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**The Use of Social Networking Technologies for Home-based Online
Businesses: The Case of Saudi Arabian Female Entrepreneurs**

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

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Abstract

Over the years, many Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs have adopted social networking technologies, also called social networking sites, to overcome certain cultural challenges and to manage their home-based online businesses. The effectiveness of adopting social networking technologies to produce business benefits is an area that has received significant attention. However, most of the previous studies focus on ‘what social networking technologies do’ rather than ‘what impact social networking technologies have’. The purpose of this study is to better understand how Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs -- a group about which little is known -- use social networking technologies to derive benefits from their utilisation and to enhance their home-based online businesses. It employs a qualitative approach to explore the opportunities and challenges that they experience when they use these technologies to run their businesses.

The research questions centre around the business benefits derived from the use of social networking technologies in a home-based context, the motivations that drove the adaptation of these platforms, and the most critical issues women face when using these platforms for business activities. Interviewees in this study describe how they negotiate between entrepreneurship and technology values, in light of their cultural roles. They discuss how the available technology enables their personal growth and allows them to create jobs for themselves and to enter the labour market without physically leaving their homes.

The study reveals that the use of social networking technologies by Saudi female entrepreneurs achieves multiple objectives, including building their business brand, organising networks, and extending their customer base beyond family circles. The motivations of these female entrepreneurs are largely driven by personal desire, a need for professional growth and personal development, and a desire to serve their communities. The use of these technologies helps to create job opportunities and to achieve financial security, but the entrepreneurs also face a range of challenges. These include determining the most appropriate social networking technology to use for their specific business objectives, an initial lack of online marketing and management skills, and the need for additional resources to help them manage their online presence. In examining how social networking technologies are employed by Saudi female entrepreneurs, this study contributes to the extant literature on home-based entrepreneurship by focusing on a group about which minimal knowledge exists.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Advances in social networking technologies have meant that, for many, work is more about the activity rather than the place of work. Traditional perspectives of the workplace as spatially static are increasingly eroding. The home is now an important location for work especially for women that live in conservative societies such as Saudi Arabia (Di Domenico, Daniel, & Nunan, 2014; Odine, 2013). Social networking technologies and the home provide valuable opportunities for women who use their abilities and resourcefulness to develop entrepreneurial activities and create societal-economic value for their countries (Nieva, 2015; Talat, Azar, & Yousaf, 2013; Zafar, Yasin, & Ijaz, 2012). The rapid development of connectivity technologies, such as the Internet and social networking technology, have offered women significant opportunities for home-working, enabling them to establish home-based online businesses (Wynarczyk & Graham, 2013).

Studies in various countries, including Saudi Arabia, consistently report on an increasing number of women who are becoming leaders of their own businesses (self-employed) and over half of them are home-based, using technology to manage their enterprises (Daniel, Domenico, & Sharma, 2014; Surangi, 2016). In the Arab world, in particular, female participation in the workplace is largely influenced by cultural roles (Khan, 2017). One of the cultural roles is that Arab women are largely excluded from full participation in national development as they hold fewer positions compared to men in the higher echelons of government, politics and private sectors (Odine, 2013). The nature of social networking technologies affords Arab women a unique opportunity to run business activities from home (Mason, 2010) and, in doing so, enables them to participate in the workforce despite the strict gender restrictions that are deeply embedded in Arab societies around female participation in the workforce (Odine, 2013). Social networking technologies are attracting large numbers of female users (Behyar, Heidari, & Bayat, 2011), and platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn have helped Arab women to build professional opportunities for themselves (Park & Kang, 2013; Ondine, 2013).

According to Sinclair and Vogus (2011), social networking technologies involves new forms of doing business across the world and has become a major global business phenomena (Al-

Somali & Gholami, 2015). Researchers (Mathew, 2010; Welsh, Memili, Kaciak & Ahmed, 2013) note that home-based businesses using social networking technologies is now an important form of entrepreneurial activity for women, is recognised as an acceptable career option (Bosma & Levie, 2009; Minniti, 2010), and has even generated the term ‘momprenneur’ (D'Andria & Gabarret, 2014; Richomme - Huet & Vial, 2014; Simon & Way, 2015; Vorley & Rodgers, 2014), because it offers mothers a means of contributing to the family income while enabling them to still take care of their family.

Businesses founded by women, and which use technology to operate from home represent a significant and growing proportion of small firms in Arab countries (Troemel & Strait, 2013). For example, in Saudi Arabia, women entrepreneurs represent between 33% and 50% of the business population (Fareed, 2017). However, despite their prevalence and growth, such businesses, especially in the Middle East, have attracted relatively little research attention (Khan, 2017). This study aims to address this current gap in knowledge.

