

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP VIA SOCIAL NETWORKS – “CONNECTED  
WOMAN” IN LEBANON**

Please cite as

Lichy, J. Kachour, M. & Farquhar, J. “Entrepreneurship Via Social Technologies: The  
‘Connected Woman’ In Lebanon”, *Qualitative Market Research* (forthcoming)

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP VIA SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES: THE 'CONNECTED WOMAN' IN LEBANON

## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** To advance theory on digitalisation in marketing in the MENA region, this paper investigates how the use of social technologies enable women-led micro-enterprises in Lebanon.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A two-phase online method accommodated the novel context of the research, consisting of a panel of specialised business journalists followed by conversations with women micro-entrepreneurs.

**Findings:** In embracing digitalisation in the form of social technologies, women micro-entrepreneurs fulfil personal and familial needs and display real ability in exploiting their social networks for gain.

**Research limitations/implications:** The study draws on a single country in the MENA region; the analysis advances theory in digitalisation in marketing by providing an evidence-based framework of how social technologies enable women-run micro-enterprises.

**Practical implications:** Provides practical insights into how digitalisation through social technologies enable women-led micro-enterprises, particularly in exploiting their social networks for marketing.

**Social implications:** Responds to a World Development aim of studying the relationships between gender and trade such as women entrepreneurs using social technologies.

**Keywords:** women micro-entrepreneurs, digitalisation, social technologies, Middle East & North Africa.

**Paper type:** research paper

## **Introduction**

Constraints to growth in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region arise from difficulties in access to finance, shortages and mismatching in skills and energy disruption (Bhattacharya and Wolde, 2012). The business environment is influenced by the political situation, cultural practices and thinking as well as moral codes (Zgheib, 2018). Against this backdrop, unemployment amongst women across the region is the highest in the world at 18 per cent (OECD, 2014). Women face barriers to employment in the form of behavioural expectations within the socio-cultural environment, stereotypical attitudes within corporate cultures and structural organizational policies and practices (Zgheib, 2018). A further potential influence on business practices is characteristic of several countries in the MENA region, which is *wasta* (Arabic: *واسطة*). Although a force in interpersonal networks, it influences every significant decision and pervades all aspects of business and social life (Alawadhi and Morris, 2009). It is a combination of internal networks, such as relationships with peers, subordinates and superiors as well as external networks consisting of clients, key customers, suppliers and government officials (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010). It is a system on which Lebanese citizens rely heavily with its connections and networks, to facilitate trust-based transactions (Harfouche and Robbin, 2012). It is, therefore, important to acknowledge that the region possesses quite distinctive characteristics and codes of conduct (Bastian, Sidani and El Amine, 2018), signifying that existing assumptions in marketing theory and practice may not be applicable.

Lebanon is one of the 19 countries that forms part of MENA and although it boasts of being a bastion of democracy in the Arab world, it continues to struggle under a flawed system of governance in which “the sectarian state actively determines who has access to resources and business opportunities” (Myntti, 2013). Moreover, the country has a turbulent history including a 15-year civil war, which led to very high levels of corruption, with a World Bank report

pinpointing the misuse of domestic revenues, direct cash transfers (made by donors and/or the diaspora), ongoing difficulties with customs revenues and taxes (Balaj and Wallich, 1999). In Lebanon, Muslims and Christians co-exist within a melting pot of Arab and European cultures, overshadowed by a complex and tense geopolitical situation. The economic climate remains difficult in spite of a young and educated population and many Lebanese have emigrated. Recent events such as the major explosion in Beirut with the predicted resignation of the Lebanese government (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-53720383>) have only exacerbated very difficult economic conditions. Lebanon, accordingly, presents a promising and yet under-explored context for research in marketing, with a Scopus search revealing only 77 scholarly articles published over the past decade. There are numerous challenges relating to conducting research in the region with reference to accessing and collecting data, a lack of research support infrastructure, multiple languages and cultures and research skills (Lages, Pfajfar and Shoham, 2015; Mellahi, Demirbag, and Riddle, 2011). As a result of these challenges, Balakrishnan (2013) states that business, management and accounting papers published from the MENA region account for less than 1% of the total papers published. Nonetheless, there is a growing body of literature on MENA countries (Balakrishnan, 2013; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2019) and it can be argued that Lebanon has, as argued above, a number of distinguishing features.

Although women in the employment market are not common, the highest levels of women participating in the workforce in MENA countries are to be found in Lebanon, Morocco, Turkey and Yemen, where they constitute about 25 per cent of the labour force (Roudi-Fahimi and Moghadam, 2016). Although an improvement on the MENA average of 18 per cent, it is not surprising that there has been an increase in the number of women turning to self-employment (Hattab, 2012) and becoming entrepreneurs or micro-entrepreneurs (Bastian et al., 2018). While claims have been made that women entrepreneurship in the MENA region are as well-

established as male-owned businesses (Chamlou, 2008), other research has found that women are restricted by society and culture, which limits them from developing a successful entrepreneurial activity (Mathew and Kavitha, 2010). In pursuit of their goals, Lebanese women often sink their personal savings into their businesses meaning that expansion can only happen with investments made by the family and/or subsequent earnings (Bastian et al., 2018; Sarkis et al., 2009). Success is far from guaranteed but there are indications that women entrepreneurs can benefit significantly from digitalisation in running their businesses (Abdul Al and Mostafa, 2019; Kamberidou, 2013).

Over the past decade, the MENA region as a whole has witnessed the growth of digitalisation, in particular social technologies, which include social media and social networking sites (Harrysson, Schoder and Tavakoli, 2016). It has been asserted that women are often the beneficiaries of digitalisation, especially Muslim women, as it enables them to develop skills that can challenge hegemonic gender discourses and hierarchical gender relations (Allagui, 2019; Skalli, 2006). Whilst digitalisation may foster women entrepreneurship (Abdul Al and Mostafa, 2019), its implementation will be moderated by cultural perspectives and consumer differences (Arora and Sanni, 2019). It is through types of digitalisation in the form of social technologies (Chamlou, 2008) such as Facebook and WhatsApp, that women entrepreneurs and micro entrepreneurs may be able to connect with social networks to further their enterprises. Of particular interest to this study, are women micro-entrepreneurs, as such enterprises are seen as a means of creating growth and development (Franck, 2012) and where women are disproportionately represented (Crittenden, Crittenden and Ajjan, 2019).

The present study aims to provide context-specific insight into how digitalisation in the form of social technologies supports women micro-entrepreneurs. In so doing, the study aims to advance

theory in digitalisation in marketing in the MENA region. Using a two-phase design developed specifically to unlock fresh insights, the study proposes a framework of three elements of digitalisation in the form of social technologies that enable women micro-entrepreneurs in Lebanon as follows: embracing digitalisation, fulfilling personal or familial needs and culturally embedded marketing. The paper is structured as follows: a review of the literature, a description of the method, a discussion of the findings with reference to the literature and a conclusion with implications for theory and practice as well as limitations and further research.

### **Literature review**

The literature review encompasses research on women or female entrepreneurs and micro-entrepreneurs and digitalisation, with specific reference to social technologies, so that a conceptual foundation can be developed for the study.

#### *Women entrepreneurs*

The term ‘enterprise’ no longer merely refers to the creation of a successful independent business but rather the “ways in which economic, political, social and personal vitality is considered best achieved by the generalization of a particular conception of the enterprise form to all forms of conduct” (du Gay, 2004:38). An established view on entrepreneurship holds that four conditions are needed for entrepreneurship to occur, which are motivation, expertise, expectation and a supportive environment (Bull and Willard, 1993). With reference to entrepreneurial performance, factors such as network affiliations, motivation, human capital and environmental factors were found to be significant (Lerner, Brush and Hisrich, 1997). Motivation in entrepreneurship involves such traits as need for achievement, coping with a degree of uncertainty and self- efficacy (Shane, Locke and Collins, 2003). Expertise, according to Mitchell (2015), explains why some individuals becomes entrepreneurs, why some are successful and others not and how it relates to human capital such as experience and previous employment (Madsen, Neergaard and Ulhøi, 2003). Expectation for gain when supported by family, peers and

culture contributes to the likelihood of entrepreneurial activity (Bull and Willard, 1993). An empirical, international study found that a socially supportive culture was a supply-side variable entrepreneurship rates (Stephan and Uhlaner, 2010). There are, therefore, indications that both the existence of and the performance of enterprises are influenced by four conditions, which provide a theoretically informed framework of entrepreneurship to be explored within the context of this study.

