects, as mentioned, are that the top 15 that represent platform business models with a market capitalisation of USD 2.6 trillion.

**So what are the business consequences of the digitally transformed economies?**

Kowalkiewicz, Safrudin & Schulze (2017) identify five digital technology trends as follows,

1. Hyperconnectivity
2. Supercomputing
3. Cloud computing
4. Smarter world
5. Cyber security

Hyperconnected world is always on and accessible to rich information providing space for interaction influencing people by providing connectivity between people and machines, machines and people and people with proven capabilities to provide prescriptive and predictive services. IoT gains predominance in this context with a potential to generate a potential economic impact of 4 trillion to 11 trillion USD in a year (McKinsey Global Institute, 2015, as cited by Kowalkiewicz et al., 2017, p. 44). Sharing economy is poised to grow 3000% from 2015 to 2030 and networks become vital in the digital transformation and external networks, particularly social media has to find a place in the enterprise. The impact on business is that it nudges business rethink their business models with scope to connect with suppliers real-time at a new level of efficiency. The connections with customers engage them, help them share experiences and become co-creators and co-innovators. While engaging communities, hyperconnectivity provides scope to engage in local commerce, share knowledge and provide services. Sensors are also an impact and becoming a cheaper commodity. Sensors used in a wide variety of applications measure motion, speed, light, optical, imaging, force, temperature or thermal, audio or acoustic, humidity, proximity and presence. This use will grow by a factor of 700 in 2030 leading to ubiquitous growth and driving big data through IoT. Cisco (Cisco 2015, as cited by Kowalkiewicz et al., 2017) predicts that by 2018 IoT devices will generate 403 trillion gigabytes of data per year. The outcome is real-time data that spurs innovations that drive value creation, predict and enable automatic maintenance via this real-time and predictive analysis enhancing safety and efficiency across complex industries (Kowalkiewicz et al., 2017, p 36).

The second trend supercomputing enable faster computation of
large databases and helps leveraging real-time operations that increases abilities, productivity and reduces cost by leveraging multiple, parallel processing and processors. In-memory technology improves aggregates. Kowalkiewicz et al (2017) identify 3 dimensions of optimisation levers of digitised core, the first being efficiency dimension, accelerates execution of high volume data and its evaluation in real time and algorithms “highly increases zero touch processes” and help invest time on core capabilities and competitive advantage. Secondly, effectiveness dimension helps de-layer process, speeding up signal to action seamlessly integrating workflow ultimately leading to quicker decisions relating to business by raising process intelligence enhancing big data into smarter decisions. Thirdly, the agility dimension increases processes enabling flexibility, speed and faster adaptation to changes. The important change is the channeling of organisational structure leading to significant timesaving and allowing flexible collaboration as well. So how do these dimensions affect value creation? It does in two ways, firstly by developing scope to change business models and not the processes alone and secondly by translating spending in terms of investments to enhance competitiveness (Kowalkiewicz et al., 2017, p. 44).

The third trend is cloud computing has developed such that its projected income by 2020 is USD 411.4 billion (Gartner, 2017) with cloud advertising taking a major share of USD 151.1 billion. Cloud computing opens up possibilities for four types of delivery models (Kowalkiewicz et al., 2017) namely, 1. Software as a Service (SaaS) wherein users subscribe via internet than buying software programmes. Gartner (2017) predicts the revenue to be $99.7 billion. 2. Platforms as a Service (PaaS) wherein users have access to platforms to create new applications and businesses. 3. Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) wherein users only pay for consumption of computing resources available on cloud which they will not be able to set up themselves. Gartner (2017) forecasts it as USD 72.4 billion revenue. 4. Business Network as a Service (BNaaS) where in business have access to the companies in their value chain wherein each entity autonomously work on their differentiated roles while collaborating with other businesses in value chain to deliver “higher customer value, agility in innovation plus cost benefits”(Kowalkiewicz et al, 2017, Pp 45). Cloud computing also opens up to subscription economy with absolutely no shelf-ware in the cloud and develops new quality to measure consumption. This usage measurement metrics adds on to the success factor of the business.

The fourth trend, smarter world is a consequence of miniaturisation of computing technologies (Bohn et al., 2004 as cited by Kowalkiewicz et al, 2017) integrated into our day to day lives enabling communication without personal computer input and output between machines, people and between people and machines (Mattern 2004 as cited by Kowalkiewicz et al, 2017). It is no more composed of mechanical and electrical components.
but combined with hardware, data storage capabilities, microprocessors, sensors, software and connectivity (Kowalkiewicz et al, Pp. 60, 2017). Capabilities enable monitoring, control, optimisation and autonomy leading to value improvement at each stage. Smarter robots use have been predicted to grow 2000% from 2015 and to 2030 and poised to be USD 190 billion market (SAP Centre for Business Insight 2015 as cited by Kowalkiewicz et al, 2017). The physical tasks in automated by emerging technologies via robotics and cognitive computing enable intellectual tasks even to an extent of putting even skilled professions at risk. A Bank of America study indicates that 45% of manufacturing tasks are likely to be performed by robots in 2025 compared to 10% existing now (Kottasova 2016 as cited by Kowalkiewicz et al, 2017). This happens in a context where robots cost lesser and when labor costs are higher. Japan has 1520 robots per 10,000 employees in car plants contrast to 66 per 10,000 worldwide. China overtook Japan as buyer of robots accounting for 25% of the global demand. Despite the fact, use of robots and automation are poised to lead growth of new jobs. Smarter printing has also opened up immense possibilities in creating objects out of digital models using additive manufacturing technique instead of subtractive manufacturing technique. 3D printing is poised to grow 2000% from 2015 to 2030 (SAP Centre for Business Insight 2015 as cited by Kowalkiewicz et al, 2017). Airbus plans to entirely 3D print a plane. A Dutch design company plans to 3D print a ridge across Amsterdam canal. A company in Shanghai built the world’s tallest 3D printed building in January 2015. Such is the power of 3D printing added to capabilities of Artificial Intelligence (AI). A fine example is Google Brain that can transcribe addresses captured by google street view in France by an hour. AI, combined with elaborate reasoning models, can answer and solve complex problems. In addition, AI algorithms are growing at a rapid pace in knowledge intensive organisations.


The consequence of digital economy determinants to oil and gas sector.

The author here attempts brief reflection on the impact of digital innovation in the oil economy. Morgan Stanley (2018) raise the question can big data pave way for of oil economies to revert to this golden decades. The article explores the idea of big data meeting big oil by observing that digital innovation in oil industry could help reduce annual costs by 5% leading to a whooping amount of 7.8% trillion opportunity. The traditional process of discovering, drilling and extracting oil had been risky and inefficient and now digitization can transform the industry to deal with such risks and inefficiencies replicating the sustained cost improvements that was part of the ‘Golden Decade” between 1987 and
1997. Oil companies are using 3D technology to create “digital twins” of the oil wells and sensors generate prolific data that is processed real-time using sophisticated analytics via supercomputing technologies. The shift is from a sequential process to a simultaneous process (Morgan Stanley, 2018). Plunging oil prices spurred companies to cut costs and digitalization can expand the savings up to 10 to 20% on drilling costs and time and remote drilling. Digitalisation also improves asset uptime, routine maintenance and avoids unplanned shutdowns. Companies use sensors, which provide predictive analytics that help avoid unplanned downtime and limiting planned downtime as well. Robotics help maintain workflow while inspections and maintenance are carried out by them. Enhanced oil recovery techniques using digital technologies boost recovery of oil and gas by 5% globally (International Agency for Energy as cited by Morgan Stanley, 2018).

“Data is the new oil” and it definitely helps the oil and gas industry!

Bruce Weinelt, Head of Digital Transformation, World Economic Forum in his Executive Summary to the report by WEF (2017) deeply delves on the theme by mentioning that any single drilling rig has a potential to generate terabytes of data per day and only fraction of it is used for decision-making. While other capital-intensive businesses have leveraged the potential of digital transformation, Oil and Gas industry has yet to capitalise on the opportunity, he says by viewing the sector in a cusp of this new era. He further observes that, despite the fundamental shifts propelled by supply, demand and commodity prices disruption, rapid advances in technology, particularly digital technologies, changes in needs and expectations of customers, the transformation to be evolutionary and not revolutionary. Currently the industry is using maintenance procedure that are proactive though, review procedures of operations and use of data to derive insights from the value chain. Weinelt suggest a revolutionary approach, as digital, he considers, form the backbone. Considering the tremendous value that digital transformation provides to industry and society, Weinelt observes that organisations need to develop a “culture of innovation and technology adoption” with a rigour to invest and commit to “revisit and revamp processes and systems” added to “willingness to collaborate across the ecosystems” (Weinelt, WEF, 2017, p.5).

Weinelt refers to the key finding of the value-at-stake analysis to highlight the benefits of digitisation to industry, customers and society between 2016 and 2025. The digital transformation has potential to unlock $1.6 trillion of value further increasing to $2.5 trillion “if operational constraints are relaxed and futuristic technologies” (WEF, 2017, p.5) are adopted. “$ 1 trillion value for oil and gas” (WEF, 2017) firms alone. The digital transformation can translate itself to “$ 170 billion savings for customers, $10 billion of productivity improvement, $30 billion for reducing water usage, and $430 billion
on reducing emissions” (WEF, 2017, p.5). That is a welcome news for the world promoting sustainable development. This doesn't end here, the environmental benefits are immense as there will be a reduction of CO2 equivalent emissions by 1,300 million tons, saving about 800 million gallons of water and avoiding oil spills equivalent to about 230,000 barrels of oil” (WEF, 2017, p.5). This being the situation, what are the barriers to change? The report identifies 4 major inhibitors, chiefly revolving around industry’s adapting to new scenario of data sharing across the value chain, and owing to this inability to share data across the ecosystem and challenges to recruit millennials.

So how MENA Region is Engaging Digital economy?

The impact is seen everywhere and Middle East is catching up very fast. A survey done by UK-Based Cobweb observes that 97% of C-suite executives mentioned that they were "fully convinced" about digital assets enhancing their competitiveness. These executives from diverse sectors mention that they are having “definitive plan” in boosting the digital capabilities (Cobweb, UAE, 2018). Cobweb is Europe’s leading managed cloud solutions provider. The research also identifies that the need for IT investments aligned to the business processes to derive the benefits of analytics. Cost effective solutions are on the anvil. A connected workforce is also an important factor. The research identified that only about 1/3rd of the executives agreed that they had a digitally connected workforce. A connected workforce and scope to strategise on available customer experiences data provides scope for end-to-end data and close to half the executives had mentioned that they had a strategy in place to avoid ‘disjointed’ strategies. It becomes all the more relevant in a context where employees prefer or rather demand flexible working and customers are connected and willing to share their experiences. These two factors become contributory to success or else superseded by highly agile competitors. It is an increasingly known fact that the digital strategies enhance the productivity of employees and enhance customer service. The research also highlights that business need to transform digitally to engage their customers, as connectivity ensures that the employees are empowered. And also new products and services developed through enhanced digital content to optimize operations (Cobweb, 2018). Altaf Alimohamed, MD, Cobweb UAE observes that “C-suite acceptance of the need to build digital transformation strategies will keep Gulf companies relevant within the region and beyond” (Alimohammed as cited in the Cobweb report, 2018). He goes on to mention that the companies are missing out on the opportunities as IT is focused on planning and its alignment to strategies and the management with staff training needs that have to be necessarily completed. He recommends managed cloud based services as it frees up organisational resources. The positive note in the report has repercussions to the regional economy, which is already in trend with leading discourses. Author’s observation here is
that the region is reaping the demographic dividends, as majority of its population is young.

Rostom (WEF, 2015) while describing the vast resources, human capital and entrepreneurism mentions the catalytic force that is capable of transforming the MENA region. These catalysts are the disruptive innovations that would change the world of work and those are, the industrial internet, advanced manufacturing and global brain characterised by collaboration and connectivity. High-end, cost effective sensors and wireless technologies help access cloud and bring the best of sophistication brought by industrial internet. Manufacturing, using advanced, smart technologies enable speed and flexibility and hence, the development of "micro-factories and high-value artisanal workshops" (Rostom, 2015).

Global brain, Rostom explains as the “collective intelligence” available through global collaboration and interaction of people and technologies. He refers to GE report on Mapping the Future of Work in the MENAT: A 2015 Outlook, in a context characterised by slow economic growth, challenges of oil prices and energy subsidies. The study, Rostom describes as providing a positive picture of a full opportunity for all. This happens when barriers to entry are lowered by “democratising manufacturing” enabled by smart technologies, which allow small-scale players to emerge and to whom big industries rely on to supply quality products, locally manufactured. This reduces cost, delivery times, opens scope for localised interaction that helps adaptation to changes and further innovation transitioning these economies from consumers to producers. This is leading to increased employment, high-value economic activity and innovation that depends and broadens the economic base (Rostom, 2015). Rostom reckons the future of work as “powerfully disruptive“ and the MENAT region “fully ripe for the creative disruption” providing possibilities, improved opportunities and living standards. A concerted effort from the government, academia, individuals as well as businesses welcoming the change will bring in a brighter future leading to a stronger economy based on collaboration, and “sustainable and equitable growth”. Rostom’s reflections lead us to delve on research findings of Digital Futures project relating to sustainability and inclusiveness opportunities of digitalisation.

**Demography and Digital Economy: Reflections on MENA dividends.**

In a WEF Executive Briefing (2017), it describes that Middle East and North Africa (MENA) demography is comprised of young working age population and regions population poised to increase by more than 25% by 2030. Increasingly well educated as well. Large workforce indeed and contributory potentials are immense. World Economic Forum Human Capital Index, measuring countries capacity to optimise its human capital places MENA at 62% compared to worlds average
of 65%. A competitive figure though. MENAs 25-54 age group represent close to 45% of the population and with an almost equal representing below 25 years age group. More than 25% of those under 25 age group are unemployed. The challenge is to create work scenarios for these population and scope for upskilling to suit the current industry demands. Technological changes all around is rearranging labour markets and though these new opportunities augments abilities and productivity of all level of workers ensuring socially cohesive, inclusive and flexible, the region needs to invest in education, upskilling and reskilling this population by preparing labour policy to suit the changes. The report further highlights three important themes that are common to the MENA region namely, low workforce participation among women (increasing though), large set of relatively well-educated and young population that is either under-employed or unemployed and shrinking public sector employment. It is estimated that close to 50% of the occupations in the region are bound to give way to automation. In this context, 21% of core skills in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region in 2020 will be different from this in 2015 (WEF Future of Job Analysis, 2017 as cited in WEF, 2017). At the same time there exists potential for “creating high-value adding formal sector jobs across a number of sectors, skill levels and work formats” (WEF, Executive Briefing, 2017).

So how is Oman responding to these scenarios? The author reflects on three scenarios in the backdrop of developments promoted based on His Majesty’s Vision 2020, the 9th five-year plan and the Vision 2040. These are Oman’s rapid gearing up to engage Industry 4.0 (4IR), engaging Blockchain momentum and ICV prospects enhanced by digital economy as elaborated in the following paragraphs.

**Oman Digital Economy Scenarios.**

The Sultanate of Oman emphasises Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as the key enabler of economic diversification and striving to catch up to contemporary market expectations. e.oman is Oman’s national e-governance strategy started since 2003-paved way for digital transformation the country embarked on, which included development of infrastructure, ICT, public service delivery and human capital (WEF, 2015 as part of interview with Dr. Salim Sultan Al-Ruzaiqi, CEO of Information Technology Authority, Oman). Dr. Al-Ruzaiqi is in charge of implementing e.Oman strategy and in his interview he highlights the grand vision of His Majesty to transform Oman into a “sustainable knowledge based society” to provide Citizens with practical and technological skills to develop “capabilities and incentivise them to seek knowledge” (Al Ruzaiqi, 2015). His Majesty directed the government to “simplify government processes, adopt technology in its daily operations and focus on electronic delivery of its services). Dr Al-Ruzaiqi further describes the six pillars of the digital Oman strategy (WEF, 2015).
The first pillar is to develop society and human capital by capacitating Citizens and Government employees in use of IT and specialist training for IT professionals. This strategy is to address the digital divide issue. Second pillar is to enhance government and e-government services transforming how government operations is taken forward and services are delivered through process enhancement and automation. Third pillar is about ICT industry development particularly local industry and SME by developing “on-shore delivery capability in content, mobility and applications” and developing linkages with foreign firms. The fourth pillar is ensuring government standardisation of its technical architecture and infrastructure. The fifth pillar is National infrastructure development through providing government services online “common shared and scalable government building blocks” to enable hosting and integrating government services and applications. The sixth pillar is to develop awareness among population about and promote e.oman benefits, a digital lifestyle and eServices. This e.oman strategy, Dr. Al- Ruzaiqi, describes as an aim to digitally transform government, businesses and society to enable digital savvy nation capable of producing and consuming digital products and services. The aim is to become a smart nation by enabling individuals and business to provide services from anywhere while being cost effective, convenient, accessible and efficient. This is possible by building intelligent systems, communication channels, portals to ensure flow of information thereby building intelligence in systems and applications. Personnel, both non-professional and advanced professionals are trained as well. e.oman strategy believes in investing mobility skills and services as it considers the future. The result is to establish a Centre of Excellence for training and providing tools and resources for application development and thereby contributing to local growth and development. Dr. Al- Ruzaiqi reiterates that sustainable growth is possible through development of SMEs in the ICT sector and it is furthered by creating systems for incubating bright ideas by providing technical and business idea training to support an industry cluster that enable coordination amongst each other that furthers investment from local and foreign companies in the ICT sector. Al-Ruzaiqi describes a scenario where Oman is pursuing an ultra-fast broadband strategy ensuring coverage through fibre optics and wireless technologies to provide efficient delivery of services and with a cost effective proposition to further build on value added services for the stakeholders and broadband considered the backbone of connectivity is the cornerstone for a smart nation. Oman thus fulfills all needed criteria for a smart nation.

**Ok, how is Oman faring in the context of digital disruption?**

Ali Al Lawati, General Manager, Cisco Middle East in Oman reinforces our understanding of digital technological development better. He
mentions that Vision 2040 of Oman followed with lot of collaborations with multiple stakeholders to serve Citizens and customers by enhancing service delivery bring it closer to the citizens and that Cisco is supporting this digitisation agenda in a big way by creating pathways by transforming how “people connect, communicate and collaborate”. Oman is the regional leader in developing services and governance. He strongly believes that Oman is an ideal destination to reap the benefits of digitisation as it strategically located within region and international communication grids, has easy access to emerging markets, a government that is business-oriented, progressive and bestowed with a dynamic business community. He also reinforces the idea that significant transition in technology is a key enabler of Oman’s economic diversification. Whilst discussing the challenges that Cisco faced, he pointed out to the demand for cyber security, digital and networking skills as these skills are not available locally. Cisco Networking Academy, developed as a response has so far trained 15,000 students of which 71% are women making Oman as country with highest participation among women in its global IT skills development programme (Ali Al Lawati interview excerpts appeared in OER Dossier - Comex 2018 special, 2018).

Oman’s National response to youth skill development to engage Industry 4.0.

A new website for National Youth Programme for Skill Development mentions that the Diwan of Royal Court, following the vision of His Majesty, recently has developed innovative strategy to engage Omani youth and prepare them for 4IR (Industry 4.0). It is an initiative to “implement His Majesty’s vision... to equip the youth of Oman with the latest relevant attitudes, skills and knowledge” through the programme. This is to build capabilities in young Omanis to engage the 4IR. This opportunity will enable young Omanis to immerse in the latest “4IR trends, technologies and applications” so as to be well equipped for the future mentioned passionately by HE Dr.Ali Qassim Al-Lawati, Advisor for Studies and Research at the Diwan of Royal Court in his welcome message. The Al Nashia scheme is designed to enable small teams to “invent, prototype and document real-world solutions” leading to design of an original product. All within the ambit of 4IR. The Al Shabab scheme provide both a virtual learning and experiential learning opportunities combined with opportunities to an international immersive experience to enable participants to implement and contextualise products or service design to suit Oman contexts (NYPSD,2018, para 2-3). It is a meaningful engagement of youth in the process of skill development to engage the creative disruption.

Oman’s Engagement in the Blockchain Momentum.

Blockchain movement is a distinct feature now in Oman since 2017.
Blockchain club is a an interactive platform started to discuss digital technologies based on trust, the dominant theme in Blockchain technologies, so as to develop local industry that has a socio-economic impact at the national level. Blockchain Solutions and Services (BSS) is a government company established in November 2017 to aid adoption of distributed ledger technology. A recent symposium brought together 100 plus professional in the field and ensured government keenness and support to develop a Blockchain infrastructure and the immediacy with which it is to be pursued. This initiative places Oman right in the middle of the vastly growing fintech sector with a strategic advantage of young people with contemporary skills (Blockchainoman.om, 2018).

Digital prospects of In Country Value (ICV) creation in Oman.

PDO, one of the leaders in Oil and Gas sector in Oman is a lead support of Joint Supplier Registration System (JSRS) which is “developed and implemented by businessgateways” (Businessgateways International) with scope to onboard all approved, validated suppliers to develop continuous connection between operators and suppliers (PDO, 2017). It is a “professionally sectoralised”, integrated, common, credible B2B platform driving ICV in Oil and Gas sector (Businessgateways International). It provides scope for ICV as it opens up lot of possibilities for Omani companies to explore international opportunities through this exposure. Secondly, it provides business transparency. JSRS is an initiative by the Ministry of Oil and Gas and is virtually present since 30 June 2014 (PDO, 2017). This initiative provides a single window for suppliers to secure contracts that pass the ICV requirements.

Apart from this, PDO has a robust ICV Monitoring and Reporting System. Since September 2014, PDO is the lead operator to implement system to collect ICV data. This digital element reduces time and effort put into collecting ICV data by providing single track to identify ICV data and measurement of suppliers’ performance, as well. JSRS Buyers Community – eMarketplace for Buyers Community is a structured “ Buyers Platform” for major corporates in various industries, a search platform for JSRS-Certified suppliers. In addition, for suppliers, this become a single window system to enhance credibility through registration and certification (Businessgateways International). This joint effort is poised to unlock “US$64 billion windfall for the Sultanate’s economy and creating 50,000 Omani jobs in the sector by 2020” (PDO, 2017). Author infers digitalisation reduces barriers to entry allowing level playing field for those who engage digital prospects, which Oman Oil and Gas sector harnessed with lot of scope for innovations in future.

Conclusion.

Author has traversed across multiple literature, predominantly secondary,
A Guide for Entrepreneurship Education

has revisited multiple conjectures and departures to synthesise a holistic idea, an effort to revisit global scenarios converging to Oman’s development. Digital economy is characterised by digital transformation of major contributors to the economy measured in terms of GDP and GNP. Depending upon resources and requirements, intensity of pursuit varies from contexts to contexts. Though it is an offshoot of the preceding context, it is also a stark departure characterised by disruptive innovations. This rearranges how societies conduct business, develop products and services, procure, supply, bargain and consume. Author infers it as a complete restructuring having immense consequences for how business is being done today by comparing and contrasting the displacement of traditional industries owing to digitisation. He has illustrated how digital technologies disrupt creating what consequences to traditional businesses. It is inferred that businesses, to survive the onslaught of smart technologies, have to inevitably catch up to digitisation. It is not only economic, but also affects people as in the context of AI and machine learning. Author finds solace in flourishing of digital businesses/startups by young Omani, traditional businesses plugging in digital elements and in the sustainable dimensions of digital economy and the social value, it proposes to create. People benefit by the very same technology that they feel subsumed. For instance, Oman has very young population, a demographic dividend and the visionary leadership of His Majesty has created lot of scope to train young population to harness the smart technologies for the benefit and development of the self and the nation. Businesses in Oman benefit owing to collaborative and circulative processes enhanced by digitisation. Oman is the regional leader in eGovernance, meaning people stand to benefit via minimal or no cost propositions with enhanced service delivery, which in turn could be used for welfare and development. Citizens are capacitated, meaning a solid human capital stock accrued, incrementally and exponentially. Digital technologies have the power to produce exponential outcomes with low or no cost. In a data-driven world where agility is emphasised, cost efficiency is a bonus. It is a hyperconnected world, made faster by sensors and embedded intelligence generating vast amounts of data that enhances business intelligence. Industry 4.0 is built on this framework and Oman has a clear strategy in place to train young people to be prepared to engage this scenario meaningfully by innovating and thereby engaging the world market. Blockchain, though feared as disrupting bank sector eases out so many process related complications in contracts by harnessing social capital elements like trust and validation. It is highly relevant to Oman as culturally and religiously, the societal makeup is such and the process only to be set in motion. Computing speed enables the process, high-speed broadband ensures connectivity, and cyber security safeguards digital identities against intrusion. These aspects are not only sustainable, but enable trustworthy social networks. Author is convinced that Oman has availed global developments and contextualised it to suit the trajectory envisioned by His Majesty in his Vision 2040. eOman is a great initiative to capacitate digital savvy citizens across all sections of society. It ensures
equitable distribution of informational resources and lowers barriers to entry to access crucial contracts. The incorporation of digital elements by Oil and gas industry in Oman has remarkable and exponential outcomes in terms of ICV. A fine illustration is JSRS. CISCO initiative in training, majority women, in global IT skills is a great feat making Oman the leader in this direction. Author infers inclusive development set in motion by digital transformation of business and the economy. This becomes all the more relevant when the future of work is changing and that future generation’s catch up to new scenarios. System is in place to train them in specialist skills. Furthermore, digital transformation in Oil and Gas sector is seen as high cost-saving exercise, especially in the context of AI triggered machine learning, predictive analytics and maintenance. Digitisation manages risk, improves customer interfaces, reduces shutdown times and hence, saves lot of cost overruns. It is all the more relevant to Oman as it enables ICV development and circulation by using digital elements to create awareness, include, validate, monitor and report. Author is convinced, though engaging digitisation has high investments, its prospects and path to prosperity is immense whilst considering the stealth assets, those intangibles and social value it creates in addition to its sustainable approaches averting huge environmental costs. When corporate longevity is short, disruptive innovation helps industries survive. Digitisation enhanced interoperability and coordination is the only alternative until another disruption happens. That too triggered by digitisation. How do we imagine the future of digital economy then?