1.2 Background of the Research Problem and Statement

Saudi Arabia is the largest Arab nation in the Middle East Asia region and today, its economic sector is fully developed with the nation achieving strategic and socio-economic objectives beyond the economics of oil production (Bazoobandi, 2019). Since 2015, the market of Saudi Arabia has become extremely diversified and is projected to grow at a faster rate (Business Monitor International, 2015) wherein female participation in the national economy is identified as one of Saudi Arabia’s most pressing economic policy priorities (Lavelle & Al Sheikh, 2013).

The key objective for the Saudi Arabian government, as a vision of 2030, is to enhance its participation in the private sector and boost this sector’s contribution to the economy (AboutHer, 2017; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). This can be achieved through explicit support of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) (Lavelle & Al Sheikh, 2013). The economy of SMEs comprises 90% of the total number of companies in the country (Mubasher, 2018). It accounts for about 56% of the total Gross Domestic Products (GDP), an encouraging sign after three quarters of decline in non-oil GDP growth (Alfozan, 2018).

Saudi Arabia is facing a number of challenges that cannot be ignored. For instance, the high rates of unemployment among the younger population (AlMunajjed, 2019) is a concern. According to Alfozan (2018), Saudi Arabia's unemployment rate reached 12.9% in 2018 and the unemployment rate among Saudi females was 31.7% compared to 6.1% for men (Lavelle & Al Sheikh, 2013). From 1999 until 2018, the unemployment rate in Saudi Arabia averaged 5.63%, remaining unchanged at 6% in the fourth quarter of 2018 (Trading Economics, 2019). The high percentage of unemployed Saudi females is the result of traditional norms, which see most Saudi societies being strongly male-controlled (Elamin & Omair, 2010). Women's roles are usually confined to the home and raising children, whereas men's roles dominate power structures, education, finance and travel (Zamberi Ahmad, 2011).

That said, changes are slowly taking place in Saudi Arabian society, including a growing contribution by Saudi women to the entrepreneurial sector (Arabian Businesses, 2016; Cuthbert, 2017). The Saudi government aims to empower women globally and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has taken a series of steps to revolutionise the lives of Saudi women (Odine, 2013; Lavelle & Al Sheikh, 2013), such as allowing them to open their own business enterprises without the consent of a husband or male relative (guardianship) (The Strait Times, 2018). In cooperation with private companies, the Council of Saudi Chambers, the National Commission for Entrepreneurship, and the Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority have also organised seminars and educational lectures on business and entrepreneurship (Arab News, 2017). From 2007 to 2017, the percentage of Saudi women entrepreneurs escalated to reach 39% and the number of commercial registers held in the name of Saudi businesswomen reached 98,853 in July 2018 (AlMunajjed, 2019).

This study has chosen Saudi Arabia as a case study because of its unique conservative environment, wherein strong and complex relationships between culture and male-dominated society that shape the lives and behaviours of its people (Stanger et al., 2017). The recent digital transformation in Saudi Arabia is another key factor, with Saudi Arabia having the largest online retail market in the Middle East, where the average annual consumption growth is projected to reach 20% between 2016 and 2022 (Research and Markets, 2019). Such developments have prompted researchers to gain a better understanding around the role of social networking technologies in helping and/or enabling women to break free from their traditional isolation in the domestic sphere (Alghamdi & Reilly, 2013). The focus on Saudi

women finds its basis in the relatively high number of Saudi Arabian female online entrepreneurs (Kelley et al., 2012; Khan, 2013; Mastercard, 2018; AlMunajjed, 2019). There is a need to understand the reasons behind the fluctuation in the number of female online entrepreneurs in developing countries such as Saudi Arabia, and to better understand the issues they face when using social networking platforms to operate their home-based businesses.

1.3 Objectives and Research Questions of the Thesis

Previous literature on Saudi women's home-based businesses focused on their participation in small and medium-sized enterprises, and how they contribute to a country's economic growth (Brancu, Gudmundsdóttir, Gligor, & Munteanu, 2015; Hathaway & Litan, 2014; Ibrahim & Lucky, 2014; Mathew, 2010). However, some researchers (Mason, 2010; Welsh et al., 2013) have argued that for many small and medium-sized businesses, the economies of scale are now much less significant. In particular, the Internet and social networking technologies can be used to establish businesses with significantly less costs than previously (Mann, Varey, & Button, 2000; Thompson, Jones-Evans, & Kwong, 2009; Alghamdi & Reilly, 2013) and they enable one to balance work and family responsibilities (Khan, 2017; Di Domenico et al., 2014; Welter, 2011; AlMunajjed, 2019). As Hubbard and Alsultan (2017, para 22) note, technology has made "it easier for women to commute to work and take charge of their own movements".