A further major development in entrepreneurship research has been the recognition that women are also entrepreneurs (Ahl, 2006). Research with respect to women entrepreneurs has uncovered that they are concentrated in the service sector, that they often set up their business as an alternative to unemployment or have to reconcile family obligations with work and that they encounter barriers (Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio, 2004). The motivations of women entrepreneurs are less well understood but a study has found that status appears important (Manolova, Brush and Edelman (2008). There are some parallels with factors discussed in the previous paragraph, suggesting that there is some consensus on entrepreneurship and parallels b These important advances recognise that entrepreneurial research is often gendered as male, thus treating gender as a variable in isolation from its relationship with other dynamic social categories, such as the cultural context (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2019). Intensive research has taken place into women entrepreneurship in developed countries (for example, Manolova et al. 2012) and developing countries (for example, Crittenden et al. 2019; Jamali, 2009), such as Lebanon. Assumptions underpinning much of the discourse on entrepreneurship and, on digitalised entrepreneurship in particular, are weakened by an inattention to the socially embedded nature of such activities (Dy et al., 2017).

As micro-entrepreneurs in Lebanon (Abdo and Kerbage, 2012), women struggle to expand within the domestic market because of poor infrastructure and restrictions on women's mobility, exacerbated by the burden of domestic chores and care work without the help of men in their families and households. Necessity and choice may be co-present in the motives to enter into entrepreneurship (Franck, 2012), no doubt leading to continued growth in the number of women micro-entrepreneurs (Hattab, 2012) and prompting interest in how these women manage their micro-enterprises.

#### *Digitalisation of marketing in Lebanon*

From a marketing perspective, digitalisation is an adaptive, technology-enabled process for firms to collaborate with customers and partners to jointly create and sustain value for all stakeholders (Hannan and Honshuang, 2017). Dutot and Lichy's (2019) describe 'digital spaces' as facilitators for people to communicate with each other and obtain information or knowledge interactively and in real time, often using social technologies. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has experienced a revolution in marketing, as social technologies shift the locus of control from official sources of information to content generated by users. This switch has led to a profound change in how digital users access and share information (Crittenden and Crittenden, 2015), and created business and marketing opportunities for interaction and networking (Rutter, Roper and Lettice, 2016). In the recent waves of popular unrest in MENA countries, social technologies especially Facebook and WhatsApp played a key role in citizens' participation in communication discourse and mobilization (Al-Rawi, 2018) but the focus of this study is on how social technologies provide a channel of communication for individuals and their networks wherever they may be (Kharroub and Bas, 2016).

While previous research suggested that the use of social technologies was somewhat unplanned and improvised (Nakara, Benmoussa and Jaouen, 2006), or a managerial fad that involved little



advanced planning (Durkin, McGowan and McKeown, 2013), an alternative view has emerged showing how they can be used lucratively to raise awareness of a product or service (Duffy and Hund, 2015). Göll and Zwiers (2019) support the notion that digitally-led modernization and innovation in the MENA region may enable them to leap-frog outmoded technologies to favour innovative solutions. This leapfrogging departs from developmental patterns of Western countries by avoiding their mistakes, unintended negative effects and adapting to circumstances and innovative usage. The relationship between social technologies and users is therefore subject to constant evolution, and is shaped by the local context. Studies conducted in other countries and periods may not fully capture particular conditions and practices in Lebanon. The growth in the use of information and communication technologies in all its forms provides researchers with an innovative way to detect, observe, analyse and understand the consumption of social technologies (Lichy and Kachour, 2017), offering a contemporary context to study how these technologies shape interpersonal communication and interaction (Richardson and Hessey, 2009). Studies into the use of digital media by women entrepreneurs are emerging (for example Kamberidou, 2013; Ulkpere, Slabbert and Ulkpere, 2014) and, in particular, the recent study by Crittenden et al. (2019) in South Africa. To advance theory on digitalisation in marketing in the MENA region, this study adopts an inductive approach to uncover how women micro-entrepreneurs in Lebanon use digitalisation in the form of social technologies. The next section presents the methods deployed to address this research aim.

## **Methodology**

An inductive-based approach, it was reasoned, supports the emergence of the novel insights (Eisenhard, Graebner and Sonenshein, 2016) this research aimed to uncover. Consistent with this approach, we provide transparency in the research process (Aguinas and Solarino, 2019). An inductive style of enquiry also follows Ahl's (2006) observations on how to take forward research on by studying how women entrepreneurs construct their lives and their businesses. To

achieve this goal, data collection consisted of two distinct yet related phases. Firstly, to gain an up-to-date overview and to bound the research, an informal panel discussion with journalists specialising in the development of women micro-entrepreneurs in Lebanon was held. Secondly, a series of conversations in the form of informal interviews with a selection of micro-entrepreneurs was conducted via the social networking site WhatsApp. Please refer to Table 1 for details of each phase. This method was adopted for three reasons:

1. *Data availability*: Lack of official information on the topic, and scarcity of sources (primary and secondary) of reliable information (with figures) in the national context,
2. *Social norms*: Time-constrained women entrepreneurs may be more open to verbal exchange via WhatsApp, which is the country's leading messaging platform, widely used for data collection in scholarly studies (Khazzaka, 2019).
3. *Suitability*: The proposed methods are in line with the research question developed in this study.

Improved access to the Internet along with the increasingly 'wireless' nature of many parts of the world has led to new options for gathering qualitative data, such as tablet computers and smartphones (Jham, 2018), facilitating a higher level of mobility in research (Moylan, Derr and Lindhorst, 2015). Moreover, data collection enabled by wireless technology offered a good fit with the lifestyle of the proposed informants *leading to the* choice of WhatsApp, owing to its prominence as a platform for communication among Lebanese citizens (Khazzaka, 2019). Its popularity can be ascribed to its user-friendliness and user options; furthermore, the cost of telephone communication is exorbitant. This methodology resonates with the context; social norms are very different in Lebanon compared to Western societies. To access these exchanges (dialogues), the authors were obliged to base the data collection on the network (family and friends), epitomised by *wasta* (Tlaiss and Kauser,

2010). This type of networking brings weight, and creates a trust relationship sufficiently robust to facilitate communication with people whom we do not know personally.

Moreover, as the exchanges took place via WhatsApp voicemail, the informants had access to the data collected. In line with ethical guidelines, discussants and participants were advised of their rights in the research process according to the National Consultative Ethics Committee (France) and **updated in line with guidance from Tiidenberg (2018) and Townsend and Wallace (2017)**. The discussants and informants were offered the opportunity to review the exchanges to confirm that the content was non-prejudicial but no suggestions were offered. Each phase is now described in detail.

### *Phase I*

The objective of the panel (Phase I) to shape and inform the emerging research design with particular reference to the Lebanese context. Using existing networks, a number of journalists with specific knowledge of women entrepreneurs and digitalisation in Lebanon were contacted to request their participation in an online panel discussion. As the studies of Milroy and Milroy (1992) have shown, people respond more positively and in a natural manner when they are part of a social or professional network with the interactions between the discussants also believed to enhance understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). In Lebanon, the network and networking are very important (Bastian et al., 2018) and form the foundation of Lebanese society (Joseph, 2004); for this reason, the selected panel was approached via personal and family networks, enhancing perceptions of trustworthiness, which facilitated exchanges with the panel of discussants. Tables 2a and 2b provide detail on the discussants and informants.

Table 1 *Details of research phases*

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Selection process</b>	<b>Discussant/informants</b>	<b>Recruitment &amp; consent</b>	<b>Social technologies used</b>	<b>Data quality</b>
I: Informal panel discussion	Personal and family networks	4 women journalists	WhatsApp message sent to participants a week before, asking them to reflect on the main points of our research topic	Group call via WhatsApp  WhatsApp group conversation (with vocal messages)	We asked participants to verify the exchanges (vocal messages) to check if the content of the conversation is non-prejudicial. No participant asked for any changes.
II: Semi-structured interviews	Personal and family network, plus Facebook outreach	15 women micro-entrepreneurs	Personal WhatsApp call for each participant in order to explain the progress and the aim of the process	WhatsApp group conversation with voice messaging	We asked participants to verify the exchanges (vocal messages) to check if the content of the conversation is non-prejudicial. No participant asked for any changes.