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3. An Analysis of Omani Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in comparison with other GCC Countries’ Ecosystems

Co-authored by Araby Madbouly & Abdelbaset Queiri

Abstract:
Sultanate of Oman and other GCC countries, recently, are moving towards reduce the dependence on oil and gas in order to stabilize their economies and to achieve sustainable economic development. This implies increasing the share of non-hydrocarbon sector in the GDP which can be achieved through diversifying the economy. Furthermore, Oman and other GCC governments therein paid more attention to increase the role of private sector investments through different means as a tool to increase the private sector contribution in GDP. In this context, stimulating private sector drew the attention towards the importance of Entrepreneurship for developing private sector. Entrepreneurship stimulation requires a well-developed entrepreneurship ecosystem. This ecosystem captures various determinants of entrepreneurship activities on the microeconomics and macroeconomics levels.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse pillars of Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem to identify the areas of strengths and weaknesses which address the following research question “What are the strengths and weaknesses pillars in Omani entrepreneurship ecosystems?”

A time series analysis for each pillar of Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem and the components of these pillars using secondary resources was adopted to answer the research question and fulfill the research objective. Moreover, A cross sectional analysis is carried out between each pillar of Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem with the similar for other GCC countries.

It has been concluded that Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem has strengths in 8 pillars: Opportunity Perception, Risk Acceptance, Networking, Opportunity Start-up, Human Capital, High Growth, Internationalization, and Risk Capital. Culture Support is a medium level pillar in Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem. There are 5 pillars represent weaknesses in Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem, which are: Startup Skills, Technology Absorption, Competition, Product Innovation, and Process Innovation. Also, it has been concluded that although Oman started to pay the attention to

promote entrepreneurship in only few years, a good effort has been done in this regard. Oman has reached the third rank among all GCC countries in the GEI index (2017). It’s expected more improvement in majority of Omani ecosystem pillars in coming years, as an outcome of the current efforts by different parties related to the entrepreneurship in Oman.

Keywords:
Entrepreneurship, Oman economy, GCC, Entrepreneurship ecosystem

1. Introduction
Sultanate of Oman and other GCC countries are endowed by oil and gas. This towards these economies to be highly dependent on oil and gas extraction activities, which made their economy vulnerable to economic fluctuation as a result of uncertainty of oil and gas prices. This towards Oman and other GCC governments to implement policies to support economic diversification to strengthen the business environment and increase the share of non-hydrocarbon sector. Furthermore, Oman government and other GCC countries paid more attention to increase the role of private sector investments as a tool to increase the private sector contribution in GDP. In this context, stimulating private sector drew the attention towards the importance of Entrepreneurship for developing Omani private sector.

The research in ecosystem for entrepreneurship has received considerable attention from researchers (even individual researchers or belonged to institutions), which developed many approaches for assessment. Some approaches are comprehensive and use large number of individual indicators, others are more conceptual and focus mainly on some key domains and specific actors.

To answer the research question, the researcher implemented "Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute" (GEDI) index which is named "Global Entrepreneurship Index" (GEI) on Oman to assess the different pillars of Oman entrepreneurship ecosystem and determine the strong pillars and the weak ones. A comparison for the GEI indices for Oman against other GCC countries will enable to identify the rank of each pillar in Omani ecosystem against the same for all other GCC countries which gives indicator about the pillars which need more effort to be improved in the whole Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The paper proceeds by reviewing the literature review about entrepreneurship ecosystem followed by the research methodology. Then, the analyses for the Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem and a comparison with each pillar in all other GCC countries were carried out. Finally, the paper draws conclusions and proposes recommendations to improve the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Sultanate of Oman.
2. Literature review

The research in ecosystem for entrepreneurship has received considerable attention from many researchers and institutions, which created many approaches for assessment. There is a wide variety between these approaches. (Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs, 2013).

One of the common approaches in assessing entrepreneurship ecosystem is “Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute” (GEDI), which defined entrepreneurship ecosystem as “A system is an organized set of interacting and interdependent subsystems that function together as a whole to achieve a purpose”. (Mathews and Brueggemann, 2015) argued that the “ecosystem is a purposeful collaborating network of dynamic interacting systems and subsystems that have an ever-changing set of dependencies within a given context”

As per GEDI, Entrepreneurial ecosystems are composed of sub-systems (pillars) that are aggregated into systems (sub-indices) that can be optimized for system performance at the ecosystem level. GEDI issued index named “Global Entrepreneurship Index” (GEI). The index consists of fourteen pillars of entrepreneurship ecosystem. (Zoltán J., et al., 2017).

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One of the most important approaches in assessing the ecosystem for entrepreneurship is OECD approach. The OECD uses a unique definition of entrepreneurship, it considers three components: Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurial Activity and Entrepreneurship. (Ahmad N., and Hoffmann A.).
The OECD conceptualizes the ecosystem of entrepreneurship as the combination of three factors: opportunities, skilled people and resources. These three factors are influenced by two important themes: culture and regulatory framework. These factors and themes can be simplified into six key determinants: regulatory framework, market conditions, access to finance, R&D and technology, entrepreneurial capabilities and culture.

Another approach in assessing the ecosystem for entrepreneurship is the World Bank’s approach. The World Bank’s Enterprise Surveys are the most comprehensive, and wide-ranging datasets available. Key data points include firm characteristics, sales, finances, R&D, entrepreneur/top manager, government relations, quality of infrastructure, competition and workforce, employee characteristics, impact on communities, and entrepreneurial motivation/culture. The World Bank project for collecting data on entrepreneurship was completed in June, 2015. The project created understanding for the different aspect of entrepreneurship. (World Bank, 2016)

The World Economic Forum (WEF) developed comprehensive diagnostic tools for assessing and tracking the development of the ecosystem. The WEF believes that entrepreneurs rely on four enablers of support: Personal Enablers (such as mentors and education); financial enablers (such as banks, investors and microfinance); businesses enablers (such as incubators and networking associations); and environmental enablers (such as regulatory framework, infrastructure and culture). By examining an entrepreneurial ecosystem through this framework the WEF is able to identify strengths and weaknesses in the ecosystem and recommend policy to fill gaps. (World economic forum)

Babson College - The Babson Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Project (BEEP) stems from the observation that in all societies in which entrepreneurship occurs with any regularity or is self-sustaining, there is a unique and complex environment or ecosystem.

The BEEP categorizes their framework into six domains: i) Policy (government regulations and support of entrepreneurship); ii) Finance (the financial services which are provided to entrepreneurs); iii) Culture (societal norms and the presence of success stories in entrepreneurship); iv) Support (physical infrastructure, non-governmental institutions, and the presence of supporting professions); v) Human Capital (the quality of higher education system and the skill level of the work force); Finally, vi) Markets (entrepreneurial networks and the presence of early customers).

(Daniel Isenberg and Vincent Onyemah, 2016)

3. Methodology

Research Design: This study uses a combination of two well-known approaches, namely; qualitative based on multiple case studies approach and quantitative approach. The former approach relied mainly on analyzing different case studies related to entrepreneurial eco-system at multinational level. A
quantitative analysis was utilized, specifically non-hypothetical relationship, in other words, a descriptive study with statistics indicators was performed, in order to understand the progress of eco-system in Oman and a comparison with the ecosystem indicators between Oman and other GCC countries.

**Unit of analysis:** This study considers the country as the unit of analysis. Different countries were under analysis for the entrepreneurship eco-system.

**Data types and sources:** The data was collected from secondary sources. The data was collected from the databases, reports, and websites of World Bank, GEDI, OECD, World Economic Forum, Al Raffad fund (Sultanate of Oman) and other former relevant studies. These reports and previous studies related to the different pillars of entrepreneurship ecosystem in Oman, world and GCC countries. To gain more in depth of analysis, the secondary data was collected for every sub-indices of each pillar of Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem.

**Data presentation:** The collected data has organized in tables and then presented in charts. This allowed the researcher to analyze the data, come to a conclusion, and provide recommendations.

**Data analysis:** With reference to research design approaches. A comparative narrative analysis was undertaken on the aforementioned countries with particular emphasis on entrepreneurship eco-system. This method is suitable for case study analysis at multiple levels. The comparison analysis, allow the researcher to compare the progress and provide justification per case, with strong tie to economic and financial performances, as part of eco-system entrepreneurship adoption at different countries under consideration. Furthermore, a descriptive analysis for each pillar of Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem and the components of these pillars was implemented. This analysis provides indicator about the progress and the level of each pillar in Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem to assess its level in comparison with its value in these levels. Similarly, such analysis was carried out and compared with each pillar of Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem against other GCC countries which provides good indicators about the level of the strengths of the pillar in Oman. Furthermore, a comparison with other GCC economies, as benchmarking, enabled to have accurate assessment for Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem, that's why a comparison with other GCC countries entrepreneurship ecosystems is carried out.

4. Entrepreneurship Ecosystem of Sultanate of Oman and GCC Countries:

This section includes implementing GEDI approach on Oman and GCC economies to assess each pillar of entrepreneurship ecosystem of Sultanate of Oman with a comparison with other GCC economies. As per GEDI approach, the entrepreneurship ecosystem is assessed via Global entrepreneurship Index (GEI). GEI consists of three sub-indices. *First* is Attitudes sub-index,
its pillars are: Opportunity perception; Start-up Skills; Risk Acceptance; Networking; and Cultural Support. Second component is Abilities Sub-Index, which consists of the following four pillars, they are: Opportunity Start-up; Technology Absorption; Human Capital; and Competition. Third sub-index is Aspiration Sub-Index, it has five pillars: Product Innovation; Process Innovation; High Growth; Internationalization; and Risk Capital.

A comparison between Global Entrepreneurship Index (GEI) for Oman and all other GCC countries 2017 is shown in figure (1). GEI 2017 refers that the Qatar has the first rank (0.550), followed by UAE (0.535). Oman got the third rank (0.469) followed by Bahrain (0.428). Saudi Arabia got the sixth rank with GEI value 0.402.

Figure (1)


The full analysis for the sub-indices for each pillar of Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem and a comparison with all other GCC ecosystems are given in the following sections.

4.1. Entrepreneurial Attitudes in Oman and GCC countries:

4.1.1. Pillar 1: Opportunity Perception:

This pillar captures the potential “opportunity perception” of a population by considering the state of property rights and the regulatory burden...
that could limit the real exploitation of the recognized entrepreneurial opportunity. (Zoltán J., et al., 2017).

The opportunity perception index for Oman increased from 0.46 in 2012 to reach its peak (0.70) in 2015, then it dropped to be 0.63 in 2016 (Figure 2).

![Figure (2): Opportunity Perception Index in Oman (2012 - 2017)](image)


This increase in opportunity perception index is resulted from increase in the components of this index (opportunity recognition, economic freedom and property rights).

Opportunity recognition is measured by the percentage of the population that can identify good opportunities to start a business in the area where they live, the value of these opportunities also depends on the size of the market. Market size is the sum of gross domestic product plus value of imports of goods and services, minus value of exports of goods and services. (Zoltán J., et al., 2017)

| Table no (2) Domestic market size index for Oman (2011 – 2015) |
|-----------------|---------|-----------------|
| year            | Rank    | Index value (out of 7) |
| 2015            | 68      | 3.8              |
| 2014            | 73      | 3.6              |
| 2013            | 78      | 3.3              |
| 2012            | 78      | 3.2              |
| 2011            | 75      | 3.2              |


The market size index for Oman increased from 3.2 in 2011 to 3.8 (out of
7) in 2015. The rank of Oman market size improved from 75 in 2011 to 68 in 2015. This reflects expansion in Oman market size which improves the opportunity perception for Oman.

Freedom is vital for individuals to become entrepreneurs. Economic freedom captures the overall burden of regulation and the government’s regulatory efficiency in influencing businesses startups and operations. Business freedom is a quantitative measure of the ability to start, operate, and close a business. That represents the overall burden of regulation and the efficiency of government in the regulatory process. (Bjørnskov, C., & Foss, N., 2010). The value of Omani business freedom index is around 70, which reflects high level of economic freedom (Table 3).

Table (3) Business freedom index in Oman (2011-2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>index year</th>
<th>business freedom index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>70.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>68.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>68.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>68.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Property rights: “enforced property rights guarantee that individuals have the right to harvest the fruits of successful opportunity exploitation and no one is confiscating or stealing their property or business”. (Bhola, R. et. al., 2006).

The property rights component is an assessment of the ability of individuals to accumulate private property, secured by clear laws that are fully enforced by the state. It measures the degree to which a country’s laws protect private property rights and the degree to which its government enforces those laws.

Oman implements its obligations under those treaties through a number of Royal Decrees made in 2000 on patents, copyrights and neighboring rights, trade marks and unfair competition, industrial designs, geographical indications and semiconductor topographies. The Sultanate’s copyright law has been supplemented by Royal Decree No. 65/2008 Promulgating the Law on Copyright and Related Rights and its law on industrial property rights by Royal Decree No 67/2008. (NIPC Gulf) Moreover, Oman signed many Treaties related to intellectual property rights (TRIPs, Intellectual Property Law in Kuwait, the GCC Patent Regulation and Implementing Bylaws, Oman is also party to the Paris and Berne Conventions, the WIPO Copyright and Performances and Phonograms Treaties, the Patent and Trademark Law
Treaties, the UPOV Convention and the Patent Co-operation Treaty, Madrid Protocol and Hague]. Hence, the level of property rights in Oman is high.

Table (4) property rights index for Oman (2011-2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>index year</th>
<th>property rights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Omani property rights index increased to be 55 since 2015 instead of 50 in the prior years.

The level of opportunity perception in Oman is ranked the fourth between the GCC countries after Qatar, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and followed by Kuwait and UAE.

Figure (3)

4.1.2. Pillar 2: Startup Skills

Business formation, operation, and management, require skills which are acquired through education and training. Hence education, especially
postsecondary education, plays a vital role in teaching and developing entrepreneurial skills. (Zoltán J., et al., 2017).

Although that start-up skills index in Oman increased from 0.28 in 2012 to 0.40 in 2014, it dropped to be 0.20 in 2015 and increased slightly to be 0.24 in 2017.

Table no (5) Quality of Education Indicators of Oman (2011 – 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tertiary education enrollment rate (gross)</th>
<th>Quality of the education system</th>
<th>Quality of math and science education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indicator value</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Indicator value (out of 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table no (5) represents the tertiary education enrollment rate gross, Quality of the education system, and Quality of math and science education. The Tertiary education enrollment rate gross increased from 24.5% in 2011 to 28.7% in 2012 and still at the same level till 2015. Quality of the education system index fluctuated between 3.1 and 4.0 (out of 7.0) through 2011 – 2015. Quality of math and science education fluctuated between 3.3 and 3.9 (out of 7.0) through the same period.

Furthermore, the higher education started the awareness for students about
entrepreneurship in last few years. In this regard, The Ministry of Higher Education decided to offer entrepreneurship course as one of university/college requirements, few Higher education institutions offered the course in the academic year (2013 – 14) while many other institutions offered the course later for their students. This may increase students’ awareness about entrepreneurship, which, in turn will increase the level of start-up skills from Omani population in forthcoming years.

On the other hand, although that many higher education programmes in Oman are business programmes, only a few of them are degrees in entrepreneurship.

The start-up skills are influenced by the efforts of institutions which stimulate entrepreneurs and support them while managing their businesses. The effort of these institutions is still limited, for example, Al Raffd Fund which was founded in 2013 as a financial organization aimed to support, encourage and promote the entrepreneurial growth and advancement among the citizens of Sultanate of Oman. Another authority is “The Public Authority for Small & Medium Enterprises Development” (Riyada) was established as the Public Authority for Small & Medium Enterprises Development as per Royal Decree No. 36/2013 has about 100 beneficiaries.

Oman is ranked the fourth between the GCC countries in the startup skills index. Saudi Arabia got the first rank (0.933) followed by Bahrain (0.543), then UAE (0.290) and Oman (0.260), While Kuwait came in the fifth rank (0.221) followed by Qatar in the sixth rank (0.198).

Figure (5)


4.1.3. Pillar 3: Risk Acceptance
Fear of failure is one of the most important obstacles to a startup. Risk acceptance is defined as the percentage of the population who do not
believe that fear of failure would prevent them from starting a business. (Vieider et al., 2015)

Risk acceptance index for Oman increased from 0.39 in 2012 to reach 0.66 (in average 14% annual growth rate).

Risk acceptance is related to country risk. Country risk index is composed of transfer and convertibility risk (i.e. the risk a government imposes capital or exchange controls that prevent an entity from converting local currency into foreign currency and/or transferring funds to creditors located outside the country) and cases of force majeure (e.g. war, expropriation, revolution, civil disturbance, floods, earthquakes). As per OECD risk classification for countries, Oman is classified Oman Prevailing was (3) in 2017, which reflects a lower country risk. (OECD)

Oman got the first rank between all GCC countries in the risk acceptance index with Kuwait (0.621) for each, followed by Qatar (0.439) and Saudi Arabia (0.436), while UAE is ranked the fifth (0.322) followed by Bahrain (0.287).

4.1.4. Pillar 4: Networking

Networking combines an entrepreneur’s personal knowledge with their ability to connect to others in a country and the whole world. Entrepreneurs who have better networks are more successful, can identify more viable opportunities, and can access more and better resources.


Networking index for Oman increased from 0.39 in 2012 to reach its maximum (0.94) in 2015, then it decreased to reach 0.50 in 2017.

The basic networking potential is defined by a possible entrepreneur by the percentage of the population who personally know an entrepreneur who started a business within two years. The connectivity variable has two components: Urbanization which measures the urbanization of the nation and the Infrastructure which measure the quality of the transport infrastructure. (Audretsch et al., 2015)

Table no. (7) Shows that the level of urbanization index in Oman is high, its value is 75.7 in 2011 and increased slightly to be 77.7 in 2015.

Table (7) Urbanization index of Oman (2011 – 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator Year</th>
<th>Urbanization index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>77.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>77.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>77.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>76.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data about the quality of transport infrastructure in Oman is not available. However, there is an improvement in air transportation in Oman resulting from establishing new airports and new Omani economy airlines (Al Salam airlines) as well.

The new Muscat International Airport has been started in 2018 with a capacity to handle 12 million passengers per annum and the new Salalah International is able to handle one million passengers per annum.

Salam Air is a proposed low-cost carrier. Oman’s Public Authority for Civil Aviation granted ASAAS a new air services operator license in Jan-2016 to establish the country’s first LCC. The carrier would support Oman’s air traffic demand, which is expected to increase by 40% by 2019. (CAPA)

It’s expected that these two factors will improve the level of networking for Oman.

Oman got the last rank between the GCC countries in the networking index 2017 (0.456).

Figure (9)


4.1.5. Pillar 5: Cultural Support
Cultural support is an essential element in motivating people to be entrepreneurs. Without it, the best and brightest do not want to be responsible entrepreneurs, and they decide to enter a traditional profession. This pillar is a combined measure of how a country’s inhabitants view entrepreneurs in terms of status and career choice, and how the level of corruption in that country affects this view.
Culture Support index for Oman fluctuated between 0.40 and 0.57 through 2012 – 2017.

Oman is ranked the third between GCC countries in the cultural support. UAE has the first rank (0.838) followed by Qatar (0.735), then Oman and Saudi Arabia got the third rank (0.447) followed by Bahrain (0.415). Kuwait got the sixth rank (0.384).

4.2. Entrepreneurial Abilities Pillars

4.2.1. Pillar 6: Opportunity Startup

This is a measure of startups by people who are motivated by opportunity but face red tape and tax payment. An entrepreneur’s motivation for starting a business is an important signal of quality. Opportunity entrepreneurs are believed to be better prepared, to have superior skills, and to earn more than what we call necessity entrepreneurs.
Opportunity Motivation is defined as the percentage of the Total Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) businesses started to exploit a good opportunity. The overall effectiveness of the government services is measured by the Good Governance variable and the cost of the governance is by the level of overall. The variable is a combination of these two components, government service quality and costs. (Asoni, A., & Sanandaji, T. 2014)

The Governance index consists of sub-indices: Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism; Government Effectiveness; Regulatory Quality; Rule of Law; and Control of Corruption.

Table (8) Governance sub-indices for Oman (2011 – 2015)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Political Stability</th>
<th>Government Effectiveness</th>
<th>Regulatory Quality</th>
<th>Rule of Law</th>
<th>Control of Corruption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Estimate of governance (ranges from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance)

Table (8) shows that all the sub-indices of governance for Oman are strong for 2015 (All of them are higher than zero), the strongest sub-index Political Stability, the second strongest one is Regulatory Quality, the third sub-index is Rule of Law, the fourth sub-index is Control of Corruption, the fifth
sub-index is Government Effectiveness.

Oman is ranked the third in the startup index between the GCC countries after Saudi Arabia and Qatar and followed by UAE, Bahrain, then Kuwait ranked in the sixth rank.

Figure (13)


4.2.2. Pillar 7: Technology Absorption

In the modern knowledge economy, information and communication technologies play a major role in economic development. The Technology Level variable is a measure of the businesses that are in technology sectors. The institutional variable, Tech Absorption, is a measure of a country’s capacity for firm-level technology absorption. The diffusion of new technology, and the capability to absorb it, is vital for innovative firms with high growth potential. (Garcia-Morales, et. al., 2014)


Technology absorption index for Oman was 0.11 in 2012 and 2013. It
increased till reach 0.72 in 2015 and dropped to be 0.21 in 2017.

Technology absorption is a part of technology readiness. Table no (9) represents some indicators of technology readiness in Oman (2011 – 2015)

Table no (9): Some indices of technology readiness in Oman (2011 – 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Availability of latest technologies</th>
<th>Firm-level technology absorption</th>
<th>FDI and technology transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Index value (out of 7)</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table (9) shows that the Availability of latest technologies index for Oman dropped from 5.4 in 2011 to be 4.9 in 2015 (The rank also dropped from 46 to 66 for the same years). Firm-level technology absorption index also dropped from 5.0 in 2011 to 4.7 in 2011 (The rank of Oman dropped from 52 to 57 for the same years). FDI and technology transfer index for Oman dropped from 4.9 in 2011 to 4.1 in 2015 (the rank of Oman dropped from 45 to 85 for the same years).

Oman got the third rank in the Technology Absorption index after Qatar and Bahrain and followed by Kuwait, UAE, and Saudi Arabia.

Figure (15)
4.2.3. Pillar 8: Human Capital

The prevalence of high-quality human capital is important for ventures that are highly innovative and require an educated, experienced, and healthy workforce to continue to grow.

An important feature of a venture with high growth potential is the entrepreneur’s level of education (discussed in start-up skills pillar) and the labour market possibilities which can be illustrate by the institutional variable labour (Labour freedom and staff training). Labour Freedom measures the freedom of the labour from the regulatory perspective. Staff training is a country’s level of investment in business training and employee development. It can be expected that heavy investment in employees pays off and that training increases employee quality. (Qian, 2016).


Human Capital index for Oman fluctuated between 0.62 and 0.71 through 2012- 2017.

Table (10) Labour freedom index for Oman (2011-2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>index year</th>
<th>labor freedom index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>75.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>80.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>85.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>89.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although that labour freedom index for Oman dropped from 89.1 in 2011 to 76.1 in 2016, it still classified as a “Mostly free” market as shown in figure (11), which means high level of labour freedom from the regulatory perspective the legal and regulatory framework of a the labor market, including regulations concerning minimum wages, laws inhibiting layoffs, severance requirements, and measurable regulatory restraints on hiring and hours worked.

Table no (11) Staff Training index for Oman (2011 – 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Index value (out of 7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff Training index for Oman fluctuates between 4.0 and 4.5 through 2011-2015. This reflects a stability in the level of Omani investment in training and employee development.

Oman got the fourth rank in the human capital index after Qatar, Bahrain and UAE. Oman human capital index equals 0.739. It followed by Kuwait while Saudi Arabia got the sixth rank.
4.2.4. Pillar 9: Competition

Competition is a measure of a business’s product or market uniqueness, combined with the market power of existing businesses and business groups and the effectiveness of anti-monopoly regulation.

The Competition institutional variable is the combination of Regulation and Market Dominance. The extent of market dominance by a few business groups is measured by the variable Market Dominance while the effectiveness of the regulatory bodies (Regulation) could also influence the level of competition in a country. (Calcagno & Sobel, 2014)
maximum (0.61) in 2015, then it decreased to reach 0.27 in 2017.

Market regulation is measured by the effectiveness of anti-monopoly policy index. Table (12) shows the value of this index for Oman dropped from 4.7 in 2011 to 3.7 in 2015.

**Table no (12) Effectiveness of anti-monopoly policy index for Oman (2011 – 2015)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>year</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Index value (out of 7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table no (13) shows that the market dominance index for Oman dropped from 4.1 in 2012 till 3.2 in 2015. The rank of Oman for this index is 110 (Out of 138 countries).

**Table no (13) Market Dominance index for Oman (2011 – 2015)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>year</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Index value (out of 7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table no. (13) shows that the market dominance index for Oman dropped from 4.1 in 2012 till 3.2 in 2015. The rank of Oman for this index is 110 (Out of 138 countries).