This study examines the process of how and why Saudi female entrepreneurs use social networking technologies for home-based business. It also explores issues that these women encounter in their use of social networking technologies. The study addresses the following questions:

1. How do Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs currently use social networking technologies to enhance their ability to reach markets?
2. What are the motivations underlying social networking technologies use by Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs?
3. What are the most important issues facing Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs in their business use of social networking technologies?

Previous literature on the business use of social networking technologies have largely focused on large organisations (Huy & Shipilov, 2012), investigating how these technologies refine

business interactions with customers, change their business models, and modify the whole economy in both developed and developing countries (Almoussa, 2011; Parveen, 2012; Gelderen, Sayers & Keen, 2008; Kazienko, Szozda, Filipowski & Blysz, 2013; Weber, 2009; Buyolo, 2018). Such studies have concentrated on the increasing opportunities created for online trading and direct marketing (Mazhar, Jam & Anwar, 2012). More recent studies have considered the reasons why large organisations integrate social networking technologies into their businesses at an increasing rate (Cha, 2009; Tan, Li, Kim & Hsu, 2012; Jerman & Završnik, 2015). However, despite their economic importance and growing numbers, relatively little research has been conducted on Saudi women owning home-based online businesses and using social networking technologies for business activities (Alghamdi & Reilly, 2013; Odine, 2013; Foroutani, Rahman & Saedi, 2015; Nieva, 2015; Al Saud & Khan, 2013).

This study seeks to address this gap in knowledge. It adopts a qualitative approach in the form of semi-structured and in-depth interviews with 40 participants. In order to gain insights into the practices of Saudi female entrepreneurs who have adopted social networking technologies for their home-based businesses. The empirical data were then organised, integrated and analysed using grounded theory techniques. These techniques were applied using Nvivo software.

1.4 Theoretical perspectives

The theories that underpin this study refer to the behavioural entrepreneurial theories and social commerce theories (presented in Figure 6-1). These theoretical perspectives help the researcher to investigate how entrepreneurs exploit entrepreneurial opportunities and take action by seeking and using available resources such as social networking technologies and home to establish an online business. Saudi female entrepreneurs took this opportunity to solve the problem of unemployment by using the available resources and being able to join the marketplace. This relates to what is called as effectuation and bricolage. Effectuation was found by Sarasvathy, (2001) while entrepreneurial bricolage was proposed by Baker and Nelson (2005). These perspectives described how entrepreneurs take a different route in order to identify and exploit opportunities, which are discussed in depth in 6.2.1.

One of the factors for bricolage is involvement with customer, suppliers and hangers-on in their businesses. Therefore, social commerce theory was implemented in order to be able to explain

the importance of customers care and how customer relationship management influence the success of the business. The perspectives underlie this theory includes social commerce constructs and relationship quality which are discussed further in 6.2.2

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study contributes to the literature on female usage of social networking technologies in the context of self-employment and entrepreneurship, focusing on the home as a business location. Its findings will allow Saudi female entrepreneurs to understand the key issues associated with the use of social networking technologies. It is hoped that by providing better understandings of the process of online businesses, conducted through social networking technologies, may aid Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs to develop appropriate business strategies for themselves.

This study contributes to the entrepreneurial literature and may assist in addressing unemployment issues in Saudi Arabia. By revealing opportunities for online entrepreneurship through the use of social networking technologies, this study demonstrates the possibility of achieving alternative forms of employment that are not necessarily bound by physical boundaries.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The study is divided into seven chapters. Figure 1-1 provides a roadmap overview of this study and outlines the background of the research problem, the research problem statement, the objectives of the study, the research questions, the theoretical context of the study, the research methodology, the findings, the discussion and the conclusions and implications of the study. The order of the thesis is indicated by arrows.