Table 2a Discussant detail (Phase I)

Discussants	Specialisms/Employer
Cynthia	Technology and social networks/Al jaded
Rita	Technology and social networks/Nahar & al-Akhabar
Nivine	Economy and politics/NBN
Mayssa	Economy and politics/EI Nashra online

Table 2b Informant detail (Phase II)

	Name, Age	Micro-entrepreneurial activity	Enterprise launched
1	Judy, 31	clothing & accessories	2018
2	Farah, 28	clothing & accessories	2017
3	Sarah, 29	clothing & accessories	2019
4	Elham, 33	clothing & accessories	2018
5	Ola, 35	clothing & accessories	2017
6	Nadia, 30	clothing & accessories	2019
7	Malak, 36	catering & restaurant	2016
8	Mervat, 45	catering & restaurant	2017
9	Samia, 41	catering & restaurant	2018
10	Zeinab, 47	catering & restaurant	2017
11	Mariam, 33	beauty & wellness	2015
12	Rima, 35	beauty & wellness	2017
13	Ibtissam, 28	beauty & wellness	2016
14	Randa, 26	beauty & wellness	2018
15	Abir 31	beauty & wellness	2015

Dialogue was initiated around the following topics but was intended to be wide-ranging to enable new material to emerge in line with the inductive stance of the study:

- . the emergence of women entrepreneurs and micro-entrepreneurs in Lebanon
- . the use of social technologies in marketing

The all-women panel consisted of two specialists on digitalisation/social networks and two with special interest in the economy, reflecting women's perspectives. These journalists wrote for several of the most popular and/or historical media in Lebanon, (see Table 2a) underlining the insight that they would bring to the research. In preparation for the panel discussion, a WhatsApp message was sent to the journalists a week before the panel, asking them to reflect on the themes listed above. Protocols for the panel discussion were adapted from focus group discussions (Patton, 2015), such as early engagement with the proposed themes so that a firmer understanding of the phenomenon could be captured. With the discussants' consent, the conversation was recorded using WhatsApp and lasted about an hour or so. The conversation covered the areas mentioned above but also encouraged a free-flowing exchange, which surfaced fresh considerations such as family support for women entrepreneurs and an indication just how many women use social networking for business emerged. The conversation with the discussants was conducted in North Levantine Arabic, indigenous to and spoken primarily in Lebanon.

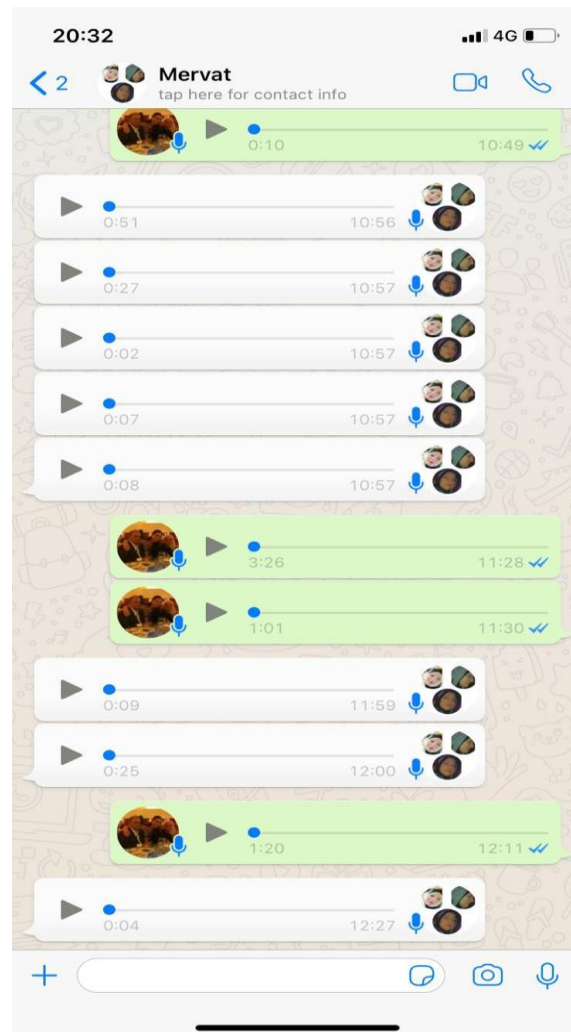
The research team consisted of one member speaking this local language as well as French with some English; the other two members speak French and English. The native Arabic speaker transcribed the conversation and made a translation of the transcription into French. In order to capture the full meaning of the conversation, this translation was scrutinised by his family and professional network to ensure that cultural nuances were captured. The analysis of the conversation was conducted in French with reference back to the original Arabic. An inductive coding approach was followed to uncover regularities or patterns in the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994, Patton, 2015), which involved the familiar process of tacking back and forth between the data and the literature. Examples of preliminary codes were 'Lebanese personality' and 'social networks to make money'. The conversations were

studied repeatedly, leaving time for reflection and discussion between the researchers (Denzin, 1978), and with reference to the scant literature in this area. From this analysis, three topics emerged as follows: (Lebanese) culture, socio-technical developments and financial incentives which were then subjected to data and researcher triangulation (Farquhar, Michels and Robson, 2020). These topics then supported the development of a loosely structured interview guide, which would be used during Phase II.

### *Phase II*

Rather than trying to arrange face-to-face interviews with the micro-entrepreneurs and having reflected on the positive outcomes of the discussant panel, an alternative approach was devised using socio-technology for data collection. Two further considerations drove that decision, firstly, it is a method familiar to women entrepreneurs in Lebanon (Salem, 2017) and, secondly, it is a method that was considered to be compatible with their lifestyle and therefore most likely to yield rich data. Underscoring the use of Facebook in a cultural context (Al-Omouh et al., 2012), the authors posted an invitation to their Facebook networks, inviting ‘friends’ to participate in the research. The aim of this phase was to elicit detail on how women entrepreneurs use social technologies, in the form of social media and social networking sites, in their marketing activities, so the research team sought informants who fitted those criteria and were willing to provide that information. From the responses received to the Facebook invitation, a selection of 15 Lebanese women entrepreneurs emerged, who fitted these criteria (Boddy, 2016; Patton, 2015). The informants undertook a range of entrepreneurial activities such as clothing and accessories, beauty and wellness, catering and restaurant services (see Table 2b). Using the interview guide, interviews were conducted using individual and collective exchanges with the informants using WhatsApp (Figure 1). The informant’s permission to use this image has been obtained.

*Figure 1: Screenshot of a WhatsApp exchange*



Consistent with qualitative data protocols, preliminary analysis of the interview data was concurrent with its collection (Myers, 2009). The number and volume of the conversations were somewhat constrained by the availability of the informants. A similar process to that of the discussion panel was then undertaken. The data were transcribed from the WhatsApp posts in full, including accompanying notes taken by the interviewer with an emphasis of hearing and understanding, not on an individual basis necessarily but by through an immersion into the conversations. The analysis revealed an extension to topics uncovered in Phase I, for example financial incentives now included personal as well. The research team



considered that a saturation point in the analysis had been achieved (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006) as no new themes or categories were emerging from the data (Charmaz, 2006). **Owing to the relatively modest amount of data, manual coding was used throughout.**

#### *Holistic analysis*

Having analysed both sets of data collected from phases I and II separately to establish a robust understanding, a final stage of analysis took place, consisting of looking at the data holistically (Creswell, 2007). To ensure that the analysis was kept as close as possible to the data, this final analysis was evaluated with the original Arabic conversations and exchanges (Nikander, 2008). Codes developed during the separate analyses – that is, phases I and II – informed the initial stages of the analysis but were then revised in line with fresh insight from this analysis. For example, ‘visible phenomenon’, ‘earning a living’ and ‘doing something you love’ contributed in part to the category of personal and familial needs. Following this inductive approach, a framework based around three categories emerged from the analysis that provided an organization of the study’s data and purpose. These categories are as follows: embracing digitalisation, personal or familial needs and, finally, culturally embedded marketing. To gain confidence that this framework captured the conversations, the research team revisited the data once again and considered any alternative explanations to the emergent categories (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989). Some minor adjustments were made, in particular, to convey the enthusiasm in the data that described how the micro-entrepreneurs and, indeed, Lebanon had adopted digitalisation. Finally, it was decided that ‘embracing’ (*embrasser*) seemed to capture the data most adequately. The French translation was then translated into English for publication purposes into English but owing to the linguistic skills of the team the approach was one of adhering *where possible* to the cultural context

(foreignization) as advocated by Venuti (1995). The findings of the analysis are now presented and discussed with reference to the literature.