Oman got the fourth rank in the competition index between the GCC countries after Qatar, UAE and Bahrain. Oman is followed by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in that index.
4.3. Entrepreneurial Aspirations Pillars

4.3.1. Pillar 10: Product Innovation

Product Innovation is a measure of a country’s potential to generate new products and to adopt or imitate existing products. In order to quantify the potential for new product innovation, an institutional variable related to technology and innovation transfer seems to be relevant. Technology Transfer is a complex measure of whether a business environment allows the application of innovations for developing new products. (Autio, 2015)

Product Innovation index for Oman increased from 0.45 in 2012 to reach its maximum (0.63) in 2014, then it decreased to reach 0.35 in 2017.
Table (8) shows that the FDI and technology transfer index for Oman dropped from 4.9 in 2011 to 4.1 in 2015. Moreover, the rank of Oman for this index dropped from 45 to 85 for the same years.

Oman got the fourth rank in the Product Innovation index between the GCC countries after UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain. Oman is followed by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in that index.

Figure (22)


4.3.2. Pillar 11: Process Innovation
Applying and/or creating new technology is an important feature of businesses with high-growth potential. Many businesses in developing countries may apply the latest technology through buying or copying it. The process innovation index is a combination of research and development (R&D), the quality of scientific institutions in a country (Scientific Institutions) and the availability of scientists and engineers (Availability of Scientist). (Audretsch. et al., 2014)
Process Innovation index increased from 0.01 in 2013 to 0.31 in 2014. Then it fluctuated between 0.20 and 0.24 through 2015 – 2017.

Table (14) Gross Domestic Expenditure on Research and Development in Oman (2011 – 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Oman of GDP</th>
<th>Arab States of GDP</th>
<th>World of GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>0.171</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>0.136</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (14) shows that the percentage of Gross Domestic Expenditure on Research and Development in Oman is about 10% of the average percentage for the world and lower the average percentage for the Arab states.

Oman got the fourth rank in the Process Innovation index between the GCC countries after UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait. Oman is followed by Saudi Arabia and Bahrain in that index.
4.3.3. Pillar 12: High Growth

High Growth is a combined measure of the percentage of high-growth businesses that intend to employ at least 10 people and plan to grow more than 50 percent in five years (Gazelle variable) with business strategy sophistication (Business Strategy variable) and venture capital financing possibility (Venture Capital). It might be argued that a shortcoming of the Gazelle variable is that growth is not an actual but an expected rate. Business Strategy refers to “the ability of companies to pursue distinctive strategies, which involves differentiated positioning and innovative means of production and service delivery.” High Growth combines high growth potential with a sophisticated strategy and growth specific venture capital finance. (Wright & Stigliani, 2013)


High Growth index for Oman increased from 0.70 in 2012 to reach its maximum in 2014, then it fluctuated till reach 0.68 in 2017.

Oman got the fourth rank in the growth index between the GCC countries after Qatar, Bahrain and UAE. Oman is followed by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in that index.

Figure (26)

4.3.4. Pillar 13: Internationalization

The internationalization pillar is designed to capture the degree to which a country’s entrepreneurs are internationalized, as measured by the exporting potential of businesses, controlling for the extent to which the country is able to produce complex products.

Internationalization index for Oman increased from 0.44 in 2012 to reach its maximum (0.58) in 2015, then it decreased to reach 0.42 in 2017.
Oman is the 57th largest export economy in the world and the 68th most complex economy according to the Economic Complexity Index (ECI). In 2014, Oman exported $49.9B and imported $31.1B, resulting in a positive trade balance of $18.8B. In 2014 the GDP of Oman was $81.8B and its GDP per capita was $38.6k.

The top exports of Oman are Crude Petroleum ($31.3B), Petroleum Gas ($5.77B), Refined Petroleum ($2.72B), Cyclic Hydrocarbons ($1.21B) and Nitrogenous Fertilizers ($745M. Oman top imports are Cars ($4.34B), Refined Petroleum ($1.63B), Delivery Trucks ($950M), Iron Ore ($932M) and Vehicle Parts ($555M).

The top export destinations of Oman are China ($23.2B), South Korea ($4.51B), Other Asia ($3.81B), Japan ($3.71B) and the United Arab Emirates ($2.02B). The top import origins are the United Arab Emirates ($9.4B), Japan ($3.59B), China ($1.62B), the United States ($1.49B) and India ($1.36B). (Observatory of Economic Complexity)

Oman got the fifth rank in the internationalization index between the GCC countries after UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait. Oman is followed by Bahrain in that index.

Figure (28)

![Internationalization index for GCC (2017)](image)


4.3.5. Pillar 14: Risk Capital
The availability of risk finance, particularly equity rather than debt, is an essential precondition for fulfilling entrepreneurial aspirations that are beyond an individual entrepreneur’s personal financial resources. This index is a combine of two sub-indices: informal investment and the institutional depth of capital market (DCM).
Risk capital index for Oman increased from 0.69 in 2012 to reach 0.93 in 2017.

Oman got the fourth rank in the risk capital index between the GCC countries after UAE, Qatar, Bahrain. Oman is followed by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in that index.

5. DISCUSSION

The Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem pillars are analysed using Global Entrepreneurship index (GEI) to explore the strengths and weaknesses pillars in the system. GEI for Oman from 0.37 in 2012 to be 0.44 in 2017 which reflect improvement in Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem as a whole. This improvement is generated from the improvement in many pillars (Sub-systems) in Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem, although that some pillars worsened.
Opportunity Perception: Opportunity Perception is one of strengths pillars in Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem. This strengthen is resulted from the high level of: Opportunity recognition and market size, freedom, and implementing more regulations and laws which increase the property rights in Oman.

Start-up: Start-up pillar in Oman is one of weaknesses pillars. This is resulted from the low position of Oman in the international rank for Tertiary education enrollment rate, Quality of the education system, and Quality of math and science education.

The main reason of the low level of start-up pillar is that the efforts which are taken to push this pillar up are recently taken. The entrepreneurship course in the universities and colleges will be applied by (2017-2018) academic year and the Bachelor degree in entrepreneurship is only one degree for the whole Sultanate and newly offered. Furthermore, the institutions which are responsible for stimulating entrepreneurs to start their own businesses have started few years ago (since 2013), so their influence in the entrepreneurship ecosystem will be seen by time.

Risk Acceptance: Risk acceptance is one of strengths pillars in Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem. Moreover, the value of GEI Risk acceptance index growth rate was 14% in average through 2012 to 2017. This reflects a lower level of business constraints in Oman, as there are no capital or exchange controls which prevent an entity from converting local currency into foreign currency and/or transferring funds to creditors located outside, and there are no cases of force majeure. Moreover, the risk classification for Oman is at a lower level.

Networking: Although that networking indicator in Oman dropped from 2015 to 2017. This reduction is resulted from data unavailability about the quality of transport infrastructure.

By analysing the individual data of urbanization in Oman, the networking level is high and stable which reflects that Omani governances and willayate become larger as more people begin living and working in central area.

Although that the data about the quality of transport infrastructure is not available. The Omani networking will singinfanctly improve as a result of establishing new airports and new Omani economy airlines (Al Salam airlines) as well.

Cultural Support is related mainly to the society view to entrepreneurs. The level of this pillar is in the middle level, it can be improved via dissemination of entrepreneurship for the population through the educational institutions and the media.

Opportunity Start-up in Oman is one of the strengths pillars. This is resulted from high level of governance in Oman. All the sub-indices of governance for Oman are strong for 2015. The strongest sub-index Political Stability, the second strongest one is Regulatory Quality, the third sub-
index is Rule of Law, the fourth sub-index is Control of Corruption, and the fifth sub-index is Government Effectiveness.

The high level of these sub-indicators reflects a higher level of opportunity which stimulates for population to start-up their own business.

**Technology Absorption**
Technology absorption pillar is one of weaknesses pillars in Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem. This low level of technology absorption is generated from the low level of technology readiness (Availability of latest technologies, Firm-level technology absorption, and FDI and technology transfer).

**Human Capital**
Human Capital pillar is one of strengths pillars for Oman. This reflects High level education, mostly freedom of the labour market from the regulatory perspective the legal and regulatory framework of a the labor market, including regulations concerning minimum wages, laws inhibiting layoffs, severance requirements, and measurable regulatory restraints on hiring and hours worked, and a stability in the level of Omani investment in training and employee development.

**Competition**
Competition pillar is one of weaknesses of Oman entrepreneurship ecosystem. The main reason of this is mainly that the market is controlled by a low number of business groups and in turn, low level of market dominance index for Oman.

**Product Innovation**
Product Innovation pillar is one of weaknesses pillars of Oman entrepreneurship ecosystem. This reflects a lower potential of Oman to generate new products and to adopt or imitate existing products. The main reason of this is the lower level of technology transfer to Oman.

**Process Innovation**
Process Innovation pillar is one of weaknesses pillars of Oman entrepreneurship ecosystem. This is resulted from lower expenditure on R&D and lower availability of scientists and engineers.

**High Growth**
High Growth is one of strengths pillars in Oman. This reflects the high ability of Omani companies to pursue distinctive strategies, which involves differentiated positioning and innovative means of production and service delivery.

**Internationalization**
Internationalization is one of strengths pillars in Oman. This reflects that exporting potential for Omani businesses is high.

**Risk Capital**
Risk capital is one of strengths pillars in Oman. The capital risk index for Oman increased strongly between 2012 and 2017. This reflects an increase
in: i) percentage of informal investors in the population age 18-64, ii) the size and liquidity of the stock market, and iii) the level of debt and credit market activity.

6. CONCLUSION
The purpose of this paper was to analyse pillars of Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem to identify the areas of strengths and weaknesses which address the following research question “What are the strengths and weaknesses pillars in Omani entrepreneurship ecosystems?

Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem has strengths in eight pillars: Opportunity Perception, Risk Acceptance, Networking, Opportunity Start-up, Human Capital, High Growth, Internationalization, and Risk Capital. Culture Support is a medium level pillar in Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem. There are 5 pillars represent weaknesses in Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem, which are: Startup Skills, Technology Absorption, Competition, Product Innovation, and Process Innovation. Table no. (15) Shows the level of strengths for each pillar in Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Omani entrepreneurship has weaknesses in three areas: The first area is related to the entrepreneurs’ start-up, the second area is related to the technological aspects even related to technology absorption or the innovation, the third area is the competition which Omani entrepreneurs may face in the markets.

Table (15) the level of strengths level for each pillar in Omani entrepreneurship ecosystem

- Global Entrepreneurship Index
- Attitudes Sub-Index
- Abilities Sub-Index
- Aspiration Sub-Index
- Opportunity perception
- Start-up Skills
- Risk Acceptance
- Networking
- Cultural Support
- Opportunity Start-up
- Technology Absorption
- Human Capital
- Competition
- Product Innovation
- Process Innovation
- High Growth
- Internationalization
- Risk Capital

- Strong Pillar
- Medium Pillar
- Weak Pillar

Although that Oman started to pay the attention to promote entrepreneurship in only few years, a good effort has been done in this regard. Oman has
reached the third rank among all GCC countries in the GEI index (2017). It's expected more improvement in majority of Omani ecosystem pillars in coming years, as an outcome of the current efforts by different parties related to the entrepreneurship in Oman.

Table no. (16) Shows that Oman got the first in “risk acceptance” pillar and the third in three pillars which are “Cultural Support”, “Opportunity Start-up” and “Technology Absorption”. Oman got the fourth rank in eight GEI pillars, they are: Opportunity perception; Start-up Skills; Human Capital; Competition; Product Innovation; Process Innovation; High Growth; and Risk Capital. Oman got the fifth rank in the “Internationalization” pillar and got the sixth rank in the “Networking” pillar.

Table no. 16: Global Entrepreneurship Index 2017 - The rank of Oman against other GCC countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-indices</th>
<th>Attitudes Sub-Index</th>
<th>Abilities Sub-Index</th>
<th>Aspiration Sub-Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The rank of Oman</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RECOMMENDATIONS Motivate higher education institutions to offer more programmes in entrepreneurship specialization.

- Disseminate the awareness for entrepreneurship for the Oman population through the media institutions.
- Improve the level of technology readiness for Oman ventures.
- Decrease the high market dominance in Oman.
- Improve the technology transfer process to Omani firms.
- Increase the expenditure on R&D in Oman and increase the availability of scientists and engineers.
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About the authors

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Summary:
This chapter commences with an explanation on the concept of Entrepreneurship and provides some selected definitions from different experts in the field. It explores various types of entrepreneurship. It highlights some important characteristics of an Entrepreneur and briefly touches upon the achievements of few successful Omani Entrepreneurs. It examines different dimensions of entrepreneurship and concludes by observing the latest trends in Entrepreneurship.

Aims & Objectives:
• To define entrepreneurship
• To describe different types of entrepreneurship
• To enlist the key characteristics of an entrepreneur
• To identify successful entrepreneurs and their achievements in Oman
• To explore different dimensions of entrepreneurship
• To examine the emerging trends in entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship revolves around innovation, making the right decision, taking that crucial step forward, giving the ideas an actual shape, making things happen and even foreseeing the future in totality. It is a capability, a talent combined with discipline and dynamism. It is a well calculated and well-handled risk. It is a process that includes purposeful and focused thinking, a methodical analysis of opportunities. It is the extraordinary and powerful ability to create something valuable from absolutely nothing - just an idea that unfolds into a business. Entrepreneurship is a career option which directs a person to turn dreams into reality. One makes personal choices to build life on one's own terms. It is only an eventful way forward with no bosses and no fixed schedules. Entrepreneurship is both the study of creating new businesses and also the process involved in starting a new business. Most academicians simply consider entrepreneurship as skillful conversion of an idea into a business. The essence of entrepreneurship is identifying opportunities and transforming them into viable businesses. It thus involves creation of new businesses based on innovative ideas.

Entrepreneurship has been defined by experts in different ways:
According to A. H. Cole (1965), "Entrepreneurship is the purposeful activity of an individual or a group of associated individuals, undertaken to initiate,
maintain or organize a profit-oriented business unit for the production or
distribution of economic goods and services”.

Joseph Schumpeter explains (2017), “Entrepreneurship is essentially a
creative activity or it is an innovation function. The process of innovation
may be in the form of  a) introduction of new product b) use of new
methods of production opening of new market c) opening of a new market
d) the conquest of new source of supplying raw material e) a new form of
organization”

“Entrepreneurship (on –trah-prih-NER-ship), the process of being an
entrepreneur, is more than just learning how to run a business. It can
affect economy, your community and ultimately the world in which we
live”, says Steve Mariotti (2010).

Stevenson and Jarillo (1990) the two highly regarded academicians
define Entrepreneurship as , “the process of creating something different
with value by devoting the necessary time and effort; assuming the
accompanying financial, psychological, and social risks; and receiving the
resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction”.

Wiklund (1999), describes Entrepreneurship as, “the process by
which individuals—either on their own or inside organizations—pursue
opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control”.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (“GEM”), which conducts wide ranging
research programs and continually measures entrepreneurial activity at
national levels, broadly states that entrepreneurship includes “any attempt
at new business or new venture creation, such as self-employment, a new
business organization, or the expansion of an existing business, by an
individual, teams of individuals, or established businesses”. (Sustainable
Entrepreneurship Project, 2018)

J.G. Burch, has referred to entrepreneurship as the "initiation of change”
and the "process of giving birth to a new business.” (Sustainable
Entrepreneurship Project, 2018)

Hessels (2008) commented, “Entrepreneurship involves the creation of
something new”.

Gartner (1990), suggested that the most fruitful path for studying
entrepreneurship was to view it as a process. Shane and Venkataraman
(2000) defined entrepreneurship as “the process by which, opportunities to
create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated and exploited,
that includes a series of behaviors and activities intended to create
organizations.”

Peter Drucker (1985), has defined Entrepreneurship as ‘a systematic
innovation, which consists in the purposeful and organized search for
changes, and it is the systematic analysis of the opportunities, such
changes might offer for economic and social innovation.

According to B. R. Barringer (2010), the word entrepreneur derives from the French words "entre", meaning "between," and "prendre", meaning "to take". The word was originally used to describe people who “take on the risk” between buyers and sellers or who “undertake” a task such as starting a new venture. An inventor creates something new. An Entrepreneur assembles and integrates all the resources needed—the money, the people, the business model, the strategy, and the risk-bearing ability—to transform the invention into a viable business.

The concept of entrepreneurship has been noted as a factor in microeconomics since the 17th century, with the work (Essai sur la nature du commerce en général” first published in 1755) of Cantillon (1992) who anticipated the belief that the entrepreneur brought equilibrium to a market by correctly predicting consumer preferences. From this concept, the meaning of entrepreneurship has evolved through the development of business and economics in the recent years and decades. Entrepreneurship is both the study of how new businesses are created as well as the actual process of starting a new business – the term is used interchangeably.

**Types of Entrepreneurship**

As a matter of fact entrepreneurship can be categorized into various types based on type of the organization, the purpose of establishing the venture, the entrepreneurial activities involved and the goals for growth and development of the new venture.

**Small and Medium Enterprises**

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has approved criteria to define small and medium enterprises. The criteria for small enterprises specifies having 5-9 employees and an annual sales of RO 25,000 – 250,000 and the criteria for medium enterprises specifies having 10-99 employees with annual sales of RO250,000 – 1.5mn. (Khan, 2012).

The small enterprises can be called as main street enterprises which make up a large part of the economy. They serve various segments of the society and give a glimpse of the local culture. Such as enterprises ranging from the neighborhood grocery store, coffee shop or tea stall, small restaurants, beauticians, small travel agency, small perfume shop to a photocopy or an ethnic clothing store. These business are usually funded by family and friends or small business loans. Medium enterprises too are significant in creating a wealthy economy. Some of the examples of medium enterprises are a logistics company, an electronic and home appliances store, and facilities for household maintenance. They have a potential of being scalable and are successful in creating more employment opportunities in the economy (Casnocha, 2011).
Big Enterprises and Corporate Entrepreneurship

This indicates entrepreneurship of large organizations which use a very systematic way of exploiting innovation. Large firms need to continuously and strategically use innovation to sustain the business. This is done by offering new products by creatively adding features and benefits to a great extent. New technologies are applied to core products and new markets are identified. Products are sold in new markets in order to expand the business and be among the top notch entrepreneurial firms. Corporate entrepreneurship is also concerned with **intrapreneurship** wherein employees in an organization act in an entrepreneurial way i.e. an employee is encouraged to take a new initiative within the existing corporate structure that adds value to the business. In sum corporate entrepreneurship can be described as entrepreneurial transformation through continuous innovation and strategic renewal (Burns, 2013).

Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship involves creating a venture for a social purpose. It is a form of altruistic entrepreneurship established for the benefit the society. It is driven by a social mission and usually endeavors to serve certain sections of society that need to be consciously given special privilege. It is basically different in terms of its governance i.e. there are no shareholders, purpose being social it has no profit motive and funds are generated based on the impact of the social cause. Badriya Al Siyabi, an Omani social worker who is committed to the cause of women empowerment and SME development, has inspired the women from the village of Sidab, near Muscat. The Sidab Women’s Sewing Group (SWSG) is an example of the most successful cottage industry in Oman. They use the traditional ‘wizar’ art to create handmade shopping bags, pouches for mobile phones, cushion covers etc. This non-profit organization has facilitated the women to become enterprising and generate money to supplement their household income (Women of Sidab, 2018).

Green Entrepreneurship

Green entrepreneurship is an entrepreneurial activity positively addressing an environmental need. It intentionally endeavors to contribute to a sustainable future with environmental values. Simply speaking this type of entrepreneurship follows the recycle and reuse principle. In more advanced instances it includes usage of improvised techniques that are instrumental in reducing the emissions of harmful gases. Hence it is based on an environmentally friendly approach that uses renewable energy which is cleaner.

Digital Entrepreneurship

Digital entrepreneurship is a combination of conventional entrepreneurship focusing on new technologies using social media platforms, mobile apps and...
other cyber solutions. They are typically e-businesses available to customers round the clock. They are less expensive to establish since they do not necessarily need physical space as these businesses work on internet of things. They have a high potential for scaling up since they reach a large number of customers online. Digital entrepreneurship is based on strategic innovation, course of decision making of customers, automation methods, highly organized procedures, technology and data analytics. Examples of such businesses are Amazon, eBay, Aliexpress, Namshi, and Bayan Customs. In Oman digital businesses are becoming the trend, the budding entrepreneurs are excited to sell their products and services using social media channels such as Instagram and Facebook.

Figure 1. Types of Entrepreneurship

Thus entrepreneurs are people who have ideas and who make efforts to create a product or service that people will buy, by building a network to support those sales. Entrepreneurs are a unique breed of individuals. A typical business executive develops a careful plan and conducts market research before launching a new initiative, an entrepreneur is more likely to act first and plan later. Where a typical business founder has a clearly defined goal, the entrepreneur looks at the available means and resources, and then fiddles with them until a product developed. These differences spring from the characteristics and thinking patterns of the entrepreneurial mindset. Entrepreneurs usually operate on a restricted budget, and many of them start by financing their operations with their own money or imploring funds from family and friends -- a scenario that is commonly called bootstrapping. They are also very flexible and agile, that they can adjust their objectives according to the markets and keep adapting as their business evolves. An Entrepreneur has typical characteristics.
Characteristics of an Entrepreneur

Here are a set of attributes that describe successful entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs essentially demonstrate the following key skills and competencies which allow them to profitably lead new ventures.

Self-Motivated

Entrepreneurs have a strong faith in themselves, they have an inner drive to achieve their dreams. They push themselves forward to take the necessary actions to turn their ideas into business opportunities. They are not put off by failures, they defy all odds and come up with solutions to create ventures that are beneficial to society. They are dedicated to making their venture rewarding. Thus entrepreneurs can be described as having the virtue of perseverance. It is this virtue that supports them in their efforts to make accomplishments in business. Steve Jobs always mentioned that pure perseverance is the key to a successful business. He said that this is what separates successful entrepreneurs from non – successful ones (Western, n.d.). Successful entrepreneurs firmly stay with their idea and positively pursue it to set it right and convert it into an achievement. Ahmed Hassan Juma Backer, now the vice chairman of Hasan Juma Backer Trading and Contracting Company started his entrepreneurial journey at the age of 20 (Kamanpoori, 2004). He had very clear goals and was motivated to take his family business far ahead and make a mark in the civil and electro-mechanical construction field. Mahmood Al Lawati, co-founder of Blue Synergy is also example of a young self-motivated entrepreneur with a vision to make branding effortless (LinkedIn, Profile page, 2018).

Passionate

Passion is the energy that fuels the excitement and the enthusiasm to turn an idea into a viable entrepreneurial opportunity. Entrepreneurs are always in love with their ideas. They are confident and proactive and so take all the required steps to make their new ventures work effectively. They take initiatives to pursue their passion and continue following their passion till they are able to give more meaningful solutions to make peoples life easy. Besides their passion usually lies in areas of their interests and knowledge. Virgin founder, Richard Branson notes that being passionate about the business idea provides the entrepreneurs with a direction for launching their business. He further mentions that when one believes in something then this will spark other people’s interest and motivate them to help
the entrepreneur to achieve their goals (Clarkson, 2015). In essence the entrepreneur’s passion will inspire others to support the business positively. Oman’s charismatic young man Ahmed Al Balushi has earned fame in the fashion world. He passionately followed his interest in designing t-shirts and created his brand ‘Kash5aful’ which has today made an impression on the fashionista’s of Oman and the Arab world as well as the fashion elites of Europe and London (Chakraborty, 2018).

Risk Taker
Entrepreneurship is synonymous with risk taking. Entrepreneurs essentially exhibit risk taking behavior, they put their time, career and money at stake. They are ready to face uncertainty till they reach their destination of success. Successful entrepreneurs take careful and calculated risks. They wisely make use of opportunities and resources to maximize the benefits for new ventures. They courageously face failures and look positively at any stumbling blocks and take them as challenges for improvement and better solutions in business. In other words they endure the setbacks they encounter as a result of their decisions. This further reflects entrepreneurs’ tenacity despite failures. Jokha Al Hussaini, is an example of a risk taker - she is Oman’s female civil engineer, who established Shumookh Engineering Consultancy in Muscat in 2011. Her biggest challenge was earning the trust of both public and private sector clients amidst big players. Today the entrepreneur is successful in providing engineering consultancy in the areas of legal advice, quantity surveying, architectural and structural design, land surveying, and project management (Pupic, 2016).

Adaptable & Flexible
One of the significant characteristics of entrepreneurs is that they are adaptable and flexible, they have an open mind. They are ready to take feedback and make necessary changes for success in their ventures. They know how to adapt their ways of delivering their products and services according to the market demands and trends. They are willing to change their approaches, to ease the operations of the business and to benefit the society. Entrepreneurs also constantly update their knowledge and skills and bring in the required modifications to optimise and customise their products and services for their customers. This characteristic of entrepreneurs is the key to sustainability of the business.

Hardworking & Dedicated
The strength of entrepreneurs lies in their
hard work and dedication to their venture creation. They are persistent with their efforts to make their venture a success. Defeats which are an inevitable part of the entrepreneurial process are dealt with determination. They keep trying again and again till they get the desired results. Namely they do whatever it takes to make things happen and are able to carve a niche for themselves in the market. They are very strong willed and follow their goals to unveil new and sustainable ventures in the society. They regularly recharge themselves to add value to their business offerings.

Has Planning & Negotiation Skills

Entrepreneurs use their resources with utmost planning. Time, money, and other relevant resources are used purposefully. They strategise and invest their resources meaningfully to facilitate the growth and development of new ventures. Besides they meticulously manage their networks and personal relationships to lead their businesses efficiently. Simply speaking they are disciplined in sticking to their targets and able to negotiate with significant others to collaborate and cooperate in order to benefit the new venture. The story of Al Jabri sisters of Meshan dates is very inspiring, as they wisely planned their entrepreneurial venture. They select the dates and flavors of their gourmet collection very carefully. Shatha Al Jabri the co-founder of this enterprise takes care of the sales and marketing and continuously develops marketing campaigns to make their brand of date sweets exquisite and global (Zuber Sec, 2015).