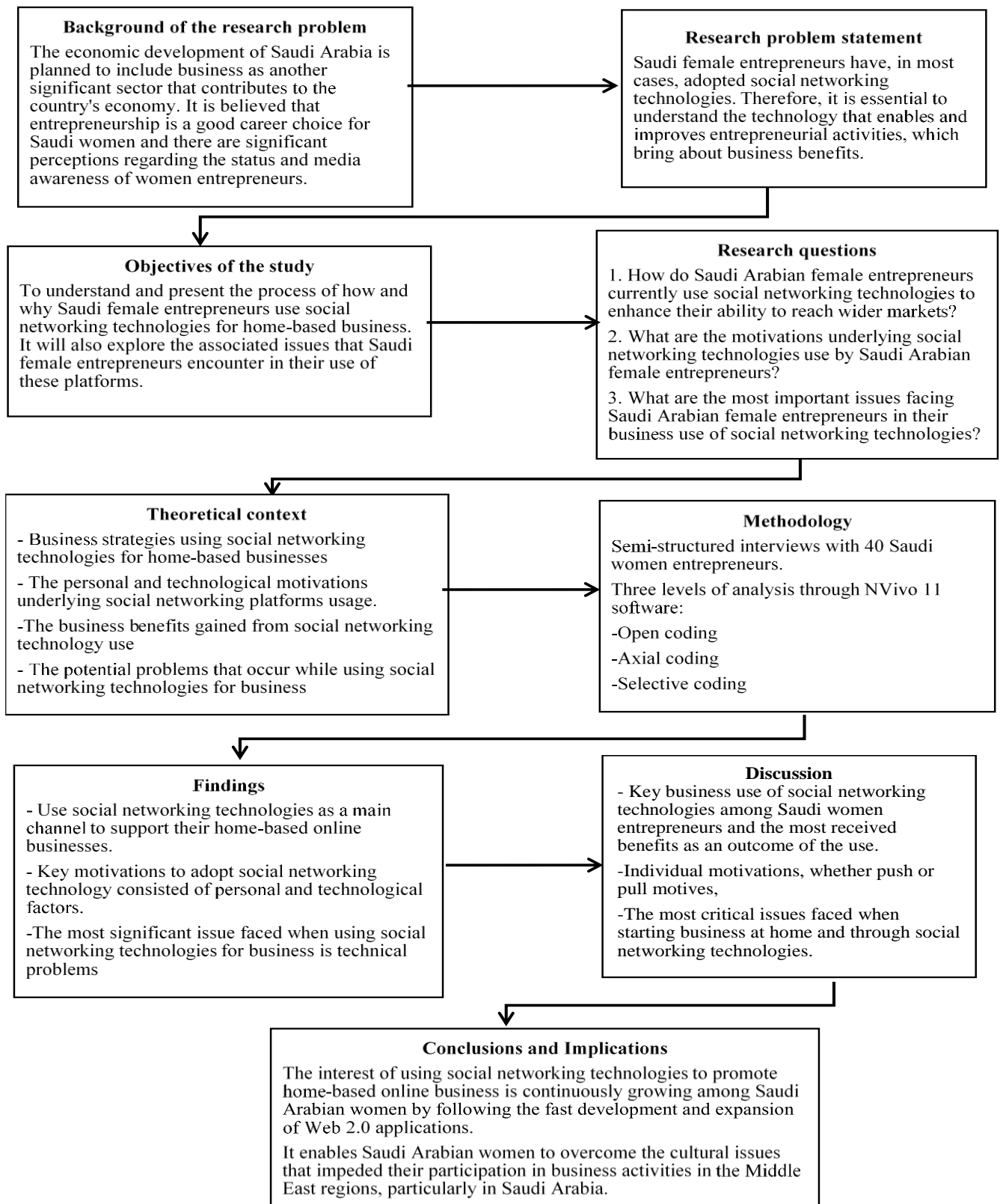


Figure 1-1: Overview roadmap of the research

2. Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of home-based businesses entrepreneurship and their adoption of social networking technologies. Sections 2.2 to 2.7 focus on the operations of home-based online entrepreneurial activities conducted through social networking technologies worldwide before examining the Arab Gulf countries. Section 2.8 outlines the importance of Arab women entrepreneurs in relation to the growth of regional economies and describes how they have engaged in social networking technologies for their home-based businesses. Section 2.9 presents the benefits that women entrepreneurs obtain from using social networking technologies for establishing home-based businesses. Section 2.10 highlights the motivations of, and the challenges faced by these women. Sections 2.9 and 2.10 round off the discussion by examining the factors that have driven women to start a home-based business and the challenges they encountered in the process of establishing them.

2.2 The Adoption of Social Media for Home-based Business

Social media utilisation for home-based businesses is a current and popular research topic (Anwar & Daniel, 2017; Daniel, Di Domenico, & Nunan, 2018; Lent, Anderson, Yunis, & Hashim, 2019; Daniel, Domenico & Sharma, 2015; Di Domenico, Daniel & Nunan, 2014). Social media can be extremely beneficial to home-based businesses in enhancing communication, interaction, learning and collaboration (Tench & Jones, 2015; García-Peñalvo, Colomo-Palacios & Lytras, 2012), which can bring significant opportunities for the businesses.