### **Findings and discussion**

From the analyses, three categories emerged from the holistic analysis that provide a framework of how digitalisation enables women micro-entrepreneurs through social technologies. **Table 3 provides an overview of the themes, sub-themes and illustrative extracts from the data.**

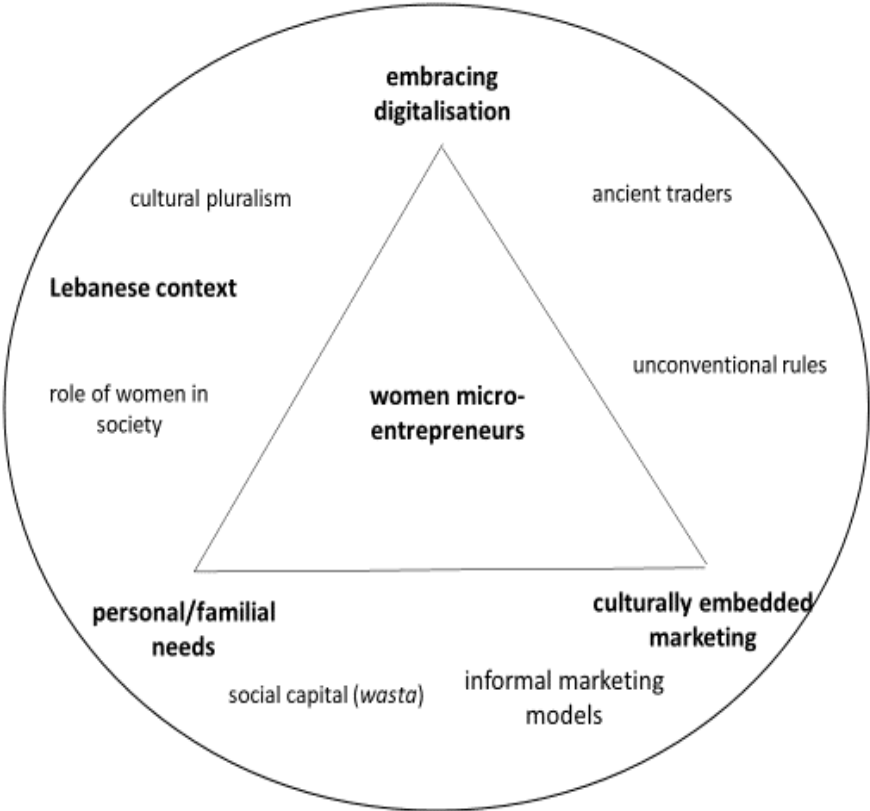
**Table 3 Overview of themes, sub-themes and illustrative extracts.**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Illustrative extract</b>
<b>Embracing digitalisation</b>	<b>Ancient traders</b>	<b>It's no surprise to find an entrepreneurial fibre and thirst for success in the country of the Phoenicians ... we've been trading for millennia across the Levant countries</b>
	<b>Cultural pluralism</b>	<b>The arrival of the Internet has given Lebanese people faster access to the much-loved Western culture ... especially, the 'success stories' of marketing online and the new jobs created by social networks – it's all the rage now</b>
<b>Personal/familial needs</b>	<b>Unconventional rules</b>	<b>Women play a crucial role in decision-making; they're often educated and have a strong personality ... the woman is at the heart of the Lebanese home, the man works outside the home</b>
	<b>Role of women</b>	<b>women are present in various sectors such as education, healthcare and administration but they didn't exist as entrepreneurs until the arrival of social networks. For the past five years now, this phenomenon has become increasingly visible in our society. We all have at least one friend who's using social networks to make money.</b>
<b>Culturally embedded marketing</b>	<b>Social capital</b>	<b>Luckily, I have a Lebanese celebrity in my family. I sent her my products and she really appreciated them. In return, she agreed to take pictures of herself with my products and post to my Instagram page ... The next day my 'friends' and 'followers' increased hugely ... celebs provide great publicity. The small businesses that transform into success stories are those supported by celebs and their network</b>
	<b>Informal marketing models</b>	<b>I use some well-known techniques to ensure that my post is well positioned in the news-feed ... like, not responding instantly to all the comments received ... a delayed response allows you to rejig your position</b>

In embracing digitalisation in the form of social technologies, women micro-entrepreneurs fulfil personal and familial needs and display real ability in exploiting their social networks for gain. These categories or elements interact, as enablers for the women micro-entrepreneurs in this study. In Figure 2, these categories are depicted as the three points of a

triangle for women micro-entrepreneurs, set within the Lebanese context, as characterised by descriptions from the journalist panel. We now go onto discuss these elements further with reference to the literature and support from extracts in the data.

*Figure 2 How social technologies enable women micro-entrepreneurs in Lebanon*



*Embracing digitalisation*

This element in the framework refers to how the widespread embracing of social technologies has opened up new business and marketing opportunities (Richardson and Hessey, 2009) that are reliant on social networks, as this discussant comments,

*For us Lebanese, as for the rest of the world, the Internet opens up many exciting business opportunities for anyone who understands the codes of social networking – and can exploit online marketing ... it’s the new way of making money (Mayssa – discussant)*

This extract draws attention to how the ‘social’ and ‘technical’ elements need to be treated as interdependent parts of the same system (Bostrom and Heinen, 1977) and confirms the use of social technologies for enabling individuals to develop their marketing potential (Lichy and Kachour, 2017). There may also be some examples of the leapfrogging mentioned by Göll and Zwiers (2019) as these micro-entrepreneurs optimise these technologies in their businesses. The ease with which social technologies can be used for obtaining domestic and foreign orders is observed by this micro-entrepreneur.

*Being able to use social networks isn't difficult! You just need a good idea and present it well; success comes later from hard work and karma. If you send notifications to the right place at the right time, you can get orders from other neighbouring Arab countries and even further away (Clothing and Accessories entrepreneur, Sarah)*

Social technologies are perceived as the pillar upon which their activities are built, drawing attention to the ease of use, and ‘reach and richness’ offered by these networks, as discussed by Dutot and Lichy (2019).

*To target potential customers, I advertise on Facebook ... I pay \$10 for an ad lasting one week, which can reach up to 10,000 people who I've identified by profile. If I want to target women aged around 40-45, then Facebook advertising works best, since this age group is more Facebook than Instagram. The ads are effective ... we don't have an issue with Facebook sending notifications or using our personal data. After each ad, I get calls for sales enquiries and new orders. (Catering Entrepreneur, Malak)*

Advertising on Facebook has been argued as being particularly effective for entrepreneurs for reaching their customers with the potential of extending positive word-of-mouth (Kudeshi, Pallab and Mittal, 2016). Malak recognises that use of certain social technologies

is related to age and so has adapted her approach to be consistent with a particular customer group. For these women entrepreneurs, embracing the social technologies spawned by digitalisation has enabled them to lead their own enterprises.

*Personal or familial needs*

This second element in the framework captures the data relating to the needs of the women entrepreneurs. This informant is inspired by a business dream:

*My dream is to make my side-line into a successful business that does more than just provide extra income for our family ... it's my personal choice. I know a woman who started out small, like me, and now has a store with the same name as her page. She often travels abroad to source new stock and nowadays leaves her sister to manage the page (clothing & accessories entrepreneur, Judy).*

The notion of entrepreneurship as a dream has been documented in the literature underscoring the 'American dream' (Carland and Carland, 1997) but, as indicated by the informant above, this research finds further evidence of dreams as inspirations. The dreams of these micro-entrepreneurs may be tempered by social norms, whereby "The rules governing our society are quite unconventional ... the woman is at the heart of the Lebanese home, the man works outside the home" (Rita – a discussant). Whilst independence has long been recognised as one of the key factors driving entrepreneurship, there are also considerations about family security (Kratko, Hornsby and Naffziger, 1997).

*In such a male-dominated society, it's true that my business activity helps our family money-wise ... but there's also a feeling of gaining independence which comes from self-realization, not wasting time ... It's great to earn a living by doing something you love (beauty and wellness entrepreneur, Rima)*

Economic motives are cited here as an incentive for embarking on entrepreneurial activities, enhanced by the low initial financial investment required to set up a business.