Innovative & Creative

Innovation and creativity are vital elements of entrepreneurship, so quintessentially entrepreneurs are innovators. They come up with novel and useful ideas that are transformed into successful ventures; namely they are people who think outside the box and believe in doing things differently. They are keen observers who are able to see the changing trends and identify the gaps in the market in order to bring out unique solutions that give new experiences to clients. They believe in being leaders...
to make a noteworthy difference to society. Thus innovation and creativity are part and parcel of entrepreneurship and responsible for longevity of the business. Saba Al Busaidi, a social media strategist and founder of 'Viral', says that “Social media is not about the exploitation of technology but the provision of service to the community”. She started her venture with social media when social media was not known to many. 'Viral' believes in using social media as a platform to connect brands with their customer audiences (Viral, 2018).

**Technology Savvy**

Entrepreneurs believe in technology. They are ready to learn and incorporate the latest technology into their businesses so that they are on par with the current business environment. They make themselves tech savvy in order to broaden their scope for networking and reaching out to significant others in the entrepreneurial world. They essentially keep up to the times and ensure that they are able to maximize their productivity with the use of technology. For instance they want to stay connected with customers and get news about competitors around the world. The want to create platforms to expand the scope of their ventures. Besides they want to be able to coordinate with their associates anytime and from any part of the globe. In short they do not want to miss any opportunity that would be beneficial for their venture creation.

**Persuasive**

Successful entrepreneurs are essentially persuasive. They are able to convince the investors that they have a great business idea, win over partners that their approach is correct. Besides they are able to influence their potential customers that their new products and services are improved solutions. They are competent in communicating with people so that people trust their products and services and are ready to invest in them.

**Visionary**

Entrepreneurs have a clear vision about how their business idea is going to be converted into a gainful venture. They have the ability to foresee the market demand and understand their capabilities and resources in bringing about the desired entrepreneurial outcomes. It is the entrepreneur’s vision that guides them to explore opportunities, keep motivating themselves to look into the future and optimally use resources to succeed. The vision of the entrepreneur also helps in attracting talented people, nurturing them,
and ultimately empowering them to implement their vision in their own areas of expertise. Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk are some examples of visionary entrepreneurs. In Oman, the owner and founder of Saud Bahwan Group, Sheikh Saud Salim Bahwan is one example of a visionary entrepreneur who started and made efforts for his business to grow to amazing levels (Kamanpoori, 2004). This characteristic of entrepreneurs indeed affirms that vision is the lighthouse of an entrepreneurial endeavor.

**Finance Knowhow**

Eventually the entrepreneur aims at earning profits. Successful entrepreneurs share the money management knowledge. They are capable of assessing their financial strength and viability. In other words they know how to raise funds and handle the finances for running the business. Though they may hire experts to analyze the financial status for their new venture, they have a good understanding of handling cash flows. They are able to satisfactorily estimate the capital required, the cost and the expenses and how and when they can maximize the returns. In a nutshell they have the ability to plan for the present and the future financial requirements of the business.

**Team Player**

A well-known entrepreneur Guy Kawasaki (Jones, 2016) says that “Success is a team process”. Entrepreneurs value team work and make sure that they have a smart team to run their new venture. Successful entrepreneurs conduct themselves as exemplary team players and are capable of coordinating well with a team to make a meaningful contribution to the new venture. In essence exemplary team players effectively communicate with their team and are open to honest and respectful dialogue. They associate with people who can provide the right kind of support to the venture with their own fields of expertise. They believe in constructive feedback to have coherence in the team and come up with winning decisions.

Howard Stevenson refers to Entrepreneurship that it is neither a set of personality traits nor an economic function but it is a “cohesive pattern of managerial behavior that can be measured”. (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990). This description can be measured by examining the following dimensions of entrepreneurship.

**Dimensions of Entrepreneurship:**

**Innovation:** Entrepreneurs are innovators. Entrepreneurship provides many financial benefits and makes the economy strong, this gives importance to innovation. It is not only the scientist who invents and comes up with novelties. Innovation in entrepreneurship is a key factor that adds longevity to a business. Entrepreneurs must grab the opportunity
to innovate only then they can provide unique solutions to the problems of the people. These solutions keep on evolving and continue to provide better and better quality. Entrepreneurs must keep themselves well-informed and be up-to-date with the latest trends and demands.

At the framework of this dimension, the emphasis is on innovation which comes from technology development. Innovation is important not just in entrepreneurship but in our lives as well. We are innovators because we are adapting well to our needs and finding unique solutions to all the problems we face in our life. Entrepreneurs are the same. The innovation in entrepreneurship helps the country by changing with the modern times and creating new products and services from the ones that are already existing. Depending on the viewpoint, innovation can be looked at, as either the achievement of strong performance through entrepreneurial behavior, or as the very foundation on which the entrepreneurial behavior grows.

**Uncertainty and Risk Taking:** To get high financial returns, new ventures usually take risks such as high levels of liability, promising large amounts of resources, introducing new products into unfamiliar markets, and investing in unexplored technologies. Most of these approaches to internal development are very risky. Whether they have aggressive, or creative strategies, firms on the path of corporate entrepreneurship must act without knowing how their actions will turn out. Before implementing their strategies, entrepreneurs must know their organization’s capacity of risk taking. Entrepreneurship and risk-taking are the two sides of the same coin, they go hand in hand. To start and develop their own business, entrepreneurs put their career, personal finances and even their mental peace and comfort at stake.

An old saying conveys it better, “A good lawyer runs away from risk, while a good businessman runs towards the risk”. Entrepreneurs feel if there is no risk there is no reward. In reality, all risks are not the same. Some risks can be calculated and taken to improve quality or to provide a competitive edge, while others are taken to skip quality checks and to save money, which can result into failure.

**Reward Criteria:** Entrepreneurial ventures are more clearly focused on the creation and procuring of value. In start-up conditions, the financiers of the organizations, as well as the founders who have invested in cash, want the cash out. In this value-driven philosophy as an outcome, entrepreneurial ventures tend to fix compensation based on performance, whereas performance is very closely related to value creation. Most entrepreneurial ventures are comfortable in rewarding teams whereas more administratively managed companies are often less focused on optimizing and providing value. Their decision making mostly is directed by the desire to protect their own positions and security. Reward often depends on individual responsibility in maximum utilization of resources and based on performance related to immediate profit goals. In such organizations reward is usually
related to promotion for increasing the responsibility levels. The pressures that push companies to the promoter end of the scale include: specific expectations. More and more, people expect to be rewarded in proportion to their contribution rather than purely as a function of their performance relative to a random peer group. In addition, investors seemingly have great desire for personal wealth. They invest in cash and expect cash back, and the sooner it is returned the better it is.

**Proactivity:** Individuals who are proactive have a quality of taking deliberate action, this helps them to create their own environment, prospect and fortune. They don't depend on others to take decisions for them or decide their future – they design their own way. In an entrepreneurial sense, this means that if an entrepreneur has a proactive personality he will definitely take the responsibility of the business in his own hands. Other issues like economy and competition, etc. influence it, but such an entrepreneur is responsible for the success of his venture. A proactive mindset is an added advantage for an entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurial leadership is not possible without proactivity. To enhance their performance the organizations must be more entrepreneurial. For their long-term survival in the market, it is important to increase their capacity for adaptation. The individuals that are proactive are usually more successful in their entrepreneurial leadership and they contribute positively and effectively to the organization. In order to bring more meaningful change a proactive personality has a tendency to show initiative and take action in one’s environment. Entrepreneurial leadership requires proactive personalities, only then they fit well in the present day organizations.

**Commitment to Opportunity:** It is very evident from this dimension that for an entrepreneur, just to be creative or innovative is not sufficient he must also be committed to grab the opportunity. An entrepreneurial opportunity is successful only when it is combined with commitment. Entrepreneurs are often called as gamblers because of their willingness to get in and out of ventures quickly. An entrepreneur must be willing to act as fast as possible, in a very short time-frame, only then he can chase an opportunity. Commitment takes time but, once made, it is there for long duration. Risk taking as a simple act straightaway does not lead to success. One must have complete knowledge of the territory on which they operate. Commitment leads to expertise in their chosen field and they are able to recognize arrangements and identify the missing elements, fix them and excel in their business. This recognition at early stages enables them to get ahead of their competitors.

**Commitment of Resources:** The entrepreneur has to think about the resources that have to be utilized to pursue the activities under a given opportunity. There is a relentless struggle between the amount of resources dedicated and the potential return. The entrepreneur attempts to optimize value creation with minimum use of resources, and accepts more risk in
the process. Another scenario is when an entrepreneur takes the challenge by careful analysis and extensive commitment of resources and makes a decision and acts accordingly. To do a little more with a little less is the requirement of Entrepreneurial management.

Sometimes resource providers get difficult and show hesitation in committing to an unproven concept. An entrepreneur must decide the manner in which the potential providers can be approached. The entrepreneur’s own credibility decides the optimal sequence. In a situation, when a resource provider does not want to be the first one to commit, an entrepreneur may shuttle between resource providers for a long time. In such conditions, an opportunity may diminish even before starting the venture. The best way to avoid this is to keep the fixed costs to a minimum and increase resource specialization. For example, an organization may need a specialized resource, such as a hi-tech engineer or state-of-the-art circuit test equipment, but only for a short time. By using rather than owning, in other words by out sourcing, a company can reduce the risk and the fixed costs. It develops flexibility and minimizes the cost of the option to quit.

**Strategic Orientation:** Most of the enterprises have a strategic plan, but very few have a well-articulated, clear strategic direction. In simple words, a strategic direction states the long-term pathway that an organization intends to follow. Being able to ‘see the bigger picture’ is an important leadership skill. Thinking beyond the here-and-now is not easy. The pull of daily demands makes it hard for entrepreneurs to shift their focus and create time for reflection or to connect with different perspectives. Sometimes entrepreneurs feel the lure of closing issues, getting things done and closing issues. It gives them a feeling of being productive and being in ‘control’. The danger of not having a strategic orientation is that it stops an entrepreneur from being alert to changes and emerging threats ahead of time. This makes them miss out on opportunities because they see them too late. This can have disastrous consequences for the businesses. Thus, strategic orientation provides the factors that help in formulation of a strategy in the areas given below:

- Employing people, acquiring tools, technology and financial resources.
- Developing a robust performance criteria that emphasizes on pursuing opportunities.
- Planning of systems and phases.

**Management Structure:** The management structure of the entrepreneurially managed firm has multiple and informal networks whereas the management structure of a ‘traditionally’ managed firm is more formal with a complex hierarchy. As all the resources used by the organization are not owned by the promoter, therefore, they cannot be managed within a formal organization. That is the reason there is a necessity for
the nontraditional means of an organization. The promoter’s management structure is intended to manage mainly non-controlled resources as well as to be flexible and to create a setting where employees are encouraged to form and pursue opportunity. Alternatively, the trustee’s management structure is more suitable for the internal efficiencies of allocating own resources. This is the reason there are clear roles and responsibilities, it indicates highly routinized work, and there is a level of middle management to manage the organization’s resource.

New Business Enterprise: Creation of a new enterprise may arise in various forms such as creation of new markets and redefining and creating new services. Global competition, which has increasingly become aggressive, is seen as an important mean for companies to survive and achieve high success. Therefore, being a forerunner in terms of identifying and pursuing new opportunities and joining developing markets is closely related to company-level entrepreneurial activities. Thus, this situation, which reveals an aspect of entrepreneurship, is expressed by the concept of proactivity, which is largely a dimension of entrepreneurship.

Self/Strategic Renewal: The concept of “strategic renewal” is not the same as the concept of “change”. The concept of strategic renewal indicates a “journey” that is constant. The strategic renewal is the act of enthusiastically adjusting business models and strategies to suit the profound changes at work in the external environment. Most importantly, this requires novelty. It is about breaking the traditional business model and looking for creative ways to reconstruct it to generate significant new value for the customers and the company. This becomes all the more crucial in ever-changing times of present age where customer requirements and market situations are changing very swiftly. Every company must organize a thoughtful, high-level strategy to start reconsidering their business from the customer backward. According to Gibson (2013), IBM expressed this very well in a thought-provoking advertising slogan they used a few years ago: “Stop selling what you have. Start selling what they need”. It is a worst thing to continue to sell the same old product or service to the same old customers in the same old fashion and at the same old price. In its place, the business organizations need to formulate strategies that suit the changing customer priorities, and quickly readjust their business model to address their new needs. Strategic renewal is creative reconstruction.

Entrepreneurship comes into life within the dimensions mentioned above and can be considered as a one of the most important fundamentals of economy.

The current strategy and public argument on the inclusive topic of ‘entrepreneurship’ gives very little attention to more precise or developing forms of entrepreneurship. These forms of entrepreneurship have a significant influence on business dynamics and conditions of employment. Entrepreneurship is changing at a very fast rate, although many of these changes are positive. As a result, there is a need for more diverse
understanding of these trends.

**Emerging Trends in Entrepreneurship:** There are abundant reasons that are encouraging the startup culture for the present generation. Current generation has more innovative ideas, far superior minds but they cannot work under the conservative work environment, it is this aspect that has given way to the new trends in entrepreneurship.

**Solopreneurs on the Rise:** There is an upsurge in the number of solopreneurs. There is a slight difference between an entrepreneur and a solopreneur. While entrepreneurs focus on building a team, solopreneurs pitch-in doing majority of the work all by themselves. They can work hard as well as smart at the same time. A solopreneur is a task oriented person by his very nature. If a task has to be done, his first thought will be to pull up his sleeves and take a plunge into the task. For this reason, a totally new generation of self-employed workers and sole proprietors has arisen, with professional understanding to run the business, with no intention of consulting another person. Solopreneurs are a powerful and growing force in today’s entrepreneurial landscape. Their risks are high and the burdens are great; yet, their business experience is transformative. They are the future of the fast-growing “Gig Economy” and they are the solid and dependable bedrock of the entrepreneurial landslide that is carving its path through global economy.

**Greater Reliance on a Freelance Workforce:** There is a trend to hire workforce on a short term basis. There are many reasons why there is rise in short-term jobs. This is a digital era, the workforce is ever more mobile and the work can be done from practically anywhere and anywhere in the world. This means that people can select many temporary jobs and projects from anywhere around the world and the employers too can have wider choice from all over the world to select the best candidates for particular projects. Businesses now find hiring a temporary work force less expensive and affordable. Entrance of the millennial generation into the workforce has made it possible. The current reality is that there is a trend of changing jobs frequently. If the Industrial Revolution was responsible for the self-made man, then one could rightly state that the Digital Revolution is responsible for the rise of self-sufficient millennial. Their need for flexibility has paved way for the situation that business owners are reducing their fixed expenses and focusing more on operating expenses and for this they are using temporary and freelance workforce. This trend is moving so rapidly that the traditional working model is already on the verge of extinction.

**Artificial Intelligence:** Artificial Intelligence (AI) for long had been in the realm of science fiction. AI isn’t just about military technology, industrial robots, or self-driving cars either. AI is now changing the way we do business. Many artificial intelligence business applications are used in industries, from finance, to marketing and healthcare. Many new businesses are using AI to save time and improve efficiency across their companies. What traditional
methods can achieve in days, AI technology can do in just a few seconds. Businesses want to reduce overheads and focus their employees’ efforts on more important challenging and creative tasks than on monotonous and routine tasks. Technology can now provide simulated assistance, generate insights and analyze unorganized raw data – allowing entrepreneurs to pay attention on the growth of their businesses. AI has so many advantages that, specialists predict that around 62% of organizations will be using artificial intelligence business applications in some form or other.

**Streaming Live Videos:** Live videos are currently gaining popularity and interest in new brands these days; this trend will continue to progress in future as well. With the digital era being so prompt and full of content and apps, people like to see things live. They desire to see events and performances live. Chat functions, discussion panels, live company events and videos will continue to gain popularity and are here to stay and help businesses.

**Customer Contact by Text:** There is an increasing trend among customers to reach out to customer service of any company by text. Be it a Facebook app, or a chat on Whatsapp, the customers want immediate answers to their queries and a more informal means of communication. Business owners are always seeking innovative ways to improve the performance of their company. While there are many ways of doing so, the use of an instant text message cannot be overlooked. From appointments to problem solving and marketing, nowadays everything is done by using text messaging and the trend is expected to increase more in coming years.

**A Boom in Co-working:** Co-working has become a norm in lot of businesses. It works very well for startups; even well established companies are looking for this type of environment. Co-working is not only about saving money and sharing resources. It is also a wonderful networking tool. Businesses that want to get closer to their future B2B customers are now beginning to establish their offices in co-working spaces. It also allows companies to be more flexible with hiring of new staff and increase their ability to enter fresh markets.

**Growth of Automation:** Automation is the way forward for any growing company. It helps the business save time by handling smaller and menial tasks automatically; it helps in providing extra time for the team to pursue bigger and more ambitious activities; and maybe best of all, it helps the businesses to save money by allocating more human-hours to value-added activities.

**Boom in Social Media Businesses:** Instagram has become very popular among all the brands and the businesses alike especially for sales. Advertising on this platform is skyrocketing and new business features are truly game changing. Many micro businesses are taking advantage of Instagram advertising and displaying their product images on the platform, accepting orders online, and running their business ventures very successfully.
**Usage Portable Technology:** Portable devices include a smartphone or a tablet. These devices are used by millions of people around the world for looking at products and services online. The market is exponentially moving towards using smart phones for almost everything. Usage of mobile devices in business is growing enormously and everyone is racing to catch up, especially the retailers. The internet has become the primary means of any business. Consumers are finding it easy to shop using their mobile phones. The mobile revolution will continue and help in the growth of new startups and small and medium enterprises.

Observing trends is very important for existing businesses and for new startups. An entrepreneur gets guidance for marketing as well as for evaluating their business model.

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5. Encouraging Creative Enterprise in Oman

"Dream **big.** Start **small.** But most of all, **start.**"

— Simon Sinek

Omanisation has revealed the pressing need to skill – and upskill – the Omani workforce in every feasible way. What is also pressing is that the emerging SME sector think outside the box and develop a ‘creative enterprise’ industry that can propel the Sultanate into a new era of innovation, success and prosperity. So far, the entire cultural and creative sector comprises roughly “1% of the world’s active population” surpassing, for example, the “combined jobs of Automotive industry in Europe, Japan, and US (25 million)” (World Creative, 2018). This chapter thus aims to highlight why the nation’s ability to successfully model and build small businesses in the cultural and creative industries is of utmost importance for its economic sustainability, growth and hence, future. It cannot be overstated that its relevance is predicated on encouraging – and supporting, by all means possible – creative enterprises throughout the Sultanate. Even though many may point to the giants in this sector, it is actually built and operated by various small businesses whose time is to ‘stand on the shoulder of giants!’ It is therefore imperative for the government to support, to guide the population with its passion for creative and cultural activities. For this may very well be the only way to convert this passion into businesses that are not only viable, but will leave a lasting and positive social and economic impact.

So what do we truly mean when we say ‘creative enterprise’? To begin with, it is difficult to separate the term **creative enterprise** from its true source: the creation of small businesses within the sphere of the cultural and creative industries. According to UNESCO (n.d.), cultural and creative industries are “sectors of organised activity whose principal purpose is the production or reproduction, promotion, distribution and/or commercialisation of goods, services and activities of a cultural, artistic or heritage-related nature”. Howkins (as cited in Wikipedia, 2018) uses the term ‘creative economy’, but this is just a natural by-product of what the cultural and creative industries can potentially produce. Howkins (as cited in Wikipedia, 2018) includes – amongst many other industries - film, fashion, design advertising, publishing, crafts as well as performing arts under the creative economy umbrella.

In other words, creative enterprise is greater than the “industrially made products of human creativity”, since it includes the “entire productive chain, as well as the specific functions of each sector involved in bringing these creations to the public” (UNESCO, 2017, n.d.). In Oman, the
education system has an amazing chance to play a decisive role to equip the Omani citizenry with the "creative, entrepreneurial and intercultural skills they need" (European Commission, 2010, p. 3). Such an approach has at its heart a 'knowledge-based society' perspective demanding more creative content, products and services. And despite creative enterprises – encapsulated within the cocoon of cultural and creative industries (CCIs) – having the true potential to develop a more cohesive, imaginative and prosperous future, key challenges that lie ahead (European Commission, 2010, p. 3), include:

- To put the right enablers in place by increasing the capacity to experiment, innovate and succeed as entrepreneurs, and providing easier access to funding and the right mix of skills;
- To help CCIs develop in their local and regional environment as a launch pad for a stronger global presence, including increased exchange and mobility; and
- To move towards a creative economy by catalysing the spill over effects of CCIs on a wide range of economic and social contexts.

The Literature – Key Debates And A Critique

Literature regarding creative enterprise in Oman, let alone the GCC is, at best, scarce. Therefore we will scour relevant material attached to this subject to illustrate the importance of creative enterprise in the GCC context and its potential future impact in Oman. In terms of organisation, for instance, the cultural industries question is still up for debate by many 'in the industry'. One could merely see them as a latent extension for those in society who deem themselves creatively independent of the big corporations. That is, creative thinkers and doers who need their own space to conduct experiments and make manifest their often innovative ideas. Others, like Grabher (2001), sorts cultural industries into the global corporation and the local 'village' levels. In other words,

...at the corporate level, there are instituted forums of debate and communication and a general aim to break up established understandings and practices. At the local 'village' level it is the communal context of skills, biographies and cultural orientations, often strongly tied to a sense of place, which acts as a kind of self-regulating ecosystem, an extremely adaptive heterarchy (Grabher, 2001, p. 354).

Which brings us to the evolution of naming rights from 'cultural industries' to 'creative industries'. It is my contention that the term culture is more oriented to a milieu embedded with connotations, nuances and expressions best found in a nation’s habits with respect to traditions, customs, cuisine and the arts (performing or otherwise). This may not tick all the academic boxes, but is, I contend, a humble beginning. While research by Hesmondhalgh (as cited in O’Connor, 2010) proposes that the
terminological acrobatics is a tightly fought contest hinging on issues of culture, technology and economics, a study by Smith (as cited in O’Connor, 2010, p. 51) sees it as a “purely pragmatic move in order to get some key spending plans passed”...“where the word ‘culture’ had to be avoided as too reminiscent of ‘the arts’, and thus not about economics at all”. Either way, what is not up for debate is the fact that culture and enterprise are now so inextricably linked that both – for the entrepreneur – must have a profit motive if to be viable at all.

But surely, the enterprising entrepreneur needs to be ‘innovative’ if to be successful. There is no doubt that ‘innovation’ is a term still ill-defined and, for many, unclear. It has been argued (The Innovation Policy Platform, n.d.), for example, that innovative entrepreneurship is derived from the following three distinct areas encapsulated in Figure 1 below:

![Figure 1. The module for innovative entrepreneurship. Reprinted from The Innovation Policy Platform, n.d., Retrieved May 12, 2018, from https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/content/innovative-entrepreneurship. Reprinted with permission.](image)

For this module to work, however, the following six policy dimensions, according to The Innovation Policy Platform (2018), must be met:

1. Access to finance
2. Access to knowledge
3. Market environment
4. Access to labour
5. Entrepreneurial capabilities and culture
6. Regulatory Framework

In other words, a lot of boxes need to be ticked to obtain a semblance of being an innovative entrepreneur. On the other hand, innovation can be described in perhaps a more nuanced manner. We can even illustrate, according to Greenwald (2014) innovation through a number of dynamic forms:
• **Words**: Original, unexpected, fresh, never been thought of before, never been seen before, creative, new, useful

• **Reactions**: “Isn’t that clever?”,”What a great idea!”, and “Why didn’t anyone ever think of doing it before?”

• **Descriptions**: Challenging conventional notions of how things have been done before, and bringing ideas from one industry to another, or from one geographic region to another

• **Strategic Criteria** such as:

  • Creating **meaningful** points of difference for products and services vs. current alternatives
  
  • Fulfilling unmet consumer needs, by offering new ways to accomplish goals, or make lives or jobs easier, better, happier, more exciting, satisfying, or more productive
  
  • Enabling brands to compete in incremental new markets or category segments
  
  • Delighting/engaging/capturing imaginations of consumers to increase loyalty

Innovative entrepreneurship and a dynamic interpretation of “innovation” tends to view creative enterprise through the lens of an emerging political economy of culture and the subsequent rise of small and medium sized enterprises (SME’s). Research by the ‘political economy of culture’ school, for example, was opposed to any ideology that viewed cultural objects as merely texts rather than commodities (O’Connor, 2010, pp. 22-23). This made sense as more culturally identifiable products become more commercialised (one only need look at the explosion of frankincense in Oman) to a wider audience. Future research attempted to “link the political economy writing with insights from cultural studies” (Williams as cited in O’Connor, 2010, p. 23). SME’s within the realm of creative enterprise were once seen as an offshoot – or loose appendage – of an ‘artistic’ segment that, at times, complemented big corporate niche products. Often seen as the bane of state subsidy financing, creative and artisanal SME’s have become more relevant – and potentially profitable – that the wheels of genuine recognition are beginning to turn. Studies (O’Brien and Feist, 1995; 1997; Pratt, 1997; Creigh-Tyte and Thomas, 2001 as cited in O’Connor, 2010, p. 35) began to notice that freelancers and small, often micro-businesses were an extremely significant part of overall employment in the sector – and were growing fast. According to a recent study, for instance, conducted by Mena Research Partners (as cited in Khaleej Times, 2017), the SME “sector in the GCC region has the potential to employ over 22 million people in the next five years”... with the SME sector representing a potential worth of “$920 billion with 156 per cent growth in the next five years”.
Still, when talking about entrepreneurs opening a creative enterprise, how do we measure ‘creativity’? The short answer is that there is no clear and definite answer. However, according to Berg and Hassink (2014, p. 653), “the concept of creative industries is useful because it helps us to understand the dynamics of the contemporary economy”. That is not to say one can fully understand these dynamics with a general perusal of the economy. The upshot, though, is that more significance has been given to creative enterprises regarding social status and the realisation of an entrepreneur’s ‘vision’ in the slowly burgeoning SME industry (Earl and Potts, 2004; Potts, 2009; Boggs, 2009; Hartley et al., 2012, as cited in Berg and Hassink, 2014, p. 653).