2.3 Web 2.0 and Social Media

Even though the concepts of Web 2.0 and social media are often used synonymously, it is important to differentiate them from each other (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to Jussila, Kärkkäinen and Aramo-Immonen (2014, p. 607) Web 2.0 involves “technologies [such as the use of Asynchronous, JavaScript, and XML (Ajax)] that enable users to communicate, create content and share it with each other via communities, social networks and virtual worlds more easily than before”. Such tools enable users to select, filter, publish, edit information, and participate in the creation of content in social media. The implementations of this concept is

helping to drive new innovation in the use of this technology toward better user interaction (Bernal, 2009). Csaszar (2016) stated that the belief that Web 2.0 has created a dynamic space for user-generated content to be exploited and generated has been further discussed by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61) who argue that “social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content”. Thus, the relationship between the two concepts is that without the ease of user interaction made possible by Web 2.0, "social media" would not have had nearly the broad adoption that it has had in recent years (Gilley, 2011).

Social media contains massive types of platforms. When social media first emerged around 2006, it involved about 23 different platforms, and by the end of 2012, it comprised more than 330 different applications (Walaski, 2013). Social networking technologies may include the following: applications that are based on users’ special interests (e.g. Facebook and Cyworld); blogs (e.g. WordPress and Frierster); portals which enable individuals and businesses to communicate via a single point of entry (e.g. Ryze); microblogs which allow users to interact with new communities and contacts including SMS (e.g. Twitter); video sharing (e.g. YouTube), collaborative projects or content-driven communities (e.g. Wikipedia and Wikispaces); and other wiki applications that allow users to share photos, videos and links (Khan, 2013; Sinclair & Vogus, 2011; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011; Warr, 2008; Cooke & Buckley, 2008).

Social media platforms are a new phenomenon that have transformed interaction and communication modes. While these platforms are often associated with leisurely pursuits, they also represent important marketing strategies for businesses (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016), a topic examined in the next section.

2.4 Social Media in Business Context

The large number of businesses using social media to implement and promote business activities has brought about a new concept and business model known as social commerce (Al-Hudhaif & Alkubeyyer, 2011; Kim & Park, 2013). Social commerce is part of e-commerce and is associated with online media which supports social connections and the buying and selling

of products and services online (Zhang, Zhou & Zimmermann, 2013; Almousa, 2013). Park and Kang (2013) define social commerce as the use of social media applications with any kind of e-commerce transaction activities while Huang and Benyoucef (2013) argue that it supports social connections, user-generated content and commercial applications, a dynamic process that enables customers to get better information regarding different products and services provided by companies (Abed, Dwivedi & Williams, 2015a).

Social media has offered great opportunities to many businesses, including start-ups, small, medium-sized, and large organisations (Yan & Musika, 2018; Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013; Clark & Douglas, 2014). One of the most important opportunities that social media provides to the world is doing businesses online (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016). According to Jagongo and Kinyua (2013), if businesses use social media adequately, they can significantly improve their online presence because it gives them a chance to promote their brands, products and services.

Marketing is an important activity for the survival and success of a business (Karimi & Naghibi, 2015). Businesses nowadays have more marketing opportunities than ever. They utilise social media to achieve marketing objectives, extending from customer care to advertising to commerce (Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018). The concept of social media marketing has been defined as “the utilization of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate deliver and exchange offerings that have a value for an organization’s stakeholders” (Tuten & Solomon, 2018, p. 18). A large and growing body of literature has focused on social media marketing and its impact on small to medium sized businesses (Wilde, 2014; Karimi & Naghibi, 2015; Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013; Ahmad, Ahmad & Abu Bakar, 2018; Dutot & Bergeron, 2016; Shah & Sindakovski, 2017; Yan & Musika, 2018). Some of these studies conclude that social media has fundamentally changed the way businesses communicate with their target customers and the way businesses promote their products and services (e.g. Ahmad, Ahmad & Abu Bakar, 2018; Dutot & Bergeron, 2016; Islam & Chitran, 2019).

Much of the literature on social media pays particular attention to its usage by businesses (e.g. Balan & Rege, 2017; Ahmad et al., 2018; Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu, & Krush, 2016; Genç & Öksüz, 2015; Chamberlain, Rudolph, & Murphy Smith, 2018). Such studies find that social media can be used in various ways. These include gaining a competitive advantage, for example, improving customer care, communication, and services or products. According to Ramey

(2012), a key advantage of using social media lies in its ability to enhance entrepreneurs' competitive advantage in the market place. Zimmer (2018) suggests that a competitive advantage can be achieved from exchanges and transfers of knowledge and strategic thinking through social media. Using social media in business has enabled entrepreneurs to have unparalleled access to customers and to extend their ability to communicate and serve their customers (Ramey, 2012; Trainor, Andzulis, Rapp & Agnihotri, 2014; Small Business Development Centers, 2015). This has enabled businesses to assemble, interpret, and transfer information for delivering new and enhanced products according to their customer needs (Leonard, 2018; Zimmer, 2018). Therefore, when businesses use social media as a strategic investment, they can evaluate the market and implement strategies needed to maintain their competitive edge for the future (Islam & Chitran, 2019).