*“The economic situation in our country is very unstable and has become quite dire recently ... by setting up a secondary activity, we manage to provide extra income for our families (clothing & accessories entrepreneur Ola)*

In contrast to Western society (Bastian et al. 2018), the Lebanese business environment is characterised by the lack of infrastructure and regulations governing e-business and online transactions linked to entrepreneurial marketing activities (see Dy et al., 2017). An important aspect of entrepreneurship is the support described by one of the journalists.

*Women who’ve set up a business via social technologies are usually bankrolled by their family and social groups, especially the men in their entourage. Support tends to vary depending on how much others get involved ... there’s less commitment to moral support than logistical or administrative or financial backing ... in some cases, support comes in the form of direct or indirect promotion of the business (Nivine – discussant).*

As in other MENA countries, these women micro-entrepreneurs appear to receive family support in building and running their businesses (Welsh et al., 2014). The analysis indicates therefore that micro-entrepreneurs in Lebanon might still be based in the home, they seek the economic and personal benefits that entrepreneurship may bring, thus enabling them to combine necessity with choice (Franck, 2012). These findings are aligned with the entrepreneurship literature where motivation may be financial and/or personal (see, for example, Bull and Willard, 1993; Lerner et al. 1997).

#### *Culturally embedded marketing*

This final category refers to both to the embedded nature of the women’s micro-enterprises in the economic and socio-cultural circumstances of their particular market (Crittenden et al. 2019;

DeBerry Spence and Elliot, 2012) as well as their knowledge of the local market. Underscoring the power of networked interactions, one informant recounted how a celebrity in her family lent her support by endorsing her business, adding credibility and prestige to the offer (Spry, Pappu and Cornwell, 2011). Linkages between entrepreneurship and local conditions have been noted (Carlsson and Mudambi, 2003; Omorede, 2014), and this informant's insight into buying behaviour and why they prefer social technologies is an illustration of these linkages.

*In Lebanon, people are happy using social network sites for buying. If you order from an international website, then you have to pay taxes ... and you never know if or when you're going to get the goods. Here, people use personal social networks ... people don't even know their postal address (clothing & accessories entrepreneur, Farah).*

Thus, the market context and availability of social technologies facilitated the growth of a local marketplace that enables women entrepreneurs to develop and manage their marketing activities. The existence of personal social networks or, indeed, social capital for women entrepreneurs (Sapleton, 2009) creates an instant pool of customers, as the following informant testifies:

*When I was setting up my business, I converted my personal accounts on Instagram and Facebook to professional accounts. Overnight, I gained hundreds of 'Friends' and 'Followers' who then became the direct target of my marketing efforts, and got me noticed (beauty & wellness entrepreneur, Mariam).*

The entrepreneur's friends and family apparently showed little resistance to being converted from 'personal' to 'commercial' contacts (Berrou and Combarous, 2012) and which may be an instance of *wasta*. Such ties facilitate and foster entrepreneurial endeavours (Jack et al. 2004; Shaw, 2004), which can then be exploited by social technologies. Another informant spoke of how, on Facebook, information can be kept at the top of her contacts' newsfeed by changing their status to "close friends", once again manifesting a familiarity with how to adapt social



technologies in support of the enterprise. These technologies allow information to be posted/reposted and shared to widen exposure, for example, by annotating a Facebook message in a post, the user's social network is able to view the thread, thus multiplying the opportunities to raise awareness of the offer (Crittenden and Crittenden, 2015), as illustrated by this extract:

*You have to post an attractive photo – and most Lebanese girls are experts at taking photos of themselves, editing and adding effects. You then need to know what day and time and which platform is best for posting content to different online communities, so the post doesn't go unnoticed because of poor planning (catering entrepreneur, Mervat).*

It is shown here that the informants value the use of smartphone photography in their entrepreneurial activities (Jham, 2018), and that timing and planning are well understood. The planning may follow less formal marketing models than might be conventionally prescribed, as in being more proactive and risk oriented (Kraus, Harms and Fink, 2010) and indeed, research has indicated that marketing in entrepreneurial concerns may not follow recognisable models (Gilmore, 2011). The expertise demonstrated by these women micro-entrepreneurs may in part explain decisions to start their own business ((Mitchell, 2015) as this informant describes:

*I started out with a simple marketing idea ... I took some good pictures and posted them online ... then I then asked my close friends and family to comment on the pictures, to boost the visibility of my products. I also asked customers to post feedback, to publicise and endorse my name (clothing & accessories entrepreneur, Elham).*

This extract from the data confirms the significance of the informant's personal social networks or social capital (Crittenden et al. 2019) for creating positive word-of-mouth and underlines her grasp of social technologies in creating and capturing opportunities for eliciting feedback (Carlson et al., 2018). These networks may well represent instances of *wasta*, in particular, the

fluidity between the personal and the commercial. As discussed previously, *wasta* is a characteristic of the MENA region and in this study, it seems to play a vital role in these enterprises, in particular when it is digitally enabled. Indeed, digital entrepreneurship may break down existing boundaries to provide opportunities for entrepreneurs to reconfigure existing institutional contexts (McAdam, Crowley and Harrison, 2018). The way in which these micro-entrepreneurs have used digitalisation in commercialising their networks to realise their ambitions or fulfil their needs is consistent with many of the tenets of the entrepreneurship literature. These findings may also be interpreted within the context of cultural entrepreneurship where a profound understanding of cultural norms and values confers a degree of social legitimization (Krueger, Liñán and Nabi, 2013). In gaining social legitimisation, entrepreneurial careers increase in value and social recognition. Our findings show that there is potential for women's micro-enterprises to have an effect on institutions and cultural norms in Lebanon.

The study now moves on to a conclusion, reviewing the theoretical and practical implications of the investigation as well as its limitations and further areas for research.

## **Conclusion**

To advance theory on digitalisation in marketing in the MENA region, this paper investigates the how digitalisation in the form of social technologies supports women micro-entrepreneurs in Lebanon. Analysing rich qualitative data to gain novel insights from journalists and a selection of micro-entrepreneurs themselves, an evidence-based framework, consisting of three main elements emerges (Figure 2). The study therefore makes several contributions to digitalisation in marketing in the MENA region with specific application to Lebanon and is able to provide some empirical advance on early work in entrepreneurship (Bull and Willard, 1993; Lerner et al. 1997).

### *Theoretical implications*

The study, firstly, uncovers the critical role played by social technologies in women's micro-entrepreneurs, specifically in digital marketing, and as such provides an example of the creation of digital spaces (Dutot and Lichy, 2019). Whilst technology acceptance models have featured in research for several decades (for example Davis, 1989), this study underlines the acceptance of technology and its penetration in supporting entrepreneurship (Crittenden et al. 2019) or, as it has been described here, as the embracing of digitalisation. The widespread acceptance and adoption of social technologies such as Facebook and WhatsApp in Lebanon not only facilitated the data collection for this study but also provide the digital structure of these entrepreneurial activities. Significantly for these women entrepreneurs, carving out their enterprises within the constraints of families and society, the adoption of social technologies appears consistent with their lifestyles (Morris, Henley and Dowell, 2017).

Secondly, the study finds that in running a micro-enterprise enabled by social technologies, the women in the study are able to realise personal aspirations and/or to supplement family income in a challenging economic situation. The fulfilment of dreams and aspirations of being an entrepreneur is acknowledged in the literature (for example, Bruni et al. 2004) but this research underscores this aspect in women's entrepreneurship in the Lebanese context.

A third implication arising from the study, is how these micro-entrepreneurs, by being embedded within the society, are able to exploit their social networks and manifest a set of marketing skills that are particularly adapted and crafted for those markets. There is some support for this finding in work by Crittenden et al. (2019) who find that social capital is an empowering construct in women's micro-enterprises. Whilst it is recognised that small business and entrepreneurial marketing may be distinctive (Williams and McGuire, 2010), this research indicates that these

women appear to have an instinctive understanding of the marketing tactics that fit the market in which they operate and which they inhabit and demonstrate considerable expertise. This finding may be interpreted within the context of cultural entrepreneurship where a profound understanding of cultural norms and values confers a degree of social legitimization (Krueger et al. 2013). Furthermore, their networks may be an example of *wasta*, a characteristic of MENA countries, again emphasising the cultural significance of context-embedded research.