So what does the literature say in terms of environments conducive to developing a creative enterprise market? Three essential areas may give us an idea. Firstly, according to Berg and Hassink (2014, p. 657), “creative industries are deeply involved in the process of new value creation, as their value-added works derive from innovation”… providing “various innovation services direct to the consumer market”…while being a “part of the innovation system given their pivotal role in the socio-economic process of adoption and retention of new ideas”. Within the Omani context, much would need to be done to reach such heights in terms of infrastructure development and collaborative relationships with varying sectors of the business community.

Secondly, since most creative products (like film, photography) need highly specialised skills sets (Turok, 2003), this has often meant a high concentration of ‘creative clusters’ located in a specific location. One need only visit the Knowledge Oasis City in Muscat – a hub for nurturing a knowledge-based society – to see as an example. The ‘knowledge pool model’, according to Benneworth and Charles (as cited in Berg and Hassink, 2014, p. 657), in addition, analyses creative clusters by capturing, on a regional scale, the idea of cluster development and highlighting the dynamic interaction between creative firms in that particular region.

The third criteria seeks agglomeration economies and urbanization economies (Lorenzen and Frederiksen, 2008; Florida, 2002, as cited in Berg and Hassink, 2014, p. 657). The former is comprised of a “shared specialized labour market, knowledge spill overs”…while the latter taps into a geographical proximity to facilitate...“the creative recombination of knowledge, ideas, and technologies, which is a source of innovation” (Berg and Hassink 2014, p657). The onus is thus on government policy to spread the seeds of ‘innovation’ allowing creative entrepreneurs to cluster in high concentration geographical spaces – in other words, “groups of competing and co-operating businesses that enhance demand for specialist labour and supply networks in a particular location” (De Propris et al., as cited in Berg and Hassink, 2014, p. 658).
Challenges and Opportunities for Entrepreneurship in The Sultanate

Challenges in realising a truly genuine SME industry based on creative enterprise initiative and implementation are many and often profound. Despite an upsurge in SME bodies and organisations throughout the country – Riyada, and the SME Development Fund, for instance – there is a growing lethargy to take the next step and make creative enterprise growth a real sector. If we take a recent snapshot of SME development between 2016 and 2017, we see that a lot of serious work must be undertaken. A report by The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) (as cited in Al Bawaba, 2017), for example, saw a 31.2% decline in registered SME’s in the first quarter of 2017. The report goes on to say that “Oman registered only 2,759 SMEs between January and March 2017, down from 4,013 as of March-end last year”.

More troubling is the fact Oman, when compared to the rest of the GCC, performs poorly with respect to contributing to real SME growth and development. According to Ali Shaker, advisor for The Zubair Small Enterprises Centre (SEC), “In the GCC and Oman, we have very a low percentage of contributions from SMEs to the economy, in general. It is only around 15 per cent. In healthier economies, it is around 60 per cent” (as cited in Times of Oman, 2018). Oman thus sits at only one-quarter of the GCC average when it comes to SME contributions, a worrying trend for any serious investor and budding entrepreneur.

An overdependence on fossil fuel reserves and their prices is also an inhibitive factor that stagnates creative thinking and real economic growth. We hear so much about how the GCC was built – and developed – based on oil reserves and production. What is staggering, then, is how nations without comparable oil production, can become economic powerhouses and hubs of true growth and development. For instance, Oman is number 19 when it comes to oil production in the world, whereas Japan, Germany, France and Italy rank as 81, 55, 71 and 45 respectively (U.S. Energy Information Administration 2017). It is not surprising, therefore, that these nations depend more on a ‘knowledge-based society’ rather than fossil fuel numbers to create SME industries that seek to nurture the youth of today for a world of creative thinking tomorrow.

Another psychological factor hampering real SME and creative enterprise growth has been the incessant inculcation of youth employment into the government sector. Is it any wonder, then, that most youth working in the private sector would prefer a lower paying job in the government sector? According to the NCSI (as cited in Prins, 2016), “76 per cent of Omani youth seeking a job preferred a job in the government sector, even if the salary in a private sector job was 50 per cent higher, compared with the government job”. The fact that most government jobs are handled in Arabic is a plus for those whose English is elementary at best. Again, such conditions are not
conducive for nurturing a creative enterprise culture based on creative and independent thinking. Two astonishing findings from the NCSI report (as cited in Prins, 2016) reveal just how much work must be done to create a climate fair and enticing for an emerging SME market:

The top reasons for not being content with a job include [perceived] low salaries, strenuous working conditions and the nature of the work not deemed fit, the report concluded.

Omani youth have a high expectation of the role of the government. 89 per cent of job-seekers think the government should be responsible for providing a job for every young Omani.

Perhaps the most confusing and ironic challenge is that which is imposed through ‘Omanisation’. Does it mean preparing the Omani population to compete for jobs in the private sector as well the SME industry or a means of lowering the unemployment rate? As it stands, according to Statista (2018) and CEIC (2018), the Oman unemployment rate stands at almost 17% based on a population of 2,573,708 (55.10%) against an expat population of 2,097,594 (44.90%) (NCSI, 2018). For some, however, it seems the message is not getting across to the private sector. According to Ann Al Kindi (as cited in The Times of Oman, 2018), a member of the Economic Association, the private sector has “misinterpreted Omanisation because they view it as just hiring Omani’s for employment sake rather than “about developing Omanis so they can do a job better”. She goes onto explain that private companies should, in order to develop the youth, develop a five-year plan. For example, when a company takes “in 10 drivers and say(s) it has complied with the Omanisation rate in reality that is not compliance, but evasion” (as cited in The Times of Oman, 2018). She may have a point here, but I contend (based on new opportunities discussed below) that the issue runs a little deeper.

Developing a skilled and knowledge based society is perhaps one step closer to realising a truly genuine SME industry spurred and inspired by creative enterprise. It appears Pankaj Khimji of Khimji Ramdas (as cited in The Times of Oman, 2018) agrees, asserting, “Oman needs to re-address its education and technical education platform, and adapt to skill-based education rather than vocational education”. The chief economist at the Oman Investment Fund (as cited in The Times of Oman, 2018), Fabio Scacciavillani, expands on this point and contends that...

...the education system needs to provide students with professional and technical skills the market requires and that are currently in short supply. The challenge is to strengthen the competencies of the workforce to make sure that Omanis can effectively compete in the labour market and take advantage of the opportunities the government is creating through the relentless diversification efforts.

It is not a stretch, therefore, to highlight just how important a skills-based
primary school education system is to redress many of the issues plaguing Omani youth who yearn the support and encouragement to pursue their entrepreneurial creative spirit. Scacciavillani leaves us with a profoundly resounding yet subtle offering: “In essence, the world economy is a contest among the best minds. The challenge for policymakers consists in optimising resources and designing policies at a macro and micro level, targeting a constant improvement of the workforce across the expertise spectrum” (as cited in The Times of Oman, 2018).

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE SULTANATE

The genuine opportunity for Omani nationals to reap the rewards of an inspiring and sustained creative enterprise industry is but a few changes - albeit dramatic and in a profound – away. I do not suggest there will be an easy transition from a predominately government-based career perspective to a knowledge-based society that sources its success from a highly successful and flourishing creative enterprise industry. Nevertheless, for this change to occur, a major paradigm shift must first take place. We shall dive into how such change may transpire and what conditions must be met for success. I propose three fundamentally transformative policies that may well set in motion change conducive to truly encouraging the creative enterprise spirit within the Sultanate of Oman. These include, a move away from a ‘psychological dependence’ equating economic success with hydrocarbon prices; establishing a world-class education system to help create a world-class economy and last but not the least is making Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) the most sought after tertiary degree in the GCC. Before we begin, it is clear to see from Figure 2 (CISAC, 2018), there is stupendous potential for creative enterprise to really take off in the Sultanate. With respect to the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI), the Africa and Middle East sector contributes around 58 billion US dollars (3% of total CCI revenues worldwide) that have created around 2.4 million jobs thus accounting for 8% of total CCI jobs.
1. **A future reliant on culture and creativity must hold more weight and sway than natural resources.**

The Omani youth of today now have a chance to think more creatively than past generations. The question of oil and gas prices should not hinder creativity and imagination to move Oman into new economic horizons. With a median age of 25.4 and a population expecting to reach 5 million by 2020 (World Population Review, n.d.), the youth of Oman have an obligation to show the world what they are truly capable of achieving in the cultural and creative sectors that represents close to 7% of global GDP (Nambiar, 2017). For years, many in the GCC – citizens and residents alike – lived in an economy governed primarily by the price of oil and gas. This era is slowly drawing to a close. From the UAE to Saudi Arabia, authorities and government officials have realised that unless their citizenry is well equipped with the knowledge and know-how to forge an independent economy run by a ‘knowledge-based society’, they will surely be left behind. Such a realisation has sparked massive interest and support in training staff and graduates to be ready and better prepared for a changing workforce for a new economy.

Hence, creative enterprise is such a vital and integral component in harnessing Oman’s greatest asset into a life-long project without the fixation on what direction fossil fuels are going and what potential reserves are present and untapped. We can see Oman’s creative spark emanating from its unique ancient and modern history stretching from Africa to South-East Asia. Its fascinating arts and crafts are on display in its museums in Salalah and Muscat. Community integration is also key in this area. Involving concerned parties governmental, social, cultural, religious, and educational is paramount to integrating culture into the creative enterprise process and its longevity. Campaigns and initiatives illustrating the overwhelming importance of enriching the nation as a knowledge-based society will raise awareness of human capital and its enormous wealth of resources.

Current SME training entities in Oman, including but not limited to Riyada, SMEF, NBC and Zubair – all play a vital role in disseminating the idea that entrepreneurship is essential for SME growth and development. However, these bodies should perhaps focus more on highlighting those essential creative enterprise factors needed to nurture ‘genuine’ entrepreneurial projects rather than just asking for applicants and their ideas. This is evidenced in the banking sector’s tentative approach to fund entrepreneurs. Despite a government directive for banks to allocate 5% of their total credit portfolio to SME’s, many are unwilling to do so on the grounds that the
inability to make repayments on loans is an all too common issue with SME start-ups (Kutty 2018). This uncertainty becomes clearer when experts “are of the opinion that financial acumen has been the major challenge for SMEs as it is the key to understanding whether or not their business is profitable and sustainable in the long run” (Kutty 2018). Hence, the need for SME training providers to focus on the creative enterprise success factors below (Figure 3) that filter those who ‘think they are’ to ‘those who know they are’ ready to take on the entrepreneurial journey.

The 5 Creative Enterprise Success Factors

1. **Opportunity recognition**: The project creates, discovers, and recognizes an opportunity to meet a need or want. There is demand (or will be) for the creative product or service.

2. **Value-add**: The project adds sufficient value for the stakeholders in one or more ways (e.g., commercial, cultural, social, environmental, personal).

3. **Stakeholder Management**: The needs of internal and external stakeholders are considered & their perspectives and input included appropriately.

4. **Resourcing**: The required resources are available, or can be made so.

5. **Innovation**: The project does something new in terms of its product (or service), processes, or position.

Figure 3. The 5 Creative Enterprise Success Factors. Adapted from “QUT Library Unit Guides,” by QUT, 2018, May 28, Retrieved June 6, from http://libguides.library.qut.edu.au/c.php?g=427248&p=2925622
As we see above, the Queensland University of Technology (QUT 2018) visually encapsulates what an entrepreneur needs to think of in the creative enterprise sector to have a clear plan moving forward. Einstein once said, ‘If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.’ Not everyone wants to be – or become – an entrepreneur, but for those who do, the ability to simply explain what they plan to create in terms of the five creative enterprise success factors would be a great start. Opportunity recognition asks if there is a genuine demand for an entrepreneur’s product or service and, if so, is what they offer valuable to society in any way possible? Value-add is more than just profit and loss and seeks to answer various ‘bottom lines’ inclusive of but not limited to cultural, social and environmental projections. In other words, can an entrepreneur simply explain how to measure success of the venture and how this, in turn, will add value? Stakeholder management will uncover if the dynamic and passionate entrepreneur knows who is genuinely important to the venture and consequently discover what they seek to gain from the venture. He or she must also take into consideration that stakeholders may include mentors, the government, and the community that, in turn, will ask how their needs are going to be met.

Resourcing will ask the entrepreneur, ‘Do you have access to the required means including, but not limited to infrastructure, equipment and financial resourcesthat are useful and relevant for the venture to be realised?’ If not, what measures can be implemented to acquire these resources? In inc.com (2014), Simon Sinek explains that “It is no accident that small businesses so often run innovation circles around large corporations”... based on the fact that most small businesses share...“a struggle for limited resources and working with people who are intent on building something out of nothing is a good formula for a small business”. Innovation must therefore ask the entrepreneur, ‘Are you doing something new? How many points of differentiation sets you apart from your competitors?’ QUT (2018) asks the entrepreneur, ‘Does your product or service embrace the 4 Ps of innovation mentioned below?’

- **Product innovation**: changes in the things (products/services) which a venture offers
- **Process innovation**: changes in the ways in which these things are created and delivered
- **Position innovation**: changes in the context in which the products/services are introduced (marketing)
- **Paradigm innovation**: major changes in thinking which frame what the venture does

It therefore needs reiteration that the opportunity for encouraging creative enterprise in Oman means encouraging creative and independent thinking that does not see oil prices as essential to creating innovative markets that
spark and sustain a growing economy. This social and cultural change can start in primary schools and make its way up to adults who feel they possess the entrepreneurial spirit. Creative enterprise and 'big business' are already working together though they realise it or not is another question. It is no secret, for instance, that 'businesses outside of the creative industries increasingly incorporate creative inputs like design, advertising, software, visuals and storytelling into their offerings in order to engage consumers and stand out above their competitors' (NESTA, 2018, p. 42). This 'creative economy', whose synergy with creative enterprise and corporate enterprise is apparent, needs creative talent for commercial purposes working in as many creative sectors as possible (crafts, museums, music, publishing, photography and the visual arts to name a few). Such synergy has the potential to create hubs of innovation and productivity and should sound a clarion call to policymakers to 'take this into account and seek to enhance these creative spill-overs when they develop new policies to strengthen creative clusters' (NESTA, 2018, p. 46). Would, say, the establishment of a Ministry of Creative Economy – similar to the U.K. Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries role, be something the Omani government could embrace in the not-too-distant future?

2. Making students LEARNERS - Getting the fundamentals right: Pioneering a world-class education system.

“Education standards are a ‘powerful predictor of the wealth that countries will produce in the long run’”, says an OECD report (Coughlan, 2015). The 2018 International Education Public Opinion Poll (World Top 20 Project, n.d.) shows South Korea, Japan, Finland, Russia and Estonia as the top 5 education systems in the world so far. Statistics are compiled from the OECD, PISA, UNESCO, The Economist Intelligence Unit, TIMSS and PIRLS. In 2015, Oman ranked 72 out of a possible 75 nations in the OECD’s global school rankings analysis “based on test scores in maths and science” (Coughlan, 2015) and was first time on a global scale education quality that was assessed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) whose mandate is to stimulate economic progress and world trade (OECD, 2018).

It should come as no surprise, then, that according to the World Bank (2013), when it comes to government spending based on GDP, Oman ranked 121 out of 195 nations listed. This is telling, since Finland, Estonia and South Korea spend 6.8%, 5.5% and 5.1% of their GDP on education while Oman spends roughly 4.3%. And based on latest statistics (GFH, 2016), Oman is “ranked 88 (of 140 countries) in terms of quality of primary education and 106 in terms of quality of higher education and training, which is the lowest in the GCC, indicating that there exists ample scope for improvement”.

No dwelling is built without a solid foundation and a solid foundation of any economy is a strong and stable education system. Oman has
the opportunity to give its public education system a dramatic boost to become a real contender on the world stage. Statistics aside, and though private schools are beginning to grow in the Sultanate, the performance of the public education sector has left a lot to be desired. Which is why an educational cultural exchange program like JET in Japan may be an answer in assisting Omani teachers teaching English in public schools throughout the nation. According to JET (2015):

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme is administered through the collaboration of Japan’s local government authorities, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR).

Aiming primarily to promote grass-roots internationalisation at the local level, the JET Programme invites young college graduates from around the world to participate in international exchange work and be involved in foreign language education at Japan’s local government offices, boards of education, elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools. The JET Programme has gained high acclaim both domestically and internationally for being one of the world’s largest international exchange programmes. We hope that all people involved in the JET Programme, both the participants and the local people who they live and work with, will build an international network and become successful in today’s global society.

This culturally diverse education and learning program has been in place since 1987, making it by far the world’s largest exchange teaching programme. At its core is the fundamental belief that blending predominantly native speakers – about half are from the United States (2,457), with Canada (495), the United Kingdom (383), Australia (315), New Zealand (255), Ireland (86), and South Africa (93)” (JET Programme, 2012) – will bring about creativity, understanding and mutual respect for a myriad of cultures. Again, the chance for public sector (government) Omani teachers to have international college and university graduates on supporting them in their classes is a chance to increase their learning curves while enhancing the teaching experience exponentially. Just what the assistant language teachers’ do is clearly defined (Jet Programme, 2018) with the following responsibilities:

• Assisting English classes taught by Japanese (Omani) Teachers of English in junior and senior high schools.
• Assisting with English language training activities at primary/elementary schools
• Assisting in the preparation of materials for English Language Teaching
• Assisting in the language training of Japanese (Omani) Teachers of English
• Assisting in organizing, coordinating and preparing activities for extracurricular activities and clubs

• Providing information on language and other related subjects to Teachers’ Consultants and Japanese (Omni) Teachers of English (e.g. word usage, pronunciations, etc.)

• Assisting in English Language speech contests. Engaging in local and international exchange activities

These tasks have potentially enriching implications. Firstly, genuine college and university foreign graduates will be able to apply their trade in a schooling environment whose main aim is to develop the next generation of working Omans. Secondly, they will assist in improving teaching standards throughout the Sultanate in an extremely cost-effective way. And last, but not least, such a programme has the real chance of enriching, enhancing and developing respect amongst various cultures, societies and their respective traditions.

3. Making Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) the most sought after university degree in the GCC

We have finally arrived to the final piece of the puzzle, which hopes to encapsulate and develop the creative enterprise entrepreneurial pursuit beyond what’s ever been imagined. As Nambiar (2017) from the Oman Observer has been quick to point out, “Economy is not just about money alone; it has a beautiful creative aspect with social and cultural implications. However, it took a while for governments to take cognizance of the real power and scope of creative economy”. Now that we have covered how to look beyond the ‘price of oil = state of the economy’ mindset and realised just how important a diversified and dynamic public education system can be, why will the creative industries become such a vital element towards developing a new and robust Omani economy? According to John Kampfner (as cited in Nambiar, 2017), CEO of the Creative Industries Federation: “Which other sector (than creative industry) can simultaneously enhance social mobility, smoothen out societal rifts, drive exports, strengthen the economy and define a nation in the international context?”

That Omani colleges and universities should embrace the creative industries into their curriculums and syllabi – via cultural and creative industries (CCIs) based degrees - should be a given. Navigating through the business jargon, processes and systems is somewhat scientific and so a Master of Science (MSc) degree is perhaps an essential tool for budding creative enterprise entrepreneurs to have in their tool box. In addition, such a degree would place copyright of creative content as central to any creative enterprise business model, an essential starting point for all creative minds. De Montfort University in Leicester, England, offers a creative enterprise MSc premised on the idea that, “Creative workers and leaders exhibit different skills and
approaches to other business sectors, and individuals with creative talent require business management and innovation skills in order to venture out leading creative enterprise” (De Montfort University, 2018).

For those not ready to undertake a Master’s degree, perhaps the Bachelor of Creative Enterprise (BCE) multi-disciplinary degree offered by the Unitec Institute of Technology of New Zealand is the start Omani entrepreneurs can initially undertake. Unitec believes that creative thinking, professional practise and communication are key to students creating their own pathway to creative practices achievement and success. The bachelor degree (Unitec Institute of Technology, 2018) is seen as:

... an immersive programme in which students explore how to be self-directed learners, to take responsibility for themselves and to take ownership of their careers. We have created a dynamic environment and a focus on real-world projects aimed squarely at getting students out into the workforce.

The major highlights of both learning establishments is awe-inspiring. De Montfort University (2018) allows students the option to “pursue an Entrepreneurship Project or Creative Research Project,” with “teaching from academics with experience across many segments of the creative industry”, set in an “inspirational setting headquartered in the historic Great Hall of Leicester Castle”. On the other hand, the Unitec Institute of Technology’s (2018) creative enterprise degree is predicated on the “development of transferable skills and real-world project based learning,” where “opportunity to work broadly across an array of disciplines” will help create the “exposure to emerging technologies with guest lecturers, cutting edge industry demonstrations, and workshops”. So how can students in Oman access such degrees focused on creative enterprise and its ongoing pursuit? Perhaps an Omani tertiary institution in affiliation with each respective university mentioned above. I feel such a path, though promising, cannot provide the real essence of the degrees unless its lecturers and professors are here on Omani soil. Even better would be an international university campus – like those found in Qatar and the UAE – in Oman, with its own staff to provide students in Oman with as genuine a learning environment as much as possible.

Though this chapter has come to its conclusion, negotiations – in terms of defining, categorising, nurturing and encouraging creative enterprise in the Sultanate – have thus far proven inconclusive as ever. That there needs to be genuine intent to implement policies highly conducive to supplementing and sustaining a thriving creative enterprise industry is a fact beholden upon captains of industry, government officials, the banking and finance sectors and the community at large. Without such impetus, words will seldom match intent and Oman, possibly, may never scale the burgeoning heights that other nations are now witnessing – and enjoying – as the fruits of their arduous labour.
Oman has the citizenry – and entrepreneurial spirit – to become a real creative enterprise powerhouse. However, this may only be achieved from developing a literal mind shift away from fossil fuel markets and towards a highly integrated knowledge-based society as its source of creative, and economic inspiration. A new paradigm shift in the public education narrative will also give rise to better educational and learning outcomes predicated on the idea of a more inclusive and dynamic teaching system and pedagogy endorsed and made manifest through a system like the JET program. In addition, for those seeking a tertiary qualification, making creative enterprise a source of practical and indispensable knowledge will go a long way to ensuring Oman is capitalising on its best and brightest minds for generations to come, locally and on the global stage. In sum, it may very well be the case that the future of Oman’s economic development and prosperity is in the hands of those who seek to creatively soar above and beyond what we expect of them today and tomorrow.

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About the Author

Rayed Darwish brings a wealth of learning and educational experience spanning almost 11 years from Australia, Qatar, the UAE and the Sultanate of Oman. Having worked as an English teacher, Corporate Trainer, and Director of Studies, Rayed is a life-long learner. With a BA in Australian and Comparative Studies from Griffith University, a CELTA teacher training qualification for teaching English as a second or foreign language (ESL and EFL) awarded by the University of Cambridge English Language Assessment and a Masters in Education (TESOL) degree from the University of Wollongong, Rayed is an avid student of all things educational, social and cultural.
6. THE CHANGING ASPECTS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTUAL REVIEWS

Co-authored by Dr Ruksana Banu A & Majid Fahad Al Said

ABSTRACT

In today’s world, investment in the human resource is not merely comprehended as an aspect to improve and promote their status in the economy, but also seen as a crucial part in achieving sustainable economic development. The aim of this chapter is to summarize studies on the essentials of entrepreneurship that may accelerate the economic development and would provide a means for economic diversification. Electronic databases were explored from the articles that involved studies related to entrepreneurship and economic development. The results showed that the contribution towards productivity, economic efficiency and growth could be measured through economic indicators like business achievements, opportunity entrepreneurs, formal sector, education, training levels and access to resources. Therefore, there is a need for improving these economic indicators, which will enable the entrepreneurs to face the challenges and barriers.

Key Words: Entrepreneurship, Economic diversification, Economic growth, and development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although, one generally agrees that enterprise in many respects acts as an important drive for economic growth (Carree, 2006; Audretsch et al., 2007); many have apprehension about the association concerning entrepreneurship and economic development (Naude, 2010). Many researchers in the context of developing countries have conferred that entrepreneurship is “no longer a problem or significant constraints”. However, some studies are curious to find “why and how” entrepreneurship is vital for developing an economy (Bruton et al, 2008; Shane, 2000) and some studies describe it as a separate school of affairs that discuss why entrepreneurship does matters (Audretsch et al., 2007). Most scientists conversed that for any economy entrepreneurship is essential when aspects of economic development are taken into consideration (Andersson, 2008).

The role of entrepreneurship and its impact on economic growth began with economists’ ideas like Adam Smith’s (1776) as cited by Acs and Naude (2013). The author discussed the economists’ overall objective is to understand the process of creating wealth and division of labor enables the organization to increase productivity but to some extent, it limits the size of the market. Yet, in many economic theories, entrepreneurship is not a central role. But in empirical studies, authors have discussed mixed
reactions and evidence about the role of entrepreneurship in economic growth. Therefore, considerable differences were observed in terms of types of entrepreneurship and economic system (Baporikar, 2017; Baumol and Strom, 2007). For instance, economic growth and development depend largely on business, market, and economic trends and fluctuations.