Recent studies have shown that social media is an incredible communication tool to be used by businesses because it helps them to get closer to their customers and to become more competitive (Ahmad et al., 2018; Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu & Krush, 2016). Business is a complex field of processes as it involves communication, collaboration and transactions (Small Business Development Centers, 2015). Gharabegian (2018) expounded that businesses should not hesitate to embrace changes and to accept social media as a means of facilitating business operations and transactions. Thus, a number of authors contend that using social media is critical to the success of businesses (Zimmer, 2018; Gleeson, 2018) because it gives them the ability to streamline remote communication, either with clients and/or workers. It also opens the opportunity for businesses to communicate, collaborate and compete worldwide (Gray et al., 2015). Through social media, it has become possible to various companies to communicate with their customers in a "non-traditional" approach (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 11). According to Sherman (2018), the use of social media has improved business communication, enabling people to keep in contact regardless of physical distance and different time zones. Social media applications enable businesses to have a smooth, instant and free means of communication (Henderson, 2018; Leonard, 2018), including the ability to send messages back and forth during negotiations. Furthermore, it makes it easier for customers to obtain and request information at any time (Leonard, 2018). Without the use of such applications, businesses would not be the same as they are today (Henderson, 2018; Sherman, 2018). Social media offers new and better approaches to business transactions and enables more convenient and efficient ways of communication (Leonard, 2018; Small Business Development Centers,

2015). It is especially advantageous for businesses that interact with clients who are far away, as they can now exchange files in seconds over the Internet (Henderson, 2018).

Social media is a widely used term and it encompasses a mixture of elements that make up a promotion mix (Shah & Sindakovski, 2017). For example, businesses are not able to control information that is spread on social media (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), and geographical boundaries pose no barrier to the sharing of information or opinions by customers. In a matter of seconds, a single piece of feedback can be seen by thousands because of the way people now 'share' information via social media (Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013). The impact of social media application, in the "easy creation and exchange of user generated content" (Mandal, 2015, p. 35) is highly dependent on one's ability to create viral marketing campaigns, which Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) term as advertising concepts. In further study, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) shows that many businesses have grappled with the shift to a highly connected world where, through the Internet, customers can speak freely with each other. Therefore, as Tuten and Mintu-Wimsatt (2018) have argued, while it is imperative for businesses to use social media, they also have to implement it correctly. Mangold and Faulds (2009) have suggested that social media enables businesses to closely monitor what customers say about them and to respond to any pressing concerns.

There is a large volume of literature describing the role of social media and its ability to acquire and retain customers, provide clues to customer choice about services and improve product quality, all of which can be achieved through customer feedback (Cheng & Shiu, 2019; Odoom & Mensah, 2019; Woodcock, Green & Starkey, 2011; Sinclair & Vogus, 2011). Dellarocas (2003) notes that customer feedback is crucial in the overall management of a business, from building the brand, to acquiring and retaining customers, to developing the products and eventually in establishing quality assurance. Customer feedback in a digital and highly connected world means that word-of-mouth advertisements have an unprecedented power to reach a wider audience almost instantaneously (Cakim, 2010). The coining of the term viral marketing aptly captures the nature and extent of this reach and obviously plays an important role for online businesses (Indrupati & Henari, 2012).

Social media has become strongly established on the Internet and many types of online communities that enhance users' interactions exist, some of which include message boards, chat

rooms, social networking technologies, and other virtual communities (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Khan et al., 2014). Virtual or online communities are mostly represented in social networking technologies that get people to interact through specific social media in order to share common interests and needs (Behyar et al., 2011). Social networking sites, referred to as social networking technologies in this study, is one of the best examples of social media applications that has grown in prominence (Indrupati & Henari, 2012).

All concepts explained above refer to the Social Commerce Constructs theory (explained in depth in 6.2.2), which explain how the dimensions of this theory, including customers' reviews, recommendations, and referrals, might affect social commerce intentions. Also, forming virtual communities where customers get support from their peer consumers to assist their buying decisions plays a significant role in social commerce adoption and use. Entrepreneurs can take part in consumer's social interaction and customer engagement on social networking technologies. Online communication and social interaction of consumers are facilitated by the social commerce construction that provided by entrepreneurs including a development of virtual groups for customer's recommendations, reviews and rating of the product or services (Amblee & Bui, 2011).

2.5 Common Social Networking Technologies Used in Business

Social networking technologies are now so influential that they are utilised in business settings (Ellahi, 2018). For example, businesses launch themselves on Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and YouTube channels (Weinberg, De Ruyter, Dellarocas, Buck & Keeling, 2013). It is essential for businesses to have a prominent online presence on social networking technologies for a number of reasons (West, 2019). As of March 2019, social media users numbered more than 3.2 billion, which equates to about 42% of the entire world population (Tjepkema, 2019). Obviously, such a large population represents a major opportunity for businesses to tap into (Singh & Singh, 2018).