Finally, this study involves a novel instance of context-specific research that enabled qualitative data to be collected from two groups of informants to address the research purpose. By using digital methods, that is Facebook and WhatsApp, which are embedded in the lives of the informants, it is asserted that greater access to informants was achieved and deeper insight into the research accomplished.

#### *Practical implications*

This study has a number of practical and policy implications. It underlines how important it is for micro-entrepreneurs to be fully conversant with the marketplace in which they operate, therein emphasising the embedded nature of micro-entrepreneurship. From a policy perspective in Lebanon, this study shows that the lack of the legal structure which makes it possible to protect and develop online entrepreneurship and in particular among women. Furthermore, the field has shown us that there is a vagueness regarding e-commerce in Lebanon. In addition, we also found that the now conventional payment methods (for example, the credit card) are not sufficiently developed in the country. In fact, traditionally cash is the predominant means of payment in Lebanon and it is very likely that an evolution concerning this could bring an at least partial response to the monetary crisis which currently strikes the country. But this requires a reconstruction of a relationship of trust between citizens and their banks on the one hand and a cultural revolution to hope for a change in the habits of the Lebanese on the other. Moreover, if

public policy desires to foster economic growth and encourage the development of the economy, then policy makers need to seek to understand the effects those policies could have on women micro-entrepreneurs.

#### *Limitations and further research*

This research is based on data from a single MENA country, which has provided an enriched and informative context for the study but nonetheless is restricted to a single member nation of the region. The framework that emerges from the study may well have traction in other domains (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013), therefore, greater insight into the phenomenon might be gained from investigation across the region or, even, more widely. The emphasis on the use of personal social networks and social capital for marketing also warrants further investigation. The data here indicate that members of a personal social network appear to find it acceptable that a friend converts them to customers. How widespread may this conversion actually be acceptable? In what circumstances may it not be acceptable? Although the significance of entrepreneurial networks has been acknowledged, the personal/commercial aspect appears novel and how this finding sits within the wider cultural practices such as *wasta*. Are these networks examples of digital *wasta*? If so, what are the implications of these networks for marketing and women-led businesses? Another direction for research arises from how these women entrepreneurs are gaining social legitimisation for their businesses through their embedded marketing skills or cultural entrepreneurship. Combined with the effects of digitalisation, there may be potential for women's micro-entrepreneurship to impact upon institutions and structures in Lebanon and the MENA region.

The data collection using WhatsApp is an example of digitally based data collection with further consideration needs to be made into its strengths and limitations. **Whilst it enables greater reach in terms of recruiting informants, it does not provide the intimacy of a face-to-face**

**interview. In the light of the pandemic that has since occurred, the use of WhatsApp and similar digital data collection devices may have gained greater acceptance as personal interactions have become so restricted.** The data which are presented here have been subjected to various stages of translation, starting with Lebanese Arabic and finishing in English, in an increasing polyglot world; there needs to be a greater understanding of conveying the findings from one linguistic context to another within a cross-cultural context.

## References

- Abdul Al, R. and Mostafa, R. (2019), "Entrepreneurial Motivation and Firm Performance in Lebanon", Crittenden, V.L. (Ed.) *Go-to-Market Strategies for Women Entrepreneurs*, Emerald Publishing Limited, pp. 157-171. doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78973-289-420191020
- Abdo, N. and Kerbage, C. (2012), "Women's entrepreneurship development initiatives in Lebanon: Micro-achievements and macro-gaps", *Gender & Development*, Vol 20, No. 1, pp 67-80.
- Aguinis, H. and Solarino, A. (2019), "Transparency and replicability in qualitative research: The case of interviews with elite informants", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 40, pp. 1291– 1315. doi.org/10.1002/smj.3015.
- Ahl, H. (2006), "Why research on women entrepreneurs needs new directions", *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice*, Vol. 30, No. 5, pp: 595-621. dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2006.00138.x
- Al-Omouh, K. S., Yaseen, S. and Alma'Aitah, M. A. (2012), "The impact of Arab cultural values on online social networking: The case of Facebook". *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 28 No. 6, pp. 2387-2399.
- Al-Rawi, A. (2018), "Regional Television and Collective Ethnic Identity: Investigating the SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES Outlets of Arab TV Shows". *Social Media Society*, Vol 4, No. 3, pp. 1-16.
- Alawadhi, S., and Morris, A. (2009), "Factors influencing the adoption of e-government services", *Journal of Software*, Vol. 4, No. 6, pp. 584-590.
- Allagui, I. (2019), *Advertising in MENA Goes Digital*. Publisher: Abingdon, Oxon; Routledge.
- Arora, A.S., and Sanni, S.A. (2019), "Ten Years of 'Social Media Marketing' Research in the Journal of Promotion Management: Research Synthesis, Emerging Themes, and New Directions", *Journal of Promotion Management*, Vol. 25, No. 4, pp.476-499.

Balaj, B., and Wallich, C. (1999), "World Bank Operations Evaluation Department: Aid Coordination and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: the West Bank and Gaza Experience", *Précis*, No. 185.

Balakrishnan, M.S. (2013), "Methods to increase research output: some tips looking at the MENA region", *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 215-239.

Bastian, B.L., Sidani, Y.M. and El Amine, Y. (2018), "Women entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa: A review of knowledge areas and research gaps", *Gender in Management*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 14-29 <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-07-2016-0141>  
[bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-53720383](http://bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-53720383), accessed 10/08/2020.

Bellin, E. (2004), "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective". *Comparative politics*, Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 139-157.

Berrou, J-P. and Combarous, F. (2012), "The Personal Networks of Entrepreneurs in an Informal African Urban Economy: Does the 'Strength of Ties' Matter?" *Review of Social Economy*, Vol. 70, No.1, pp. 1-30, doi 10.1080/00346764.2011.577347

Berthon, P., Pitt, L., Plangger, K., and Shapiro, D. (2012), "Marketing meets Web 2.0, social media, and creative consumers: Implications for international marketing strategy", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 55, No. 3, pp. 261-271.

Bhattacharya, R. and Wolde, H. (2012), "Business Environment Constraints on Growth in the Mena Region", *Middle East Development Journal*, Vol. 4 No.1, pp.1-18,  
[doi.10.1142/S1793812012500046](https://doi.org/10.1142/S1793812012500046)

Biernacka, A., Abu-Rabia-Queder, S., and Kressel, G. (2018), "The connective strategies of Bedouin women entrepreneurs in the Negev", *Journal of Arid Environments*, Vol. 149, pp. 62-72.

Boddy, C. (2016), "Sample size for qualitative research", *Qualitative Market Research*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 426-432. [doi.org/10.1108/QMR-06-2016-0053](https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-06-2016-0053)



- Bostrom, R.P., and Heinen, J. S. (1977), "MIS problems and failures: a socio-technical perspective, part II: the application of socio-technical theory", *MIS Quarterly*, pp. 11-28.
- Brislin R. (1980), Cross-Cultural Research Methods. In: Altman I., Rapoport A., Wohlwill J.F. (eds) Environment and Culture. *Human Behavior and Environment (Advances in Theory and Research)*, Vol 4. Springer, Boston, MA.
- Bruni, A., Gherardi, S. and Poggio, B. (2004), "Entrepreneur-mentality, gender and the study of women entrepreneurs", *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 256-268. doi.org/10.1108/09534810410538315.
- Bull, I. and Willard, G. (1993), "Towards a theory of entrepreneurship", *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol 8, No. 3, pp. 183-195, doi.org/10.1016/0883-9026(93)90026-2.
- Caneday, L., Cashel, C., Zeiger, J. B., and Cissell, W. R. (1990), "Satellite dishes in the Land of Cedars", *Parks & Recreation (Arlington)*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 48-142.
- Căpățînă, A., Kachour, M., Lichy, J., Micu, A., Micu, A. E., and Codignola, F. (2020), "Matching the future capabilities of an artificial intelligence-based software for social media marketing with potential users' expectations", *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, (Forthcoming).
- Carlson, J., Rahman, M., Voola, R. and De Vries, N. (2018), "Customer engagement behaviours in social media: capturing innovation opportunities", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp.83-94. doi.org/10.1108/JSM-02-2017-0059.
- Carlsson, B. and Mudambi, R. (2003) "Globalization, Entrepreneurship, and Public Policy: A Systems View", *Industry and Innovation*, Vol. 10, No.1, pp. 103-116.  
doi.10.1080/1366271032000068122
- Chamlou, N. (2008), The environment for women's entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Charmaz, K. (2006), *Constructing Grounded Theory*, London. Sage Publications.