In today’s world, investment in the human resource is not merely seen as an aspect to improve and/or promote the status of an economy, but it is also seen as a fundamental aspect to achieve sustainable economic development (Box, Lin, and Gratzer, 2016). Many diverged empirical approaches have emerged in understanding the effect of entrepreneurial activities on economic growth and development; still, looks like a puzzle (Ferreira et al., 2017). Many studies approved that the entrepreneurship influence on economic growth is different when compared to the low-income and high-income countries (Gries and Naudé, 2011; Acs et al., 2018).

Furthermore, studies have shown that due to the presence of oil reserves, most of the Gulf nations have started to adopt generous domestic policies, including massive social welfare and public work activities (Faggian, Partridge and Malecki, 2017). Dechant and Lamky (2005) and Gupta et al. (2012) attested that the Gulf nations may find it difficult to sustain such generous domestic policies due to its growing population and unemployment rate, particularly the Gulf nations like Oman and Bahrain. In such a scenario, studies (Baporikar, 2017; Al-Harthi, 2017) make it clear that the complexity of economic problems has made the governments consider and look to private sectors and small and medium enterprises for economic development and to create jobs. Thus, it becomes vital to understand the dynamics of entrepreneurship in economic development. The main objective of this chapter is to provide a summary of the literature and empirical studies on the changing aspects of entrepreneurship that may accelerate the economic development and would provide a source for economic diversification.

Research Method
Electronic databases were explored from the articles that involved studies on entrepreneurship and economic development. Research articles were identified through appropriate databases (i.e., EBSCO and Google Scholar) from 2000 to 2018 using keywords like entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship, economic development, economic diversification, Gulf countries, and Oman.

2. Theoretical Viewpoints on Entrepreneurship in Development

Contemporary developments in entrepreneurship studies have suggested that there is a causal association between entrepreneurial activity and economic growth; it is found that entrepreneurship paves the ways to economic growth. In other words, researchers have indicated that
entrepreneurship has a positive influence on economic development in the context of advanced economies, as innovation plays a vital role. Studies have conferred that economic diversification is one of the most common indicators of development in entrepreneurship activities (Box, Lin, Gratzer, 2016).

2.1 Concept and Relevance for Development

The scientific views on entrepreneurship development and activities reflect the categories economic behavior, changing nature of the workplace, and synthesis definitions of entrepreneurship. Ferreira et al. (2017) in his study conferred that Schumpeter (1950) defined an entrepreneur as production co-coordinator and agents of change (i.e. “Creative Destruction”). As per the conceptual point of review, “Schumpeterian” concept of entrepreneurs is always referred to as “innovator” and the entrepreneurship is also much like Schumpeter. Additionally, few studies have conferred “the concept of entrepreneurship” is not very significant at earlier stages of economic development when compared to post entrepreneurship activities. The later stage of entrepreneurship development is important because it is from here that economic growth is often driven via advancement in knowledge and competition. In earlier stages of economic development, the entrepreneurship shows a less noticeable role, because the growth is frequently determined by greater factor accumulation (Ács and Naudé, 2013; Desai, 2011).

Some authors have defined entrepreneurship based on behavioral aspects as the elements of entrepreneurial actions depends and deals with response to the market conditions, particularly in the context of developing countries. For instance, Kirzner (2009) considered that an entrepreneur is a person who enables and/or facilitates the adjustment to changes through identifying the profit opportunities of the firm under a situation of imbalanced and uncertain markets. Such views enabled scholars to suggest that the entrepreneurs need to focus on opportunity-grasping-for-profit (Shane and Ventakaram, 2000), especially in developing nations where the imbalances in the market are common. This also highlights the dimension of risk-taking entrepreneurship.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) as cited by Reynolds et al. (2005), entrepreneurship is often referred as the synonymous to self-employment, as it is not by choice that people become entrepreneurs, it is because of necessity. The “necessity entrepreneur” is common in developing nations because when an individual remains unemployed for a longer period, he/she starts h some business. An “opportunity entrepreneurs” occurs when market and economic conditions are suitable, and the entrepreneur is not actively looking for jobs before involving in businesses. Gries and Naudé (2011) synthesis the definition of entrepreneurs by combining the behavioral and occupational views and defined as “the resource, process, and state of being through and in which individuals utilize positive
opportunities in the market by creating and growing new business firms”.

Studies have discussed that an entrepreneur is a person who accomplishes the activities associated with the production function through paying the wages for workers; such activities enable them to gain more security than profits (Brück, Naudé and Verwimp, 2011). Thus, the reviews on various definitions, can be summarized that an entrepreneur may be seen as a “performer” whose purpose is to lessen or ease the uncertainty and risk, this can be very much relevant for developing countries (including Oman). Furthermore, with the prevalence of small businesses, most entrepreneurship studies in the context of developing nations have associated small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as an indicator of economic uncertainty, where the probability of success is low (Deaton, 2009).

2.2 Economic Growth Theory and Entrepreneurship

Traditionally, economists conferred that the economic performance of country depends on capital and labor inputs. Miller and Breton-Miller (2017) conversed about the Solow (1956) growth model, this model discussed that economic performance depends on the production function, where the amount of labor and capital, alongside technological advances are the main factors of the production function. Solow’s model demonstrated that the nation’s development can be exogenously determined after advancement in knowledge or technical progress is achieved. The economic growth factors like the investment in capital and labor alongside technology need to be utilized to the greatest extent in order to achieve economic growth and development. The theory indicated that the capital investment increases the growth, but this is only temporary as the ratio of capital to labor may increase. Few studies have criticized that this theory failed in explaining the growth pattern and the magnitude of technological change for the economic environment (Al Mataani, Wainwright, and Demirel, 2017; Block and Koellinger, 2009). However, this model provides an understanding of how the transition dynamics in growth factor appear, which may support entrepreneurs to understand the risk factors associated with business and measure capital-labor-technology ratio for production activity in the long-run.

On the other hand, the endogenous growth theory solved certain limitations found in Solow’s model. The endogenous theory discussed the mechanisms by linking human capital with the creation and advancement of technology. Thus, the technological progress was not determined outside the theoretical model and discussed that the productivity of an economy is directly associated with developing pace of innovation alongside the investment level in human capital (Kannebley, Sekkel, and Araujo, 2010). Fergany (2002) discussed that the endogenous model of economic growth could be viewed as an investment which can supplement to entrepreneurial development activity. However, the authors did not sufficiently explain the aspects of entrepreneurial activities that lead to economic growth. In addition, few studies have indicated that more striking studies are require
that research the association between entrepreneurship performance and economic diversification and aggregate economies (Blanchflower, 2004).

Since the past two decades countries have witnessed many studies on wealth in which entrepreneurship is analyzed as a factor of growth model and consequently extensive literature conferred entrepreneurship can influence economic performance and development. However, this influence or effect depends on the firm’s establishment, the region in which it’s established and is subject to the survival and growth of the firm (Ács and Naudé, 2013). Few studies have linked the impact of entrepreneurship on the firm and the industry activities and performance rather than developing the economies (Gries and Naudé, 2011; Faggian, Partridge, and Malecki, 2017). This implies that the economic development indicator about entrepreneurship depends on the achievement aspects of the firm and/or the industry.

2.2 Economic Diversification and Entrepreneurship

Among the various studies on development, dual economy models developed by Gries and Naudé (2010) is well known, because this model distinguishes the traditional and modern sector by optimizing the micro-aspects of work, enterprises, and households that are relevant to the market. The model discussed that the new entrepreneurs, as well as small and medium companies, can be developed when diverse economic activities are planned and implemented, as this provides an opportunity to develop entrepreneurial spirit among unemployed. The model considered that the transformation from traditional to modern economy brings substantial changes in the production process and in entrepreneurial activities. Here the entrepreneur plays a vital role because it provides scope of innovative inputs to offer specialization in the economy as well as to boost productivity and employment. Thereby leads to economic development.

Earlier, Rada (2007) conferred that entrepreneurship ‘triggers’ investment in the economy and such investments provide profitable opportunities that allow to develop new effective and efficient allocations of factors of production, and the movement from traditional to modern economy appears. Samila and Sorenson (2011) study indicated that the long-term structural transformation depends on the level of a transitional economy and this leads to growth path as indicated by Peretto’s (1999) in his model of endogenous growth. This implies that the accumulation of capital is the growth path, which is also driven by the accumulation of knowledge and entrepreneurial activities. In such a scenario, it can be determined that economic diversification and structural changes stimulate entrepreneurial development. This may be considered as an economic indicator for the development process.

Baumol and Strom (2007) conversed entrepreneurs who emphasis to develop innovative products and/or adopts new production methods and market development techniques, then they play a key role in economic growth. Additionally, discussed entrepreneurial directions are often guided
by goals that are mostly associated with the creation of wealth, power and prestige. These directions enable nations to gain from economic diversification. Neffke et al. (2018) discussed that the reinforcement of regional and economic diversification depends on entrepreneurial growth and nature of the decline, and change the direction of the industry, as these factors align and make them connected to rest of the world. For instance, the unrelated diversification requires structural changes, which originates through the establishment of new entrepreneurs and/or organizations particularly that is not rooted locally. The authors discussed that although entrepreneurs introduce some novel activities in the local economy, the success rate is less when compared to businesses of prevailing companies in another country (Wainwright, and Demirel, 2017). Consequently, the new entrepreneur needs to manage their resources to develop and contribute to economic development.

Michelacci, (2003) discussed that government and economic development are critical aspects when looked from entrepreneurial features. For instance, an entrepreneur may find it promising to direct their efforts based on government stimulation to entrepreneurial activities and sometimes they may bring the advantage but not always benefit the general welfare. Therefore, it is suggested to redesign the economic policy that attracts entrepreneurial activity which is beneficial in all directions. For instance, entrepreneurs need to manage their business activities that bring new goods and services in the market and display technological advancement. Hausmann and Rodrik (2003) indicated entrepreneurs not only offer goods and services with technological externalities, but also enables opportunities to identify and develop new markets. However, in developing countries, the debate between the development of formal and informal sectors often occurs (Maloney 2004; Gries and Naudé, 2011). De Paula and Scheinkman (2007) discussed that informal firms are often associated with ‘evasive’ entrepreneurship. This means informal businesses occur because an entrepreneur can evade taxes or regulations. In such a situation, the informal sectors may be less efficient in contributing towards economic development. Thus, it can be implied that the informal sector like a traditional or subsistence sector in a dual economy and growth enhancement is possible by encouraging entrepreneurs to shift their ability, time, money and efforts more towards the formal sector. Thereby leads to economic development.

3. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

As cited by Desai (2011), clear empirical evidence that entrepreneurship brings limited economic growth, productivity or employment in the economy. However, the empirical evidence indicated that there is a significant association between entrepreneurship and economic growth and development. The empirical evidence can be viewed from the Marco-level and Micro-level point of view.
3.1 Macro-level Perspective
Wennekers and Thurik (2005) studied the association between entrepreneurship and economic growth from different perspectives, that is from historical viewpoints on entrepreneurship, macroeconomic growth theories, the industrial economy points (i.e. the competitive advantage based on Porter studies), the evolution and history of economic growth and huge business organizations through management literature. Therefore, it can be implied that to examine and explore the role of entrepreneurship in the process of economic growth, it requires decompositions of concepts and various aspects entrepreneurial activities and entrepreneurship. Wennekers et al. (2010) conferred that the significant association between entrepreneurship and economic development is like a U-shaped relationship, the empirical cross-sectional analysis indicated the underlying business ownership trend rates in a highly developed countries shows a structural shift that stimulation revival of the economy in “U-shaped” pattern. However, variation may appear depending on the personal characteristics of the business environment of the economy. The behavior of entrepreneurship shows steady declines at early stages of entrepreneurial activity and here the economic development is not achieved much (Wennekers et al., 2010). According to Ács et al (2008) and Gollin (2008), the U-shaped relationship demonstrates that the entrepreneurs in the developing nation may be less innovative, as the proportionate of ‘necessity’ entrepreneurs are more encouraged than ‘opportunity’ entrepreneurs. From these findings, it can be implied that the contribution of ‘opportunity entrepreneurs’ towards GDP may be increased when compared to another type of entrepreneurs (necessity). Thereby the ‘innovative and opportunity’ forms of entrepreneurial activities show a significant relationship with economic development. Correspondingly a reverse influence may also be found, that is economic development may have support to increase ‘innovative and opportunity’ entrepreneurial activities.

Faggian, Partridge, and Malecki (2017) studied long-run underlying causes of growth among developed countries taking into consideration the changing trends i.e. from industrial to the knowledge-based economy. The authors discussed that the sources of economic growth depend on human capital (linked to education), knowledge spillover and the creative and high-technological clusters. The study proposed a new conceptual way of representing the interrelationship between these knowledge-based attributes and its factors in an empirical model based on US economy. Earlier studies have shown that human capital can be as measured by the level of educational activities and the intensity of small and medium-sized enterprises (Michelacci, 2003). The authors demonstrated that these factors (education, the intensity of SMEs) statistically associated with future growth, while other factors like the creative and proportion of advancement in technology industries are insignificant. Consequently, authors have suggested that economic development strategies need to concentrate and develop policies that can attract large foreign companies
and high-tech enterprises to gain competitive advantage.

Hill and Akhrass (2018) studied the “Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Adult Population Surveys in MENA region” data and authors demonstrated that the entrepreneurship development can be associated with a relative change in initial entrepreneurial participation in terms of gender. The study conferred that the ratio between female and male entrepreneurship in the regions of MENA has declined, but overall entrepreneurial activities and levels of development have increased. However, substantial variations among the countries can be found and this may be due to changing economic and social entrepreneurial activity. Monge (2018) discussed that the key drives of entrepreneurship and economic development depend on the forces of labor and this can be determined by achievements in the tertiary education level of the country, the prevalence of unemployment for a longer period, and the percentage of immigrant movements in the nations. The author also indicated that an increase in carbon dioxide emissions also can be considered a factor that drives entrepreneurship because this affects the quality of life.

Thus, it can be summarized from the macro-level perspective and empirical work, entrepreneurship influences economic development. Furthermore, factors like business ownership trend rates, early stages of entrepreneurial activity, opportunity entrepreneurs, educational achievement, unemployment rates, immigrant movements, and carbon emissions may be considered as the key economic indicators, which may support to determine and measure the level of economic development in terms of GDP, productivity and employment.

**3.2 Micro-level Perspective**

Most of the micro-economic studies focus on how entrepreneurs develop and why entrepreneurship develops, but it does not relate to economic growth. However, few studies on productivity, innovation, and growth provide insight into why entrepreneurship matters of the economic development. Shane (2009) and Stephens, Partridge, and Faggian (2013) studied and discussed that the majority of the entrepreneurs would gain more income than the wages gained by working for an organization. While some businesses may create more jobs when compared to non-entrepreneurs and as some entrepreneurs may not have the ability to create low jobs. This shows that not all entrepreneurs lead or bring economic development. Therefore, it can be implied that development depends on the entrepreneurs’ ability to create jobs.

In 2007, Van Praag and Versloot studied the effect of entrepreneurship on employment, innovation and productivity growth. The authors found that even though the quality and efficiency of their innovation may be higher, entrepreneurs do not spend much on research and development activities. This contributes towards slow growth in productivity. Few study’s findings indicated that the innovative enterprises, especially in high-tech industries
may have high productivity on average, but still employment growth rate may have a positive impact for other companies (Stam and Wennberg, 2009). Stephens, Partridge, and Faggian (2013) studied that factors such as self-employment, human capital, creativity, the advantages of education and high-tech clusters can act as an economic indicator. The study findings suggest that entrepreneurial factors and creativity are key growth for any region. On the other hand, Shukaili et al., (2018) debated over years the impact of entrepreneurship policy on the market and institutional have often shown mixed results.

Acs et al., (2018) study discussed the economic indicator like health and education specifies the most productive form of entrepreneurial activities in a country, particularly developing economies. The authors discussed that institutional quality initiatives are also related to entrepreneurial productive aspects, which helps to promote economic growth. The economic growth of entrepreneurship model developed by authors signified that the quality of institutions and activities of entrepreneurship together should improve in the same directions, to gain economic growth and development. While, Shukaili et al., (2018) study results showed the policy of a major financial market failure in a developing economy appears to be a major barrier for new firms. The authors suggested that to overcome these obstacles of growth it is essential that training and facility to access resources are provided at an early stage of development.

Many literature studies have conferred that still there are unclear conclusions on how to improve entrepreneurial capacity and development. Furthermore, few authors have discussed that although much in-depth analysis in advanced economies has studied the contribution of entrepreneurship towards economic growth, little is known about the impact of entrepreneurial capabilities in developing countries. Thus, it can be summarized that from the micro-level perspective and empirical work, education and training, entrepreneurial capabilities and to some extent the health aspects can act as an indicator to measure the influences of entrepreneurship in economic development and diversification activities.

3.3 Impact of Entrepreneurial Development on Economic Growth

Dechant and Lamky (2005) in their study on understanding the nature of women entrepreneurs in context of Oman and Bahrain indicated that there are different concern on securing start-up capital and other resources. For instance, the networking and the compatibility of work and family life among the women entrepreneur in Bahrain are different when compared to Oman. This implies that the contribution towards economic growth through entrepreneurial activities may differ from country to country. According to Lerner (2009) promotion of innovative entrepreneurship in developing countries is more limited by their lack of ability together with limits to their access to resources. This has enough effect on their survival and expansion of businesses. Lopez-Acevedo and Tinajero (2010), the study indicated
that such scenario is due to the fact that the firms are not able to observe the heterogeneous aspects of the business.

Klapper, Amit, and Guillén (2010) conferred that declining trends in self-employment rates are discontinuous and showed downward development between 1970 and 1980 in many industrialized countries. In some countries, it is observed that the self-employment rate seems to increase. At the same time, the cross-sectional analysis showed a U-shaped relationship between business start-ups and levels of economic development, which indicates that at earlier stages of development the contribution of entrepreneurs towards economic growth goes downward but in long-run the contributions may tend to increase. However, this depends on the survival rate of entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the study provided an overview of empirical data on the relationship between independent entrepreneurship (also known as an independent activity) and economic development. Studies have supported the revival of independent entrepreneurship depends on a minimum of two revolutionary activities in the economy. Firstly, at the lower end it is the spectrum of entrepreneurship and ambitious entrepreneurs and/or innovative. Secondly, at the upper end it is the revival of two extremes of independent distinctions which can be found in advanced economies/market conditions (Szirmai, Naudé and Alcorta, 2013; Huggins, Waite and Munday, 2018). This infers that policy-makers in the advanced economies should consciously adapt two revolutions practices and develop entrepreneurial policies which can contribute to economic growth.

Studies have indicated that the significant contribution of entrepreneurship towards economic growth and development can be summarized depending on the empirical evidence, as different economies tend to have a different experience and this largely depends on economic and market conditions (Wennekers, Van Stel, Carree and Thurik, 2010; Parker 2018). Therefore, it can be implied that the policy and decision-makers understand the rate of economic development and contribution of entrepreneurial toward national income or GDP. In addition, it is important to assess the economic and market trends and examine how they can influence. Studies have shown that the relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development focuses on the concepts and various aspects of entrepreneurship. Naudé (2010) and Miller and Breton-Miller (2017) have conferred yet there is no solid evidence from both theoretical and empirical cases which can provide a clear understanding about the role of entrepreneurship. However, it is evident that entrepreneurship development really does matter to gain direct economic growth, but how it helps in economic development is still a difficult issue to be answered.

4. Concluding Remarks

The literature studies discussed in this chapter, indicated that the improvement in an entrepreneurial capacity means not only to improve skills and provide training to entrepreneurs, but to focus on developing...
innovative capacity and facilitate potentially to emerge ‘opportunity’ entrepreneurs as well as invest in the development of human capital. The innovative and opportunity entrepreneurial spirit is more desirable for economic growth. The economic diversification policy ought’ to have a central element for promoting opportunity to entrepreneurial activities, particularly in developing countries (including Oman). The literature study has shown that entrepreneurs have a greater propensity to innovate and they play a dynamic role in economic development – the reasons being many studies have argued and believed entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities assistance and enables countries to gain economic growth and development. Over the past three decades, studies have shown that entrepreneurial activities have remarkably contributed to countries to achieve substantial reduction in poverty and provided opportunities to create jobs. However, studies have shown that there is still a need to improve entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities which can enhance the effectiveness and can act as a sustainability aid for economic growth and development.

From above literature study, much can be learned about the changing nature of entrepreneurs’ obstacles and barriers, but not many studies have provided clear indications about the level of aggregate economic activities which can influence the entrepreneurs’ decisions and even less is discussed about how the entrepreneurs contribute towards development. It can be inferred here that there needs a systematic approach and required statistical data, which can enable the researcher or policy-makers to examine them and support in formulating a comprehensive and robust model/ theory associated to explore the impact of entrepreneurship on developmental aspects of the economy. Yet, literature studies have provided a solid understanding to researchers and policy-makers about the distinctive characteristics of entrepreneurs and associated models of growth. Furthermore, the literature and empirical studies results have shown that the contribution of entrepreneurship towards productivity, economic efficiency and growth can be examined and measured through economic indicators like business achievements, opportunity entrepreneurs, formal sector, education, training levels and access to resources.

Few studies have indicated that entrepreneurship policy evaluation tends to be more about qualitative aspects rather than quantitative, as well as it is difficult to keep track of the constant changes in various entrepreneurial programs over a period (Bruck et al., 2011). It is observed from many ‘impact’ studies about entrepreneurship and economic development that limited attempts have been made to examine detailed impacts and/or outcomes for interpretation, this may be due to limited and reliable small-medium enterprises. The data and cross-country comparisons of entrepreneurial activities and programs are difficult to find due to difference within countries, regions and sectors. Deaton (2009) cited that despite the need for a consolidated or robust framework for entrepreneurship development, the contributions made by various research studies and
findings should be not be undermined. Thus, it can be implied that their suggestions and recommendations should be taken into consideration because the theatrical and empirical approaches of study provides significant information which can support policy of decision makers to develop and formulate appropriate policies for entrepreneurship development. However, there is a need for further research and literature study to examine and explore more about interdisciplinary approaches, which combines the insights and experiments from socio-economic aspects together with political-economic development. Such approach may provide evidence to analysis developments in entrepreneurship areas and support to determine the intersection of entrepreneurship and economic development.

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7. Oman Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Analysis

*Authored by Dr Mohammed Issa Alaeddin*

**Abstract**

Study critically reviews present initiatives of Oman for entrepreneurship development. It identifies the current stakeholders of the entrepreneurship in the country, their work and potential for feasible interventions to further entrepreneurship reflecting Oman’s economic development process.

**Approach**

Study is adopted to explore the initiatives and recognize entrepreneurship growth ecosystem based on secondary resources.

**Originality/value**

This study covers the components of entrepreneurship ecosystem of Oman that contribute to the growth of entrepreneurs. The findings will be valuable to entrepreneurs, the government and scholars. It will provide knowledge to nascent and existing entrepreneurs about different support and assistance that they can acquire. It will help entrepreneurs where to look for support, or what to do if they need assistance. In addition, the results would help the government to understand how it can regulate the existing policies in favor of entrepreneurs. Furthermore, it will help scholars to understand the impact and influence of entrepreneurship ecosystem of Oman to the development of entrepreneurs. With the help of entrepreneurship ecosystem of Oman framework provided in this study, it can help the authorities to evaluate themselves to know if they have such components or not.

**Findings**

Entrepreneurship ecosystem of Oman is under development and infancy stage institutions are prospering. This research offers a rich case study of a single country’s broad governmental efforts to support entrepreneurship and the creation of entrepreneurship ecosystems. It raises important questions about the opportunities related to more customized and structurally coordinated entrepreneurship policy.

**1- Introduction**

Oman is fortunate in having oil and gas which has made it one of the wealthiest countries on the world, but high reliance on these resources makes it vulnerable to economic instability of oil and gas prices (Oman Economic Review, 2016). Decreasing this reliance is essential for sustainable
economic improvement (Schwab, 2016). This includes growing the non-hydrocarbon sector in the gross domestic product (GDP) which can be achieved expanding the economy (Supreme Council for Planning, 2016). The Omani government has considered enlarging the role of the private sector as an instrument in GDP. In this situation, the private sector has moved towards small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which involves particular strategies, arrangements and execution programmes helped by assessing the practices of industrial countries that have flourished in accelerating SMEs and entrepreneurship and have developed a complete ecosystem capturing different determinants of entrepreneurship movements at microeconomic and macroeconomic levels (Obadic, 2013). Several developing countries, including Oman, are working to update their entrepreneurship ecosystems to achieve performance on par with that of industrial countries.

A first step to inspiring entrepreneurship is mapping and gauging the existing entrepreneurial ecosystem in Oman. This allows for analysis of possible challenges and challenges that can be tackled during particular interventions (Supreme Council for Planning, 2016). Entrepreneurial ecosystems are usually attractive in terms of their educational strength or their physical characteristics that give new opportunities (Acs et al., 2014). At the initial point every entrepreneur needs some type of support to get started and gain stimulus and power to help every day of business activity (Mason & Brown, 2013). The type of support needed depends on the type of business, and needs will change over time. Particularly in developing countries, people have enthusiasm for self-employment and entrepreneurship, but support is not always available (Marcotte, 2014). The basics of entrepreneurship ecosystems have different roles in attracting and empowering people to become entrepreneurs, which is good for individuals and for the country (Feld, 2012).

A key feature of entrepreneurial ecosystems is to emphasise the importance of entrepreneurship, mutually for individuals and for the country. (Stam, 2015). Its attitude is to attract those who have the dream of being self-employed but do not fully understand the entrepreneurship concept, and those who are in need of help from the government. The entrepreneurial ecosystems concept has been argued by numerous scholars concerning the impact on influencing the creation of new firms and new entrepreneurs (Isenberg, 2011). Oman has recognised the role of entrepreneurs as actors, able to add to economic development and be the agents of a novel wealth making. However, entrepreneurship ecosystems in Oman are debatable as the concept itself is new, and is not emphasised in most of the Oman economy.