Social networking technologies are also crucial tools for businesses because customers are using these platforms to research products. A statistical study showed that 54% of social browsers, across the world, join social networking technologies and look for brand reviews and recommendations (Beer, 2018). Therefore, it is not surprising that businesses are actively

exploring these platforms to win over potential customers (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011). Social networking technologies represent an opportunity for businesses to provide quality customer service by managing their online presence and ensuring that they keep in touch with their audience such as responding to comments and messages (Mohsin, 2019). A study found that 71% of customers who had positive experiences with a company through social networking technologies are most likely to recommend the brand to their friends and family, which known as social media influencer and/or referrals (Kayla, 2019). Another empirical study found that 49% of customers decide on their purchases based on the recommendations available on social networking platforms (Osborne, 2019; Ismagilova, Dwivedi & Slade, 2019), a finding that supported an earlier study which suggested that referrals in social networking technologies could influence 71% of consumers (Husain, Ghufraan & Chaubey, 2016). Kayla's study (2019) states that the number of posts from influencer marketing have been grown up to reach 4.95 million, by the end of 2019. Moreover, social networking technologies influencers' posts have been forecasted to increase and reach up to 6.12 million in 2020.

Social networking technologies are integral communication and marketing channels among businesses and their customers (Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013). A study reported that a large proportion (73%) of marketers believe that social networking platforms are very effective for their business (Buffer, 2019). Other studies show how social networking technologies benefit businesses in various ways, including reducing costs, improving communication, and releasing innovative and attractive products on an international scale (Gharabegian, 2018; McCann, & Barlow, 2015; Stockdale, Ahmed, & Scheepers, 2012; Derham, Cragg & Morrish, 2011).

According to Husain, Ghufraan and Chaubey (2016), almost all (97%) businesses in Lucknow, India, participate in social networking technologies and take advantage of virtual social capital, conducting different types of commercial activities (Stephen & Toubia, 2008). Businesses have embraced social networking technologies as a form of essential business practice to share product information with other networks, and to promote their services or products (Abed et al., 2015a; Sinclair & Vogus, 2011; De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012). Certain features of social networking technologies have been exploited by businesses, including the "Like" button on Facebook, the "Tweet" messages on Twitter, the "Story" live allowed on Instagram and the "Share" button enabled on LinkedIn (Park & Kang, 2013). These features enable businesses to easily identify, exchange and share useful information with their customers and to profit as a

result (Chen, Fay, & Wang, 2011). However, some studies have suggested that many businesses are unsure of what social networking technologies tools are the best to use (Husain, Ghufraan & Chaubey, 2016) because each platform has a unique audience and its own set of functions (Mohsin, 2019). The study by Kayla (2019) on American businesses using online social networks showed that about 56% of businesses have at least one or more social networking profiles. It is common for businesses to establish themselves on different social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube in an attempt to become a product information source and to create as well as strengthen links with customers (Abed et al., 2015a).

The following section provides brief descriptions of well-established examples of social networking technologies that have influenced businesses, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Pinterest.

2.5.1 Facebook

Facebook is regarded as the most influential platform for achieving business growth (Chierotti, 2017). Based on global reach and total active users, Facebook is currently the market leader among social networking technologies, with over 2.32 billion active monthly users (Mohsin, 2019). Approximately two-thirds (68%) of American adults report that they are Facebook users, and roughly three-quarters of those users access Facebook on a daily basis (Smith & Anderson, 2018).

Consumers are increasingly using Facebook to look for information about various products and services, as an alternative to traditional media such as television, radio and magazines (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). A number of studies have suggested that Facebook is more effective than emails when businesses need to connect with people across the globe (Aasheim & Stensønes, 2011; Mandal & McQueen, 2012; Singh & Singh, 2018). This is because Facebook is able to spread information faster and reach a larger audience than emails. Many businesses are heavy users of Facebook's 'business page' service (Plans, 2010), which enables users to create profiles that are separate to their personal profile. Previous studies report that having a separate Facebook page is crucial for businesses because it keeps their business account in good standing, and gives them the freedom to post, advertise, and focus their content around the business, industry, and customers (Jenkins, 2017; Young, 2017). Moreover, Sutevski (2019) suggests that establishing a Facebook business page is beneficial in giving businesses

access to Facebook advertisements and Facebook Analytics. However, having separate personal and business Facebook pages may be time-consuming, and Facebook's advertisements policy may prove overly restrictive (Jenkins, 2017).