- Crittenden, V. and Crittenden, W. (2015), "Digital and Social Media Marketing in Business Education", *Journal of Marketing Education*, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 71-75.
- Davis, F. (1989), "Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and User Acceptance of Information Technology." *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 3 pp. 319-40. doi:10.2307/249008.
- DeBerry-Spence, B. and Elliot, E. (2012), "African microentrepreneurship: The reality of everyday challenges", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 65, No. 12, pp.1665-1673, doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2012.02.007.
- Denzin, N. (1978), *The Research Act*, Chicago, Aldine.
- Duffy, B. and Hund, E. (2015), "'Having it All' on Social Media: Entrepreneurial Femininity and Self-Branding Among Fashion Bloggers. *Social Media + Society*. doi.org/10.1177/2056305115604337
- du Gay, P. (2004), "Against 'Enterprise' (But Not Against 'Enterprise', for that Would Make no Sense)" *Organization*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 37-57.
- Durkin, M., McGowan, P. and McKeown, N. (2013), "Exploring social media adoption in small to medium-sized enterprises in Ireland", *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 716-734. doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-08-2012-0094
- Dutot, V. and Lichy, J. (2019), "The Role of Social Media in Accelerating the Process of Acculturation to the Global Consumer Culture: An Empirical Analysis", *International Journal of Technology and Human Interaction*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 65-84.
- Dy, A., Marlow, S. and Martin, L. (2017), "A Web of opportunity or the same old story? Women digital entrepreneurs and intersectionality theory". *Human Relations*, Vol. 70 No. 3, pp. 286-311. doi.org/10.1177/0018726716650730
- Eisenhardt, K., Graebner, M. and Sonenshein, S. (2016), "Grand Challenges and Inductive Methods: Rigor without Rigor Mortis", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 59, pp.1113–1123, doi.org/10.5465/amj.2016.4004

- Emery, F. and Trist, E. (1960), "Socio-technical systems". In: *Churchman C.W., Verhulst M., editors. Management Science Models and Techniques*, Vol. 2., Oxford, UK: Pergamon, pp. 83-97.
- Faisal, A. (1990), "Favouritism (Wasta): an exploratory study of university students", *Journal of King Saud University*, Vol., 2, No.: 2, pp. 693-711.
- Fan, S., Xiao, J., Xie, K., and Leon Zhao, J. (2017), "Introduction to the special issue of ECR on E-business innovation with big data". *Electronic Commerce Research*, Vol. 17, No.1, p.1.
- Farquhar, J., Michels, N. and Robson, J. (2020), "Triangulation in Qualitative Case Study Research: Widening the Scope", *Industrial Marketing Management*,  
[doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.02.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.02.001)
- Franck, A. (2012), "Factors motivating women's informal micro-entrepreneurship: Experiences from Penang, Malaysia", *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 65-78. [doi.org/10.1108/17566261211202981](https://doi.org/10.1108/17566261211202981).
- Gilmore, A. (2011), "Entrepreneurial and SME marketing", *Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 137-145. [doi.org/10.1108/14715201111176426](https://doi.org/10.1108/14715201111176426).
- Gioia, D., Corley, K. and Hamilton, A. (2013), "Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology", *Organizational Research Methods*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 15–31. [doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151](https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151)
- Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2019), *Women's Entrepreneurship Report*, London, London Business School.
- Göll, E., and Zwiers, J. (2019). Technological Trends in the MENA Region: The Cases of Digitalization and Information and Communications Technology (ICT). *MENARA*, 206. WORKING PAPERS No. 23, November 2018.

- Guest, G., Bunce, A., and Johnson, L. (2006), "How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability", *Field Methods*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 59–82. doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903
- Harfouche, A. and Robbin, A. (2012), "Inhibitors and enablers of public e-services in Lebanon", *Journal of Organizational and End User Computing*, Vol. 24, No.: 3, pp. 45-68.
- Hamdan, K. (2005), "Micro and Small Enterprises in Lebanon", Economic Research Forum Research Report, *Promoting Competitiveness in Micro and Small Enterprises in the MENA Region*, Cairo: ERF.
- Harrysson, M., Schoder, D. and Tavakoli, A. (2016), "The evolution of social technologies", *McKinsey Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 8-12.
- Hattab, H. (2012), "Towards understanding female entrepreneurship in Middle Eastern and North African countries: A cross-country comparison of female entrepreneurship", *Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues*, Vol. 5 No.. 3, pp. 171-186. doi.org/10.1108/17537981211265561
- Hein, W., Steinfield, L., Ourahmoune, N., Coleman, C. A., Zayer, L. T., and Littlefield, J. (2016), "Gender justice and the market: A transformative consumer research perspective", *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 223-236.
- Hendy, R., and Zaki, C. (2013), "On informality and productivity of micro and small enterprises: Evidence from MENA countries". *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp.438-470.
- Husseini, R. (1997), "Promoting women entrepreneurs in Lebanon: The experience of UNIFEM", *Gender & Development*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 49-53.
- Jack, S., Drakopoulou Dodd, S. and Anderson, A. (2004), "Social Structures and Entrepreneurial Networks: The Strength of Strong Ties." *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, Vol. 5, No.: pp. 107-120. doi:10.5367/000000004773863264.

- Jamali, D. (2009), "Constraints and opportunities facing women entrepreneurs in developing countries", *Gender in Management*, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 232-251.
- Jamali, D., Sidani, Y., and Safieddine, A. (2005), "Constraints facing working women in Lebanon: an insider view", *Women in Management Review*, Vol. 20, No.: 8, pp. 581-594.
- Jham, V. (2018), "Adoption of mobile marketing through smart phones apps", *Journal of Emerging Trends in Economics and Management Sciences*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp.52-64.
- Joseph, S. (2004)," Conceiving family relationships in post-war Lebanon", *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp.271-293.
- Kamberidou, I. (2013), "Women entrepreneurs: 'we cannot have change unless we have men in the room'". *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, Vol 2, No. 6. doi.org/10.1186/2192-5372-2-6
- Kharroub, T., & Bas, O. (2016), "Social Media and Protests: An Examination of Twitter Images of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution." *New Media & Society*, Vol. 18, No. 9, pp. 1973-1992.
- Khazzaka, M. (2019), Pharmaceutical marketing strategies' influence on physicians' prescribing pattern in Lebanon: Ethics, gifts, and samples. *BMC Health Services Research*, Vol. 19, No 1, pp 80-88. doi:10.1186/s12913-019-3887-6.
- Kraus S., Harms, R. and Fink, M. (2010), "Entrepreneurial Marketing: Moving beyond Marketing in New Ventures", *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 19-34. doi: 10.1504/ijeim.2010.029766.
- Krueger, N. Liñán, F. and Nabi, G. (2013), "Cultural values and entrepreneurship", *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, Vol. 25, No. 9-10, pp. 703-707, 10.1080/08985626.2013.862961
- Kudeshia, C., Sikdar, P and Mittal, A. (2016), "Spreading love through fan page liking: A perspective on small scale entrepreneurs", *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol 54, pp. 257-270. doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.08.003.

Lages, C., Pfajfar, G. and Shoham, A. (2015), "Challenges in conducting and publishing research on the Middle East and Africa in leading journals", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 52-77. doi.org/10.1108/IMR-12-2014-0374

Lancelot, M.C. (2011). Vie privée et marketing, Étude de la décision de fournir des données personnelles dans un cadre commercial, *Réseaux*, Vol. 167, No.: 3, pp.131-166.

Lerner, M., Brush, C. and Hisrich, R. (1997), "Israeli women entrepreneurs: An examination of factors affecting performance", *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 315-339, doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(96)00061-4.

Lichy, J., and Kachour, M. (2017), "Research Paradigms and Contemporary Perspectives on Human-Technology Interaction", in *Advances in Human and Social Aspects of Technology: Insights into the culture of young Internet users - emerging trends: Move over Gen Y, here comes Gen Z!* pp. 86-118.

Kannan, P. and Hongshuang, L. (2017), "Digital marketing: A framework, review and research agenda", *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp.22-45. doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2016.11.006.