2- Literature review

The idea of entrepreneurial ecosystems relates to the individual and institutional characteristics which either promote or discard the entrepreneur’s preference to take risks. Professor Daniel Isenberg from
Babson College stressed its importance in the Harvard Business Review (Isenberg, 2010). The essential ideas were first developed in the 1980s and 1990s, when research began to go beyond the individual and look at social, cultural, and economic influences (Stangler & Bell-Masterson, 2015).

These common field areas contain numerous features that support in highly difficult and distinguishing circumstances. Recognising general causes is of limited value. Isenberg focuses on the importance of the concepts for each ecosystem under a unique set of conditions. This mostly overlaps with the well-known nine features and eight pillars as described by the World Economic Forum (2014). The main consideration is that entrepreneurial ecosystems do not emerge just anywhere. They need fruitful soil and may appear where there is already a strong knowledge foundation and there are important figures in science and engineering (Mack & Mayer, 2016). Knowledge institutions such as research and development departments, in universities, companies, and the public sector, are good resources for skillful workers who can begin businesses. However, full benefit will not be gained without a receptive business environment and good use of technology (Tsvetkova, 2015). This is like an ecosystem which instead of looking at organisms (Arshed et al., 2014). As said by (Feldman, 2014) “entrepreneurial ecosystems focus on cultures, institutions, and networks that have built up over time, rather than the emergence of order within global markets”

The success of an ecosystem centers on key features such as human capital, funding, and services. The players concerned are the talent, investors, mentors, advisors, entrepreneurial peers. There also needs to be an official government and regulatory framework, and unofficial institutions (cultural support) facilitating entrepreneurship and contact with consumers abroad (Casadesus- et al., 2013).

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor categorizes entrepreneurs into two behavioral types, necessity entrepreneurs and opportunity entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship is a necessity in localities where there is no better alternative employment. Unemployment itself may open their eyes to possibilities. Opportunity entrepreneurs follow business opportunities or individual interests as their preferred way forward, whether or not employment is available. There is an urgent need to highlight how the existing elements of entrepreneurial ecosystems can help entrepreneurs to grow their business in Oman. Articles on this subject are scarce, which indicates a delay in research in the academic field. The concept of entrepreneurial ecosystems needs deep research (Guo& Ahlstrom, 2016).

3- Elements of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Oman

There was wide participation from different stakeholders in the Oman entrepreneurship ecosystem. For the purposes of this study, we identified
and streamlined the eight main pillars and components.

1. Accessible markets
2. Human capital/workforce
3. Funding and finance
4. Support system
5. Government and regulatory framework
6. Education and training
7. Major universities as catalysts
8. Cultural support

3-1 Human capital workforce

Large amounts of human capital are a essential predecessor for success in the modern knowledge economy, and qualified employees are a key component of the efficiency of new challenges (Anderson & Witvliet, 2008). The growth of Oman’s human resources is a key part of the plan to accomplish the diversification strategy (Al Lamki, 2000). The plan comprises policies created by the government to generate more jobs in order to provide work opportunities for the growing number of Omani job seekers. Another purpose is upgrading of the skills of the Omani workforce through developments in technological education, vocational teaching and higher education (Das & Gokhale, 2009). Oman is considered a labour importing country. The government tends to import asian employees from several countries such as India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (Abdullah, 2009). Most Omanis favor government jobs as these are seen as more safe and steady than private jobs, and considered to bring better reward and status (Al Sawafi, 2012). In order to decrease reliance on foreign labour and to tackle unemployment, the government launched the Omanisation policy, which seeks to change expatriates with skilled nationals in the labour force. Omanisation was adopted as an integrated national policy within Vision 2020 (Omoankhanlen, 2013). Its purposes were be accomplished through the following strategies:

1. Providing Omani employees with the training and qualifications to adapt to labour market demands
2. Supporting women’s involvement in the labour force
3. Increasing the effectiveness of Omani labour
4. It seems that the Omanisation policy is just a means of increasing the quantity of Omani workers without taking into account the quality of these workers.
3-2 Accessible Markets

The marketplace is an important mode of governance in entrepreneurial ecosystems. It is mostly concerned with the range and enforcement of government instructions and their role in attracting or restraining business activities. (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014). Market entrance is accordingly a real test for new entrepreneurs with new ideas for potentially disruptive products. These entrepreneurs tend to be unaccustomed to government regulations, procurement methods, commercial accounting and business practices.

Since 1971 the government of Oman has adopted an open market strategy to bring in local and overseas investment in almost all regions. Oman is not an active exporting country yet. Non-oil exports contained only 13.5% of total exports in 2017 (NCSI, 2017). Several government efforts have been made to develop the industrialized sector's influence on the market. There are numerous challenges, such as having a small narrow marketplace, little marketplace purchasing power, competitive imported products, and weak connections to export marketplace which limit new business set ups (Porter, 2004). For foreign entrepreneurship, Oman offers a set of incentives to attract investors for the industrial sector. Their recommendations are:

1. No restrictions on reporting requirements or private capital movement
2. 5-year tax holidays, renewable by another 5 years
3. Low-interest loans from the Oman Development Bank (limited) and the Ministry of Commerce & Industry
4. Subsidized plant facilities and utilities at the Industrial Estates

3-3 Funding and Finance

There is a lack of access to finance. Funding is extremely important in the initial stages of a business. The money is required to rent a premises, hire staff, purchase capital goods or fund any other expenditure necessary for starting a business.

Accessibility of finance is an additional critical factor of entrepreneurial ecosystems. It includes the gathering of investors to promote funding. Attracting investors is of vital importance both when disseminating the seeds of the business, and developing it (Wang, 2017). Investment could take the form of offering loans at a low interest rate. Seed capital financing is another area where Oman has a severe shortage (Pasmed, 2016). Existing public channel resources for venture capital and angel financing are not available at present. For instance, a joint stock corporation, Fund for Development of Youth Projects, the first venture capital fund, incorporated 1998, focused on citizens of 20-40 years of age, and those who could obtain a maximum of 49% of seed capital. But this fund was not processed
for a couple of years. The main reasons have not been identified, but it was assumed that the main reasons were lack of experienced management to assess entrepreneurial requirements. In 2008, the fund went through a restructuring procedure, as a new board and director took over, yet small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) still have difficulties in accessing finance.

3 - Support System

One of the most fundamental needs of starting a business is support system. Oman has established advisors, professional services, incubators and network of entrepreneurial peers. To effectively run a business, an entrepreneur can benefit from a well functioning business incubators. The main idea of business incubators is to support entrepreneurs to create successful start-ups within a reasonable period of time (Cekada, 2010). Thus, the main objective of a business incubator is to “offer three categories of services: infrastructure, coaching, and networking” (Carmeli & Binyamin, 2010). Effective governance of business incubators is required through clear authorization of its operating framework and articulation by its management.

An important undertaking would be to certify that services being provided by business incubators are aligned with market requirements and more importantly driven by the spirit of innovation and enhancement of competitive advantage (Budhwar & Mellahi, 2006).

Vision Oman 2020 is a plan for the economic growth and future of Oman which puts stress on the expansion of small and medium enterprises (Al Obthani et al., 2013). As part of the initiative to inspire the growth of entrepreneurial training, programmes have been developed in Oman. The country has embarked on a sustain program as follows: the SANAD programme which is an initiative to promote entrepreneurship among young people by providing loans and skill to new graduates. Know about Business (KAB) is another initiative by the Omani government under the sponsorship of the International Labour Organization (ILO) which focuses on the management teaching of entrepreneurs to increase their entrepreneurial attitude (Katou et al., 2010).

In terms of science parks, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry started in 2003 the first and only IT Park, called ‘Knowledge Oasis Muscat’ (KOM). KOM is located in the capital area just a few kilometers from Sultan Qaboos University. The park now hosts around 60 local and international established businesses such as Microsoft and Motorola. It also contains two new private colleges that are specialised in the field of IT and ICT. KOM has the only business incubator programme called ‘The Knowledge Mine’ (TKM). The programme presents subsidised office room and other sustained services for nascent entrepreneurs in technology-dependent businesses. However, the capability of this programme is limited to 15 novel firms and currently all spaces are occupied. Although several of these government and non-
government projects have great aspirations and good objectives, there is suspicion about the effectiveness and quality of the services provided.

3-5 Culture

Culture here represents how much entrepreneurial motivation is present within a society. The media, government, educational institutions, social organisations and professional organisations all play an important role in shaping perspectives about entrepreneurship (Chan & Chheang, 2008). Whether or not entrepreneurship will thrive in a particular society is dependent on the extent to which innovation and risk taking is encouraged in that society (Sun, 2008). Culture has been identified as a key element in maintaining entrepreneurial ecosystems, including social customs and approaches (Isenberg, 2011).

The attitude and mindset towards entrepreneurship is another challenge that must be addressed. Positive attitude is a very important mindset that entrepreneurs must possess. Inspite of having specialized or technological skills, if they do not have the positive attitude, they will not be able to achieve the goals that they want to achieve (Choudhury, 2007).

Some good Omani entrepreneurs have come up bravely with an initiative to generate jobs, and these people are much appreciated, but not universally. A person with a government job or military rank is often regarded with confidence, whereas a successful entrepreneur is not. In Omani society, successful self-sufficient role models are scarce (Moideenkutty et al., 2011). Oman’s culture in general was found by Hosftede to be high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, low in individualism, and high on masculinity (Azar & Drogendijk, 2016). Culture and social customs in Oman are similar to those in other Arab countries. These factors have discouraged the entry of novel businesses in Oman (Owtram, 2004).

People may not find sufficient reasons to take the risk of starting or joining businesses if safe and well-paid public sector jobs are available. Policymakers need to lead in bringing about a shift in broad societal attitudes towards risk and uncertainty.

3-6 Government Policy

The culture behind government regulation should be to create ease for aspiring entrepreneurs who wish to start a venture. Regulations should be established which decrease the cost of starting a business venture, in addition tax regulations should be softened for start-ups. One may conclude that the government has been terribly myopic when developing a regulatory framework for the growth of entrepreneurship in the country (Truitt, 2011). The role of the government is crucial as regulators. The state provides appropriate rules and guidelines by which entrepreneurs must adhere. In the absence of a proper regulatory framework, adverse outcomes may result in sheer profiteering and speculation. A structured
policy framework for small entrepreneurs is still lacking in government regulations.

Overall, administrative and licensing procedures involve many restrictions, complexity, and bureaucracy. Ineffective government and bureaucracy was one of the top troubles raised in a survey of Omani respondents about the most difficult elements for doing business (Zerovec & Bontenbal, 2011). Further, Oman was ranked 65 out of 183 in ease of doing business in 2010 (World Bank, 2017). This rank is just above Namibia and Rwanda and last among GCC countries.

To encourage investment, there are a number of support programs available including subsidized zones, funding and industrial parks wherein the government is placing heavy investment with a view to ensure future growth.

3- 7 Universities and institutions.

The entrepreneurial university theme has attracted interest as part of a broader context of rising knowledge-based economies (Rasmussen et al., 2014). It is connected with rising pressures facing universities to add to socio-economic development (Curi et al., 2012). This pressurises universities to create modifications at different levels, from organisational measurements, academic and knowledge production measurement, formation of organisational links among universities and outside entities (industry and government), and the cultural and beliefs dimension (Siegel & Wright, 2015). This has also led to governments around the world, mainly in Oman, launching public policies to sustain and encourage universities as entrepreneurial bodies. These policies appear to focus on knowledge commercialisation by encouraging universities to work together with industry. The most important role for universities is to set up a community of students who convey new ideas and rush the intellectual ability of the community. The Omani government considers the knowledge-based economy to be a good option for sustainable socio-economic growth, and sees Omani universities as playing a crucial role in this aspiration. In most Omani university departments, there is no movement linked to campus-wide entrepreneurship awareness, entrepreneurship teaching programmes, or inter-disciplinary problem-based learning. However, recently there have been some modest initiatives introducing optional entrepreneurial courses at SQU. Student learning is influenced by the state being an oil-based economy that offers free education for all and a secure job after graduation. This cultural approach influences the learning system as a whole, and university education programmes in particular. Despite the clear desire from state authorities to move towards a knowledge-based economy where education plays a critical role, the learning environment is seen to be memorization-driven rather than knowledge-driven. Furthermore, additional activities focus on sport, art, and traditional culture rather than entrepreneurial activities. In this context, students aim to get good degrees
in order to get esteemed governmental jobs. In general, Omani students are hesitant to practice self-employment as a career option. This approach puts huge pressure on state authorities to offer safe jobs for increasing numbers of graduates every year.

### 3-8 Education and training.

The purpose of the education system as a whole and entrepreneurial education in particular must be to create an ideology of self-reliance (Sharma, 2009). The curriculum must cover elements of creative thinking skills, risk management, ability to identify opportunities, inculcating the right work ethics which are currently lacking among some Omani college graduates. It is not just about creating new business but being able to produce future leaders equipped with the required skills, training and attitude that will foster challenges and change the status quo (Rajasekar & Al Raee, 2014). The strength of entrepreneurial education lies in its ability to influence the attitude of people towards entrepreneurship and acts as a catalyst for those who might lack confidence in going to business on their own. Entrepreneurship Education is primarily concerned with providing students with the requisite information, skills and attitude of creating and operating their own business ventures successfully, while using the existing resources to develop themselves and the country in general. There is increasing interest to entrepreneurship and education in Oman as evidenced by its Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) practices with the Ministry of Manpower running Colleges of Technology to enable delivery of information and skills required by Oman (Rajasekar & Khan, 2013). Entrepreneurship education in Oman includes research, teacher training, curriculum improvement, pilot projects, and cooperation with NGOs.

The education system must take measures to provide opportunities for learning and to engage in actual entrepreneurial enhancement projects and activities. Activities must be made available wherein students put the theories they learned into practical use. These can be done by business simulation with the aim to understand the entire business cycle, how to assess risks and how to identify opportunities and develop actual business plans. Underlying a sound entrepreneurial education is the ability to assess, evaluate and provide appropriate training areas that address challenges faced by entrepreneurs and administer learning interventions to address the challenges (Swaiies, & Al Fahdi, 2011). The educational system in Oman, has been promoting memorising and imitating rather than encouraging novelty and there are no serious initiatives for encouraging innovative teaching. Currently, there is no business-linked awareness in the curriculum (Belwal et al., 2015). The government is spending significant amounts on education, yet the outcomes have been unsatisfactory. Students have graduated without the talents they need to thrive in employment. Also, the percentage of uneducated and jobless youngpeople is very high in Oman.
4- Conclusion

The problem is not the lack of entrepreneurship, but rather a negative macro environment and infrastructure, which pushes entrepreneurial activity into idle and damaging economic methods instead of wealth creation (Oman Economic Review, 2016). In Oman, most entrepreneurial activity does not focus on opportunity. People are forced to start up new businesses in order to survive due to high unemployment. Moreover, most of these entrepreneurs are in the informal sectors of heavy expenses in the establishment stage, which also restricts their resources in expansion plans. A stable entrepreneurial ecosystem in Oman is possible through a much improved and diversified economy, although some weaknesses can be identified in employment opportunities, Omani nationals need frequent notification and training on how to make use of existing entrepreneurial opportunities in mining, tourism and agriculture. This could be made practical by a much harmonised system of administration, especially in research and developmental institutions. Also, the government needs to launch some innovative programmes to promote research and development, creativity and sustainability. The programme mapping has to be done jointly to achieve these entrepreneurial goals and other research and development practices. Recently, the government of Oman has taken new steps and measures on entrepreneurship and innovations by realising that the state should not focus only on oil and gas exports, but should increase the number of SMEs, and work towards a knowledge-driven economy. In this context, the Research Council has come up with the idea of converting student projects into start-ups by proper funding. This will promote innovation in the country’s economic development.

The Sultanate is mainly depending on government institutions in almost all sectors. A stable and fine policy programme that can unite entrepreneurial activities will have an impact on the country’s economic success. For this, Oman needs a much wider entrepreneurship policy approach, including coordination of several bodies including both the private and the public sector. The government needs to give guidance by playing a major role in administering the policy programmes. The push needs to be on the quality and not the quantity of entrepreneurship sustained programmes. A highly flexible and committed government unit has to be formed with all the ministerial powers to govern and advocate entrepreneurship and its further development. Finally, the focus has to be on opportunity entrepreneurship rather than necessity entrepreneurship so as to safeguard the future of Oman. Encouraging and nurturing entrepreneurship initiatives will benefit the country in the long term given low enterprise establishment and growth rate. The contribution of entrepreneurship to economic growth and employment creation cannot be denied especially in the context of Oman. Policymakers should understand that this initiative is to make Oman an entrepreneurial economy as a long-term commitment. They have to be prepared to be patient and to persevere before they would be able to see tangible results.
5. **Recommendations**

Various objectives need to be the focus in order to promote a healthy climate for entrepreneurship in Oman:

1. Analysis of the ecosystem, focusing not only on result-oriented entrepreneurship but also on the restricted factors such as educational and societal qualities. This will enable reconstruction of an overall ecosystem.

2. Woman youth entrepreneurs need to be increased through diversity to bring entrepreneurial promotion. The study of ecosystems should centre not only on results but also on the restricted educational, societal and material qualities that maintain entrepreneurial action, and the ways in which these qualities work in tandem and recreate the general ecosystem.

3. Officials should connect in open talk with entrepreneurs to find out ecosystem solutions that are appropriate for local circumstances in Oman.

4. Creating networks between big companies and promising entrepreneurs should be ingredients in any public policy to develop entrepreneurship. Confidence and contacts are critical for achieving success in business in Oman.

5. Educators and society leaders must support practices that sustain entrepreneurial ambitions and convey success stories to Oman.

6. Entrepreneurs themselves must be in a position to direct the promotion of ecosystems in Oman, by generating entrepreneurial society and offering to contribute to strategies.

7. Different actors in an entrepreneurship ecosystem in Oman should support other stakeholders in building most of their needed strengths.

8. Entrepreneurs work best in a strategy and regulatory environment in Oman that holds few obstacles, offers incentives to innovation, and protects individual property.

9. Creating entrepreneurship policy also has to consider the Omani culture and values. Embracing entrepreneurial education right from lower levels, proliferation within tertiary and higher learning institutions is critical towards having a population prepared to appreciate entrepreneurship as an alternative to employment.

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is a growing concept in Oman and the country is focusing on this initiative for business expansion, to further technological progress and create wealth in the economy. The importance is paramount as it creates jobs, enhance creativity and innovation. It also helps young people to be independent and confident by making them socially responsible in contributing to the economy of the country. The growing need of jobs and slump in the oil prices has led Oman to push entrepreneur initiatives, and also impart education and training in this field. Number of organizations and colleges has started encouraging and promoting entrepreneurship training, programs, courses and conducting workshops in this field. Several Ministry initiatives and funds are deployed to promote and enhance entrepreneurship in the country. Hence, it will be interesting to know how the youngsters in Oman especially the college students in HEIs perceive these initiatives, and how far they have intentions to become entrepreneurs. In this regard a study was conducted in and around Muscat region to study the entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions of the college students in Oman.

A questionnaire was distributed to the final year students in nine HEIs by the researchers. The profile of the sample consisted of 122 females and 96 males, which accounted for around 218 respondents. The data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis. The outcome from the results supported the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Omani students have shown inclination towards becoming entrepreneurs and self-employed. The variables of TPB like subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, attitude, and participation in entrepreneurship courses have positive relationship with entrepreneurial intentions. Interestingly, the study contradicted earlier studies and does not show any significant impact of personality trait on risk taking propensity and attitude. This might be an indication of their apprehensions towards financial risks and constraints.

This study is a humble attempt to bridge the gap in literature by reflecting on Omani students perspectives towards entrepreneurship and education related to it. The significance of the study is to provide Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) and different organizations with the results and to provide recommendations to enhance the awareness level and value of entrepreneurship so that the culture and environment to embrace and foster entrepreneurship prevails amongst the students. The recommendations can further create the environment suitable for nurturing new ventures which are going to be important vehicles for the economy in Oman.
Keywords: entrepreneurial intentions, Omani college students, TPB, Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), Oman

1. Introduction

The entrepreneurs create new business opportunities and seek resources and innovative methods to achieve them. Entrepreneurship helps in new job creations and at present it is essential to curb springing unemployment problems in Oman. Many college students in Oman do not get appropriate jobs inspite of the Omanization policy prevailing in country. The Ministry and various colleges are promoting this concept so that young people are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and funds to start their venture when they complete their degrees from different colleges/universities. The students need to realize their potential opportunities and that presently the country cannot rely on oil resources and tourism sector alone. The development of economy and innovation can be channelized if strong initiatives and policies are directed towards them (Winston and Zimmerman, 2004). It is important for the colleges/universities to reap this interest and promote entrepreneurial intentions amongst college students in Oman. The study aims to study the current status of entrepreneurship in Oman and how far the college students are interested to take up these opportunities. Further, the study will explore the attitude, personal traits needed to become an entrepreneur in Oman and their viewpoint of entrepreneurship as one of their career options.

2. Literature Review

The literature review has plethora of studies reflecting the concept of entrepreneurship. There are four main personality traits which influences the intention to become an entrepreneur. There are four different factors that influences the intentions which are as follows; contextual related factors, personal background, motivational factors and personality traits factors (Linan, 2004). Researchers have emphasized that entrepreneurship can be enhanced by increasing the knowledge, influence and attitude of the students. There should be urge amongst the youth to solve unemployment problems and self-employment drive (Brännback and Kickul, 2007). Oman has signed an agreements with UNESCO and Stratt REAL foundation to promote education in entrepreneurship. This kind of education will help in enhancing the ability to recognize the potential opportunities in the environment and develop the abilities, skills and confidence to pursue their goals. Furthermore, it also nourishes their ideas, intelligence and capabilities (Luthje and Franke, 2003). The researchers have also argued that macro-environment plays a very important role in the success of this concept and intention to start a business. Various courses, incubators, certifications and related degrees can enhance the interest and facilitate the students to become self-dependent and confident (Bonin Falk and Sunde, 2006). Intention is a state of mind which leads to individual intention towards specific goal or path. Researchers have also associated intent with courage,
persistence and perseverance (McClelland, 1985). Further researchers have added that behavioral intentions are based on belief, attention and expectations.

The three important and proponent theories revolves around theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), entrepreneur model (Shapero and Shokol, 1982) and social cognitive or self-efficacy theory (Balan, 2012). Theory of planned behavior (TBP) emphasizes that the human intentions have relationship with their subsequent actions. The three beliefs which affect human behavior are normative, control and behavioral beliefs. Behavioral beliefs focus on attitude of the human, normative deals with people expectations and social norms that control or affect the performance (Ahmed, 2010). According to researcher, when the control is appropriately affecting the behavior the intention of the person is prominent when there is any opportunity (Azjen, 2002). Shapero model incorporates three variables namely feasibility, propensity and desirability for intention to be an entrepreneur. It was found that the perceived propensity has stronger influence than other two factors. Research has indicated that there is a positive correlation between student education in entrepreneur and decision of self-employment. Education and training can nurture the self-empowerment, values and role modeling skills (Ro and Yin, 2013). It gets further influenced by personality traits as it affects the intention to become entrepreneur. The foremost problem for setting business is the initial finance and a good business plan (Bird, 1988). Market conditions, government policies and initiatives and funds are other prominent reasons affecting entrepreneurs. Autio et al (2001) explained that career choices and preferences at college level can further influence entrepreneurship intention.

2.1. Theoretical discussions

2.1.1 Theory of planned behavior

In order to know the change in the behavior of the people, the theory of planned behavior is developed by Aizen (1991), hereafter TPB. The central factor TPB is to identify the attention of individuals to display a specific behavior. In case if an individual have a strong intention to perform a certain behavior then stronger are the chances of performing it.
Figure 1: Janzen’s (1991) theory of planned behavior.

According to Aizen (1991), the intention to intention and actual behavior can be changed based on three factors. The attitude and behavior one has towards the behavior is the first factor. A positive attitude can be developed by a student towards entrepreneurship if the parent is an entrepreneur. Another factor is the subjective norm which is a social factor. Individual will have a social pressure from the environment which makes them to decide whether to perform a behavior. For example, a parent having a negative experience with entrepreneurship will never force their children in the same field. Third factor is the perceived behavioral control which focuses on the fact that apart from the motivation and intention to perform a certain behavior, the actual behavior is also dependent on the perception of the difficulty to perform a certain behavior. The antecedents of each of these factors were identified further research. Wide range of human behavior was tested using TPB. This has been used to explain the structuring of advertising campaigns (Autio, Keeley, Klofsten, Parker and Hay, 2001). The change in the behavior of the receiver is not only dependent on providing information, but also on change in the attitude and perception of the product. According to Krueger et al. (2000) the voting decisions, problem of drinking and losing weight were also explained using TPB (Aizen, 1991).

2.1.2 Model of entrepreneurship event

‘Entrepreneurship Event’ model was created by Shaper (1975) which emphasizes that reliability of other behaviors and the tendency to grab the opportunities will decide the intention to start a business. Shapero (1975) also highlighted that perception is important in predicting the intention. A model was developed by Krueger (1993) after testing the thoughts of Shapero (1975). Desirability, feasibility and propensity to act are the three variables that explain the changes in intentions towards entrepreneurship in Oman. (Krueger, 1993).
The importance of understanding the theory of self-efficacy in the entrepreneurship behavior context was stressed by Krueger et al. (2000).

### 2.1.3 The structural model of entrepreneurship intent

According to Luthje and Franke (2003, p.136) the entrepreneurship activities can be successfully stimulated by some universities, and hence included in their structural model of entrepreneurship intent.

The above figure explains how the contextual factors result in entrepreneurial intent and attitude towards entrepreneurship in Oman. According to Luthje and Franke (2003) the risk-taking and internal focus are the two main personality traits that need to be integrated. Researchers have developed various intention models over a period of time based on previous research. In a Pre-entrepreneurship event (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003)
attitude and behavior theory (Aizen, 1991) are focused by most of the intention models. Similarly, some models are focused on self-efficacy and social learning theory (Bandura, 1997). The model related to psychology and economy which affects individual’s intentions to start a new venture was developed by Davidson (1995). This model was tested by Autio et al. (1997) with a group of university students.

Another model was framed by Shaper (1975) which is related to the impact of desirability and feasibility on start-up ventures which was then tested by Krueger (1993). A model of intentional action was also suggested by Bird (1988). According to Bird (1988) the models based on entrepreneurial intentions have two dimensions. Firstly, is the presence of elements of rationality versus intuition in the entrepreneurial intention models. Secondly, it includes a dimension of location. All these models have focused on the various constructs which can explain intentions of individuals for choosing entrepreneurship.

2.2 Entrepreneurship and students

Entrepreneurship education is one of the major solutions with the growing demand for new jobs. The effectiveness of this education can be improved by understanding the antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions among students. The entrepreneurial intention has a direct influence on the student’s participation in the entrepreneurial intention and indirect influence on the personality. Many skills such as self-empowerment, values, role modeling and system thinking can be improved. These are considered to be essential skills for all the students who wants to be entrepreneurs (Roposo and Paco, 2011). The entrepreneurship activity is greatly affected by the education and training given to the students. This will change the personal attitudes rather than delivering theoretical knowledge of developed countries from past experiences.

The role of teachers is very important. Right and promising students can be identified and encouraged to participate in their field by the teachers with extensive knowledge. According to Cheung (2012), the purpose, structure and interrelationship of business with different sectors of economy and society can be understood by educating the students. It is the responsibility of the students to develop the growth and development of the economy. One major problem of the business start-ups is of getting the finance in the early stages. If the risk is shared with the public and private sectors, the availability of funds will increase (European Commission, 2003). Influence can be made for career preferences of students Autio et al. (1997). The significant role of universities in entrepreneurial intentions is identified, and it will be included in superficial support factors which are a part of related factors (Crant, 1996; Luthje & Franke, 2003).

Customers are individuals who are interested in new products and services and are involved in creating new products and services. Sufficient time and effort is required for entrepreneurship.
Time and effort is required to the process of entrepreneurship. To make an idea operational and launch it to the market is considered the most difficult part of entrepreneurship. It is necessary to mitigate the risk, which are of financial, psychological or social nature. The role of indicator is to consider rewards against efforts. Almost 2% to 15.5 new jobs were created in current job pool, and the creation of jobs is directly related to the level of entrepreneurship activities (Reynold et al., 2004).

In the economic growth and increase in the self-employment an important role is being played by entrepreneurial activity (Folster, Wennekers and Thurik (1999). This will have a positive effect on the overall employment. These startups and the competitions among them will bring factors like innovation, which will ultimately increase the economic growth. A long-term equilibrium exists between economic growth and self-employment. In encouraging and promoting SMEs stakeholders play an important role. This will help the economy to shift the focus from oil based to non-oil based. Various programmes, training and vocational courses are implemented which are only available in Muscat region which make it difficult for an ordinary citizen to achieve.

### 2.3 Oman and Entrepreneurship Initiatives

Recent years Oman has started focusing on promoting entrepreneurship as they provide employment opportunities and assists in economic diversification thereby creating a sustainable economic development. As a part of fostering entrepreneurship spirit and promoting SMEs various courses and trainings are being provided in various colleges and universities. Vocational training centers are available for the students and people. Many initiatives are being taken up by nonprofit organizations to promote the knowledge and essence of entrepreneurship. Al Raffud Fund, a financial Organization to promote entrepreneurial growth among Omani citizens is one among the initiatives by government of Oman to support entrepreneurs. It provides various financial services and other business support services to budding entrepreneurs. Another major initiative is The Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Riyada). It provides guidance and a consultancy service for various entrepreneurial projects. It also organizes various workshops, seminars to enhance the skills of the entrepreneurs to run their business in line with International Best Practices. Riyada is also involved in assisting to market the products locally and internationally. Riyada Talk was initiated to connect the entrepreneurs with investors. Various Organizations in Oman had joined hands with Riyada to provide training and Development in their respective fields to SMEs'. Recently Riyada has also launched technical support an initiative for SMEs in cooperation with PDO. This targets around 300 SME entrepreneurs with the aim of making the cooperation between Riyada, the private sector and SMEs more stronger (Oman observer, 2018).

Various bank loans, schemes, incubators, youth funds, equity funding
etc. are also provided to support the budding entrepreneurs. One major constraint is that these facilities and programmes are available in Muscat region, and it is difficult for the common man residing in the interiors to get these facilities. Recently, the sixth edition of Global Entrepreneurial Week (GEW) Initiative was organized by Sultanate of Oman under the theme “Failure taught me” to empower entrepreneurs in the country in Knowledge oasis, Muscat (Oman Observer, 2018). This event focused on developing awareness about the challenges, business opportunities investment readiness for entrepreneurs. This has also provided consultancy services for new SME’s. Furthermore, Sultanate is hoping to commence new markets for SME’s in the country as part of EU-GCC dialogue on Economic Diversification. In order to support the innovation and industry system in Oman a contract was recently signed by the Omani Authority for Partnership for Development (OAPD) with BELL Company in United States to set up a Prototyping Centre. (Times of Oman, 2018). According to this agreement an integrated center will be framed in the Sultanate for SME’s, industrial institutions and students to turn their creative ideas into reality. The study will further enhance the knowledge pool of entrepreneurship intentions and personality traits for Omani youth so as to channelize and motivate them for these ventures.

3. Problem definition and Objectives

The study focuses to find out, whether the Omani students have the intention to become entrepreneurs and whether they have, the personality traits for the same. In addition to the factors that influence them to adopt entrepreneurship. ??

Objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To find out how students’ demographic factors and their intention to become entrepreneurs in Oman is related ...?.

2. To study the impact of entrepreneur education, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurial intention for college students in Oman

3. To examine the influence of attitudinal factors of Omani students’ on entrepreneur intentions.

4. To examine the risk taking propensity, attitudinal factors and personality traits on Omani college going students’ and their entrepreneurial intentions.

4. Research Methodology

The present study is based on the positivism approach and has used quantitative data analysis with hypothesis testing. The research strategy is based on survey method as it processes the opinions of the respondents. The major advantage of this approach is that it can collect large pool
of data economically from the population. The target population of the present study are the Omani students in various colleges and universities who are in the third or final year of graduation. Sampling method was non probability purposive sampling method. The colleges are scattered and all around Oman and time and resource constraints have limited the study in and around Muscat region. The targeted sample size was 300, out of which only 218 fully filled in questionnaires were selected for data analysis. The sample has been collected from nine HEIs in and around Muscat region. Response rate was above 70%.

Data collection was done by secondary data and primary data collection. Various journal articles, external reviews and market reports on Oman were studied. Published reports of Ministry and relevant websites were also consulted. The primary data was collected through questionnaire. The students in various colleges were approached in Muscat and were requested to fill in the questionnaires in English. Due to the anonymity and confidentiality issue names of the colleges has not been disclosed.

The description of the respondents is as follows:

Omani 4th /3rd yr. students 218
Age 18 and above
Gender Mixed

The questionnaire had two parts, the first section was to collect demographic profile of students and the second section was to capture the responses related to entrepreneurship intention through statements which used 5-point likert scale starting from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A pilot study was conducted through 20 respondents in Muscat region. The filled in questionnaire was checked for reliability and validity, and all the comments and suggestions were incorporated.

4.1 Conceptual Model

Figure 4: Conceptual model for entrepreneurship intention of college students in Oman

Figure-4 is shows the conceptual model of the present study. The dependent
variables are entrepreneurship intentions, participation in entrepreneurship education and attitude towards entrepreneurship. Independent variables are proactive approach, risk taking propensity, perceived behavioral control and subjective norms. The model will help in understanding the relationship between different variables.

### 4.1.1 Hypotheses

In Figure-4, the entrepreneurship intentions are the ultimate dependent variable. It is important to measure the antecedents of intentions of becoming entrepreneurs. It is interesting to know that graduating students’ intentions for taking up entrepreneurship as a career. The theory of planned behavior (Azjen, 1991) has regarded behavior as an impact factor for entrepreneur intentions. Autio et al, 2001 remarked that attitude and subjective norm has a positive or significant impact on entrepreneurship intentions. Based on past study, the following Hypotheses were framed:

- **H1**: Attitude of Omani students towards entrepreneurship inclination as career option has a significant impact on their entrepreneurship intentions.
- **H2**: Subjective norm has a significant impact on entrepreneurship intentions of Omani students.
- **H3**: Perceived behavioral control has a positive effect on the Omani students’ intentions to become entrepreneurs.
- After studying various models and TPB and developing hypotheses based on the previous studies, the researchers have added hypothesis related to education and entrepreneurship intentions.
- **H4**: Omani student participation in Oman entrepreneurship courses or education has a positive effect on their entrepreneurship intentions.
- **H5**: Risk taking propensity of Omani students has a significant impact on their attitude towards entrepreneurship.
- **H6**: Proactive personality of Omani students is positively related to their attitude towards entrepreneurship.
- **H7**: Proactive personality of Omani students is positively related to their participation in entrepreneurship education.
- **H8**: Risk taking propensity of Omani students has a significant impact on their participation in entrepreneurship education.

### 4.1.2 Dependent variables

Entrepreneur intentions of Omani students, attitude towards entrepreneurship and participation in entrepreneurship education are three dependent
variables. Researchers has explored whether the mentioned personality traits have any impact on the Omani students’ attitude towards entrepreneurship. Researchers have first found out colleges in Muscat region which are offering such courses and then this dependent factor was also studied whether it influenced the personality traits.

4.1.3 Independent variables

The research model has taken two main personality traits as risk taking propensity and proactive personality. These variables have been taken from Kickul and Gundry (2002) model. Proactive personalities basically influences change in environment, which basically means that these personalities have an ability to scan for any new opportunities, show their initiatives, take action in this regard and reach their goals. Risk taking propensity means the willingness of a person to take risks. It is an interesting trait to study in Omani students. It is worth noting that how high risk aversion and fear of failure affects risk taking behavior of Omani students. Perceived behavioral control sometimes affect the entrepreneurship intentions, and then the subjective norms which are the social pressure of the environment drawn from TPB model.

4.2 Validity and Reliability of Research

Joppe (2000) has emphasized that validity should be maintained and the study should measure what it intends to measure. The researcher has used adapted version of valid scale of Lüthje and Franke (2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Internal reliability for items (Cronbach alpha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omani students attitude towards entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk taking propensity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Behavioral Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Norm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship Intentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in entrepreneurship education in Oman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nunnaly (1978) has stated that 0.5 value is acceptable but from 0.6 and above is more reasonable. It may be noted from the table that all the values were above 0.6, hence accepted.

4.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis was executed through SPSS software and Cronbach
alpha, cross tabs for reliability, correlation and regression analysis were performed. Correlation was conducted to study if any relationship exists in between variables and regression, which helped in understanding the existing relationship between variables. A total of 281 valid respondents questionnaires were used for coding out of 300 questionnaires. The incomplete questionnaire was discarded and further missing items were also checked before feeding the data in SPSS.

4.3.1 Descriptive statistics

The following table-2 depicts select measures of central tendency and dispersion for the different aspects related to the current study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N Valid</th>
<th>218</th>
<th>218</th>
<th>218</th>
<th>218</th>
<th>218</th>
<th>218</th>
<th>218</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.2982</td>
<td>3.2760</td>
<td>2.9541</td>
<td>3.4560</td>
<td>3.1578</td>
<td>3.2381</td>
<td>3.2500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>.07992</td>
<td>.07007</td>
<td>.09835</td>
<td>.09575</td>
<td>.07816</td>
<td>.06982</td>
<td>.04226</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>3.5000</td>
<td>3.3333</td>
<td>3.0000</td>
<td>4.0000</td>
<td>3.6000</td>
<td>3.3333</td>
<td>3.2500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>1.17994</td>
<td>1.03455</td>
<td>1.45206</td>
<td>1.41369</td>
<td>1.15398</td>
<td>1.02847</td>
<td>.62402</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>1.39225</td>
<td>1.07030</td>
<td>2.10849</td>
<td>1.99851</td>
<td>1.33167</td>
<td>1.05776</td>
<td>.38940</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is noted that the respondents (Omani college students) mean values depicted that the constructs for Attitude, Proactive personality and Risk taking propensity are very important factors for entrepreneurship intentions.

4.3.2 Correlations Analysis

Pearson correlation test was performed to analyze correlation analysis. The results are tabulated below:
### Table 3: Correlations Analysis of the sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>EI</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>PE</th>
<th>PP</th>
<th>RTP</th>
<th>SN</th>
<th>PBC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>-.080</td>
<td>.378(**)</td>
<td>.718(**)</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>.370(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.717</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.751</td>
<td>.721</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>.025</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.074</td>
<td>-.175(**)</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.717</td>
<td>.279</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td>.373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.080</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>-.151(*)</td>
<td>-.195(**)</td>
<td>-.210(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>.279</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td>.378(**)</td>
<td>-.175(**)</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.297(**)</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.183(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEE in Oman</td>
<td></td>
<td>.718(**)</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.297(**)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.243(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.811</td>
<td>.760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td></td>
<td>.022</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.151(*)</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.910(**)</td>
<td>.884(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.751</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.811</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTP</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td></td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>-.195(**)</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.910(**)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.721</td>
<td>.373</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.487</td>
<td>.760</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SN</td>
<td></td>
<td>.370(**)</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>-.210(**)</td>
<td>.183(**)</td>
<td>.243(**)</td>
<td>.884(**)</td>
<td>.798(**)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.762</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBC</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.144(*)</td>
<td>.267(**)</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>-.391(**)</td>
<td>-.053</td>
<td>.220(**)</td>
<td>.218(**)</td>
<td>.169(*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.433</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Interpretations:**

Table 3 highlights all the constructs which are significant at 0.01 significance level like age of the respondents with participation in entrepreneurship education in Oman, Attitude towards entrepreneurship and Subjective Norm; Gender with Perceived Behavioral Control and Attitude towards entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurship Intentions has a significant level
with Subjective Norm, Risk taking propensity and attitude towards entrepreneurship with Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavioral Control and Participation in entrepreneurship education; Similarly, Subjective Norm with Participation in entrepreneurship education in Oman; Proactive Personality with Perceived Behavioral Control, Risk taking propensity and Subjective Norm.

### 4.3.3 Regression and Hypotheses Testing

The researchers have used regression analysis to know and analyze the relationship between different variables for independent and dependent variables. To test the hypotheses, correlations and regression statistical tools were used. Regression analysis predicted how the different constructs of the study affect Entrepreneurship Intentions.

#### Hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H4

The four variables namely attitude towards entrepreneurship, participation on entrepreneurship education, perceived behavioral control and subjective norms on entrepreneurship intention are studied. The research model indicates that the independent variables are perceived behavioral control, subjective norm, risk and proactive propensity. The dependent variable is entrepreneurship intention, attitude and participation in education (entrepreneurship).

### Table 4: Model Summary for H1, H2, H3 and H4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>Change Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R Square Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>df1, df2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. F Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.284(a)</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>1.13926</td>
<td>.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4, 212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a Predictors: (Constant), Participation in entrepreneurship education in Oman, Perceived Behavioral Control, Subjective Norm, and Attitude towards entrepreneurship (Oman)*

### Table 4.1: ANOVA(b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>24.051</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.013</td>
<td>4.640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>275.159</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>1.298</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>299.210</td>
<td>216</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a. Predictors: (Constant), Participation in entrepreneurship education in Oman, Perceived Behavioral Control, Subjective Norm, and Attitude towards entrepreneurship (Oman)

b. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurship Intentions

Table 4 and 4.1 clearly depicts that the value of multiple R is .284 and R square is 0.80. Further, 4.640 is the value of F when the significance value is at .001.

**Table 4.2. Regression Coefficients (a)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B Std. Error Beta</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.602 .604</td>
<td>4.310</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitude towards entrepreneurship (Oman)</td>
<td>.105 .087 .092</td>
<td>2.200</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subjective Norm</td>
<td>.318 .081 .278</td>
<td>3.932</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived Behavioral Control</td>
<td>.366 .140 .194</td>
<td>2.618</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation in entrepreneurship education in Oman</td>
<td>.163 .057 .078</td>
<td>1.105</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurship Intentions

**Summary:**

The multiple regression analysis was done to know how far the Omani students' attitude towards entrepreneurship with regards to Perceived Behavioral Control, Subjective Norm and Participation in entrepreneurship education predicts the intentions towards Entrepreneurship. It was found from the study that the combination of Attitude towards entrepreneurship, Subjective Norm, participation in Entrepreneurship education and Perceived Behavioral Control has a significant relationship with Entrepreneurship Intentions, where F ((4, 212) = 4.640, p < .001. The multiple correlation coefficients for this part was .284, which signify that 8% of the variance of Entrepreneurship Intentions can be explained by the linear combination of above stated variables. The regression equation which predicts the Entrepreneurship Intentions of Omani students is reflected below:

Entrepreneurship Intentions = .105 x Attitude towards entrepreneurship (Oman) + .318 x Subjective Norm + .366 x Perceived Behavioral Control + .163 x Participation in entrepreneurship education in Oman + 2.602.
Hypotheses H5 and H6

Further, Regression analysis was implemented to know the impact of relationships between the personality traits: proactive personality and risk taking propensity on Omani student’s attitude for entrepreneurship. Based on the research model predictors such as Proactive personality and Risk taking propensity are dependent variables in Omani student attitude towards entrepreneurship.

Table 5: Model Summary for H5 and H6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>Change Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.178(a)</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>1.02276</td>
<td>R Square Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.02276</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>3.517</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a  Predictors: (Constant), Risk taking propensity, Proactive Personality

Table 5.1: ANOVA(b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>.Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>7.358</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.679</td>
<td>3.517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>224.898</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>1.046</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>232.255</td>
<td>217</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a  Predictors: (Constant), Risk taking propensity, Proactive Personality
b  Dependent Variable: Attitude towards entrepreneurship (Oman)

Table 5.2- Regression Coefficients(a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>3.161</td>
<td>.202</td>
<td>15.622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proactive Personality</td>
<td>.303</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk taking propensity</td>
<td>-.295</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>-.329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a  Dependent Variable: Attitude towards entrepreneurship (Oman)
Summary

The regression analysis depicts how far the personality traits like Proactive personality and Risk taking propensity can predict Omani students’ attitude for entrepreneurship. The linear combination of independent variables of Risk taking propensity, and Proactive Personality was found to be not significantly related to Omani students’ attitude towards entrepreneurship. Where F ((2, 215) = 3.517, p > .001.

Hypothesis H7 & H8

To know how combined effect of proactive personality and risk taking propensity impact Omani student attitude towards entrepreneurship, regression analysis was implemented. In this case, the predictors were proactive personality and risk taking propensity, and the dependent variable were be Omani students’ attitude towards entrepreneurship.

Table 6: Model Summary for H7 & H8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>Change Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R Square Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.087(a)</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>1.45322</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Predictors: (Constant), Risk taking propensity, Proactive Personality

Table 6.1: ANOVA(b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regression Residual Total</td>
<td>3.497</td>
<td>454.044</td>
<td>457.541</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Predictors: (Constant), Risk taking propensity, Proactive Personality
b Dependent Variable: Participation in entrepreneurship education in Oman

Table 6.2 Coefficients(a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant) 2.858 .288</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>9.939</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proactive Personality -.210 .168</td>
<td>-.205</td>
<td>-1.250</td>
<td>.213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk taking propensity .261 .206</td>
<td>.207</td>
<td>1.264</td>
<td>.207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Dependent Variable: Participation in entrepreneurship education in Oman
Summary

Multiple regression analysis helped to find out the Proactive personality and Risk taking propensity impact on participation in entrepreneurship education. It was interesting to note that the linear combination of these variables like Risk taking propensity, and Proactive Personality was not significantly related to Participation in entrepreneurship education where $F((4, 212) = 0.828, p > .001$.

Table 7: Summary Table for Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1 Attitude of Omani students towards entrepreneurship inclination as career option has a significant impact on their entrepreneurship intentions.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2 Subjective norm has a significant impact on entrepreneurship intentions of Omani students.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3 Perceived behavioral control has a positive effect on the Omani students’ intentions to become entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4 Omani student participation in Oman entrepreneurship courses or education has a positive effect on their entrepreneurship intentions.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5 Risk taking propensity of Omani students has a significant impact on their attitude towards entrepreneurship.</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6 Proactive personality of Omani students is positively related to their attitude towards entrepreneurship.</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7 Proactive personality of Omani students is positively related to their participation in entrepreneurship education.</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8 Risk taking propensity of Omani students has a significant impact on their participation in entrepreneurship education.</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Conclusion and summary of the findings

- **Demographic profile**

  The respondents were from selective private colleges in Muscat region who studied Diploma, Bachelors, Masters and technical programmes. Apart from the mainstream programmes, the colleges in Oman that impart entrepreneur courses or programme were also considered. Hence, the data was collected from those respondents who have studied entrepreneur course and selected sample showcases 96 males and 122 females which accounted for 218 respondents. The majority of the respondents were in the age category of 25 years.

- **Hypotheses and further discussions**

  The study has tested and verified the research model and many constructs are in line with the previous studies. Omani students’ attitude has shown significant positive relationship with entrepreneur intentions, and hence show an inclination towards self-employment. The study also highlighted that behavioral control, subjective norm and participation in entrepreneurship
education has a significant relationship between entrepreneur intentions. This study contradicts the earlier studies and does not support personality trait construct on attitude and risk taking propensity on attitude. It was also deduced from the study that students risk taking propensity does not influence their attitude, but that due to financial constraints and fear these effects are observed.

It was interesting to note that Omani student intentions for becoming an entrepreneur are predetermined by his/her nature. However, risk taking propensity and proactive personality has not shown any significant relationship with participation in entrepreneurship education. This study supports the work of Al Shanfari (2012) and students should be motivated and made to understand the meaning of being self-employed. It was deduced that students need more support, motivation and push factor to be self-employed. The entrepreneur ecosystem is developing in Oman and it will take time for the students to fully understand the potential of these courses and potentials which are waiting for them. Student’s preference for government jobs and existence of non-risk taking attitude needs to be researched further and how to motivate the young students to look beyond the comfort zone is important.

6. Recommendations

It is highly recommended that concept of entrepreneurship should start from school level. It will assure a platform and basic understanding of the field. The focus on school level should be more on English than training them in technical streams. Many students study it as a course and not as a future stream/field. The initiatives of the government should be based on polishing their personality and giving them right attitude. Colleges and government can work together to form incubators and support the budding entrepreneurs from the beginning. It is known fact that students with higher grades are getting opportunity to study specialized courses which might not be the true reflection of intention to become entrepreneurs. Documentation procedures should be made simpler so that it is helpful for the entrepreneurs to survive in the business. Further it is recommended that Ministry can have one centralized department to see the incubators and its viability. Many entrepreneurs could not survive after one year, which is again a burning issue to be addressed. One day should be allocated to the students from Universities and Colleges to present their ideas in the programs like Global Entrepreneurial Week (GEW). Similarly all colleges and Universities should be given awareness about how to utilize Prototyping Centre once it is started. It is also recommended to introduce entrepreneur course widespread across Oman and can be delivered in both English and Arabic. The policy amendments should consider the current environment of Oman and the focal point in the frame work should be the students. A change in the microenvironment is needed in Oman to adapt entrepreneurship. Various dimensions like attitude towards government jobs, free scholarships, cultural aspects etc. require changes.
Different private colleges and Universities can do their part by offering courses and specialized programmes which benefits students. Courses like innovation management, entrepreneurship, strategic management, responsible business modules can provide holistic knowledge about business environment and macro-variables affecting today’s businesses. The colleges and universities should be responsible to provide graduates which already have knowledge, motivation and skills so as to assist them to become future entrepreneurs. Industry should provide feedback to the colleges for their programme and courses so that the graduate employability is increased. Workshops, open days and seminars should be conducted to encourage students. Entrepreneurship clubs can be formed where they are given exposure to manage resources and operate a small business concept within college or University premises. It is highly recommended that a strong nexus is needed amongst organizations, Ministry and colleges in Oman to promote such courses and training opportunities for students. There is a need of Triple Helix model for fostering entrepreneurship and to align with Vision 2040 of Oman.

7. Future directions

An attempt was made through this study to identify the intentions of college students in Oman. Different entrepreneurship models can be used in future studies to correlate with this research. Interviews can be arranged with policy makers, community and Industry to know deeper about this issue from Oman’s political, cultural and economic perspectives. The entrepreneurial intentions span and level can be understood using longitudinal studies. The focus on entrepreneurship by Oman and other GCC can be compared in the future studies to identify the gap. The right personality traits of Omani students who are interested in starting a new business can be identified by checking more antecedents of student personality.

8. References


About the authors

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When Certified Entrepreneurship Educator program was launched, little we knew that we will be bringing out series of books related to entrepreneurship. However, in the same forum, we planted the idea of a series of low cost, practical books creating intellectual capital for the country while providing a research & development opportunity for the CEE participants. These very CEE participants, most of them being faculty of entrepreneurship unanimously coveted for real life local case studies and so a case study competition was launched. Different faculty from various educational institutes of Oman participated in that competition and we had quite a few case studies with us which we decided to compile in a book form to reach out to a larger audience.

We would like to thank each one of these faculty for their invaluable contribution in creating this book. These faculty have gone beyond their call of duty and spent many hours meeting and understanding their protagonist and penning down their journeys and without their commitment the book would not have been possible.

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