Kuratko, D., Hornsby, J. and Naffziger, D. (1997), "An examination of owner's goals in sustaining entrepreneurship", *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp 24-33.

Madsen, H., Neergaard, H. and Ulhøi, J. (2003), "Knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship and human capital", *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 426-434. doi.org/10.1108/14626000310504738.

Manolova, T.S., Brush, C.G. and Edelman, L.F. (2008), "What do women entrepreneurs want?" *Strategic Change*, Vol. 17, pp. 69-82. doi:10.1002/jsc.817.

Manolova, T., Brush, C., Edelman, L. and Shaver, K. (2012), "One size does not fit all: Entrepreneurial expectancies and growth intentions of US women and men nascent

entrepreneurs”, *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, Vol. 24, No 1-2, pp. 7-27.

doi.10.1080/08985626.2012.637344

Mathew, V. and Kavitha, M. (2010), Women entrepreneurs practicing business in Middle East: Case study of socio-cultural environmental barriers. *International Journal of Arab Culture, Management and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 239-253.

Mellahi, K., Demirbag, M. and Riddle, L. (2011), “Multinationals in the Middle East: challenges and opportunities”, *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 46, No. 4, pp. 406-410.

Menzies, T., Diochon, M. and Gasse, Y. (2004), “Examining Venture-related Myths Concerning Women Entrepreneurs”. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 89-107.

Miles, M. and Huberman, M. (1994), *Qualitative Data Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.

Milroy, L., and Milroy, J. (1992), “Social network and social class: Toward an integrated sociolinguistic model”, *Language in Society*, Vol. 21, No.: 1, pp. 1-26.

Mitchell, R. (2015), “Cognition and Entrepreneurship: One View of the Entrepreneurial-Expertise Approach”, in *Wiley Encyclopedia of Management*, eds C.L. Cooper, M.H. Morris and D.F. Kuratko, doi:10.1002/9781118785317.weom030011

Monroe, K., Low, S., and Glück, Z. (2017), “Tweets of Surveillance: Traffic, Twitter, and Securitization in Beirut, Lebanon.” *Anthropological Theory*, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 322-337.

Morris, W., Henley, A. and Dowell, D. (2017), “Farm diversification, entrepreneurship and technology adoption: Analysis of upland farmers in Wales”, *Journal of Rural Studies*, Vol. 53, pp. 132-143, doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.05.014.

Moylan, C., Derr, A. and Lindhorst, T. (2015), “Increasingly mobile: How new technologies can enhance qualitative research”, *Qualitative Social Work*, Vol 14, No. 1, pp. 36-47.

doi.org/10.1177/1473325013516988.

- Myers, M. (2009), *Qualitative research in Business & Management*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.
- Myntti, C. (2013), “Civic Engagement in a Challenging Political Context: The Neighborhood Initiative at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon”, *The Journal of General Education*, Vol. 62, No. 4, pp. 238-246.
- Nakara, W., Benmoussa, F-T. and Jaouen A. (2006), “Entrepreneurship and social media marketing: evidence from French small business”, *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 386-405.
- Nikander, P. (2008), “Working with Transcripts and Translated Data”, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol. 5, No. 3 pp. 225-231, doi.10.1080/14780880802314346
- OECD (2014), *Women in Public Life-Gender, Law and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa*. OECD Publishing.
- Okazaki, S. & Mueller, B. (2007), “Cross-cultural advertising research: Where we have been and where we need to go”, *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 24, No.: 5, pp. 499-518.
- Omoredede, A. (2014), “Exploration of motivational drivers towards social entrepreneurship”, *Social Enterprise Journal*, Vol. 10 No. 3, pp. 239-267. doi.org/10.1108/SEJ-03-2013-0014.
- Patton, M. (2015), *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice* (4<sup>th</sup> edition), Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.
- Richardson, K. and Hessey, S. (2009), “Archiving the self? Facebook as biography of social and relational memory”, *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 25-38. doi.org/10.1108/14779960910938070.
- Roudi-Fahimi, F. and Moghadam, V. (2016), “Empowering Women, Developing Society: Female Education in the Middle East and North Africa”, *Al-Raida Journal*, July, pp. 4-11.



- Rutter, R., Roper, S. and Lettice, F. (2016), "Social media interaction, the university brand and recruitment performance", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 69, No. 8, pp. 3096-3104, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.01.025>.
- Salem, F. (2017). *The Arab Social Media Report 2017: Social Media and the Internet of Things: Towards Data-Driven Policymaking in the Arab World* (Vol. 7). Dubai: MBR School of Government.
- Sapleton, N. (2009), "Women non-traditional entrepreneurs and social capital", *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 1 No. 3, pp. 192-218. [doi.org/10.1108/17566260910990892](https://doi.org/10.1108/17566260910990892)
- Sarkis, J., Fahed-Sreih, J., Pistrui, D., Huang, W. and Welsch, H. (2009), "Family contributions to entrepreneurial development in Lebanon", *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 248-261.
- Shane, S., Locke, E. and Collins, C. (2003), "Entrepreneurial motivation", *Human Resource Management Review*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 257-279, [doi.org/10.1016/S1053-4822\(03\)00017-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1053-4822(03)00017-2).
- Shaw, E. (2004), "Marketing in the social enterprise context: is it entrepreneurial?", *Qualitative Market Research*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 194-205. [doi.org/10.1108/13522750410540209](https://doi.org/10.1108/13522750410540209)
- Shirazi, F. (2013), *Social media and the social movements in the Middle East and North Africa: A critical discourse analysis*. *Information Technology & People*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 28-49.
- Skalli, L. (2006), "Communicating Gender in the Public Sphere: Women and Information Technologies in the MENA Region", *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol. 2 No. 2, pp. 35-59. [doi.org/10.2979/MEW.2006.2.2.35](https://doi.org/10.2979/MEW.2006.2.2.35)
- Spry, A., Pappu, R. and Cornwell, B. (2011), "Celebrity endorsement, brand credibility and brand equity", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 45, No.: 6, pp. 882-909. [doi.org/10.1108/03090561111119958](https://doi.org/10.1108/03090561111119958).

- Stephan, U. and Uhlaner, L. (2010), "Performance-based vs socially supportive culture: A cross-national study of descriptive norms and entrepreneurship", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 41, pp. 1347–1364. doi.org/10.1057/jibs.2010.14.
- Tiidenberg, K. (2018), "Ethics in Digital Research", in ed. U. Flick, *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*, London, Sage Publications, pp. 468-481.
- Tlaiss, H. and Kauser, S. (2010), "Perceived organizational barriers to women's career advancement in Lebanon", *Gender in Management*, Vol. 25, No.: 6, pp. 462-496.
- Tlaiss, H., and Kauser, S. (2019), "Entrepreneurial Leadership, Patriarchy, Gender, and Identity in the Arab World: Lebanon in Focus", *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 57, No. 2, pp. 517-537.
- Townsend, L. and Wallace, C. (2017), "The Ethics of Using Social Media Data in Research: A New Framework", Woodfield, K. (Ed.) *The Ethics of Online Research (Advances in Research Ethics and Integrity, Vol. 2)*, Emerald Publishing Limited, pp. 189-207.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/S2398-601820180000002008>
- Ukpere, C. Slabbert, A. and Ukpere, W. (2014), "The Relevance of Modern Technology Usage on the Business Ventures of Kenyan Women Entrepreneurs", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, No. 10, p. 58-60.
- Venuti, L. (1995), *The Translator's Invisibility*. New York: Routledge.
- Wallendorf, M. and Belk, R. (1989), "Assessing Trustworthiness in Naturalistic Consumer Research". *Special Volumes-Interpretive Consumer Research*, Association for Consumer Research, pp. 69-84.
- Welsh, D., Memili E., Kaciak, E. and Al Sadoon, A. (2014), "Saudi women entrepreneurs: A growing economic segment", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 67, No. 5, pp.758-762.  
doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.11.040.

Williams, L. K., and McGuire, S. J. (2010), “Economic creativity and innovation implementation: the entrepreneurial drivers of growth? Evidence from 63 countries”, *Small Business Economics*, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp.391-412.

Zgheib, P. (2018), “Multi-level framework of push-pull entrepreneurship: comparing American and Lebanese women”, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 768-786. doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-12-2015-0314