A number of researchers have commented that Facebook is an effective channel for brand communications, in being able to drive a targeted number of customers to company internet-shopping sites (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Valles & Petrova, 2012). Professional press on social media have also recognised the ability of Facebook to facilitate business connections with existing and new customers (Indvik, 2013; Liu & Bloomberg, 2013; Soule & Hanson, 2018; Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011) and it is more dominant than any other advertising mechanism (Brzozowski, Sandholm, & Hogg, 2009; Hopkins, 2012).

Aside from online visits and views, researchers have acknowledged the ability of Facebook to drive sales (Aral, Dellarocas, & Godes, 2013; Kirtiş & Karahan, 2011; Lehdonvirta, 2009). Its 'business page' feature is especially crucial for small and medium size businesses in allowing them to showcase interrelated products via the Timeline (Lockhart, 2013), Newsfeed (Shrivastav, Collins, Hiltz, & Dwyer, 2012), Photos and Videos (Tonks, 2012), Messages (Napolitano, Hayes, Bennett, Ives, & Foster, 2013), or Events (Lee, Xiong, & Hu, 2012). Kayla (2019) found that more than 50 million small businesses currently use Facebook's 'business page' to connect with their customers and to remain competitive with their rivals.

Other studies have found that Facebook is an effective mechanism for generating growth and value for small businesses (Hopkins, 2012; Lewis, 2014; Singh et al., 2018; Pentina, Koh & Le, 2012). However, O'Hare (2011) argues that Facebook's 'business page' is not suitable for non-consumer based companies as it is limited in recording activities. Although Facebook has sought to develop and improve its business pages (Yatsyna, 2018), many businesses have adopted other social networking platforms for their marketing strategies and public relations tools (Kaur, 2016). Indeed, the adoption of different social media sites to understand customer behaviour is inevitable for brand development (Singh et al., 2018).

2.5.2 Twitter

Twitter is the second most used social media after Facebook (Rudoy, 2018). Twitter is an online newsfeed and social networking technology platform where users interact through text

messages called “tweets” which are restricted to a maximum of 140 characters, which may include in-text URLs and attached visual materials (Alsahi, 2016). At the end of 2017, Twitter was not as popular as Facebook, with about 500 million monthly active users compared to Facebook’s 2 billion monthly active users (Carter, 2019).

Previous studies have reported that businesses were quick to use Twitter for their commercial activities because it is a great tool for communication, promotion and advertising purposes (Singh & Singh, 2018; Zhang, Jansen & Chowdhury, 2011; Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013; Park & Kang, 2013). Nonetheless, Twitter was not profitable until the third quarter of 2017, posting a profit of 91 million dollars; in the third quarter of 2018, it reportedly posted its largest profit ever (Cooper, 2019). Therefore, Twitter is emerging as a major rival to Facebook (Culnan, McHugh, Zubillaga, 2010), and in Forbes’ Top 100 Digital Companies list for 2018, it placed 21 on the list, outranking Facebook, which placed number 26 (Cooper, 2019).

From a business perspective, Twitter differs from other social networking technologies owing to its unique features (Mohsin, 2019). For example, information posted on Twitter can be viewed by anyone whereas on Facebook, information can only be viewed by those who have a user account (Mancini, 2009; Rudoy, 2018). Moreover, businesses believe that Twitter is an exceptional tool for instructions, reminders, and customer support (Pavel, 2009; Norris, 2013) and it enables users to connect to a range of other social media including business networks, e-mail addresses and Facebook pages (Conway, 2011). The unique features of Twitter have made it a popular choice for businesses seeking to achieve their organisational goals (Aral, Dellarocas, Godes, 2013; Hahn, 2019).

Prior studies have indicated that use of Twitter has a positive impact on branding (Dutot & Bergeron, 2016; Delerue & Cronje, 2015). It can be utilized to develop the company’s image and brand (Castronovo & Huang, 2012), but it is important to attract quality followers (Carter, 2019; Halloran & Thies, 2012). A study by Elliott (2014) showed that brands can expect about 300 interactions for every one million Twitter followers, compared to an average of 700 interactions for every million Facebook followers. Another study showed that 78% of customers who complain to or about a company on Twitter could typically expect a response from that company within an hour (Kayla, 2019). Twitter is an extreme example of how a company’s responsiveness can make or break its image (Halloran & Thies, 2012). As Kayla

(2019, Para 11) notes, “ignoring Twitter complaints from angry customers can fuel their frustration with your brand while responding quickly with information to appease them can actually turn disgruntled consumers into repeat customers”.

O'Hare (2011) describes Twitter as an easy social media tool for interacting with other companies within the same industry. According to Conway (2011), business to business (B2B) companies often use Twitter as a way of maintaining their relationships with clients, suppliers, local stakeholders and network partners. Although companies may initially find Twitter a challenging tool to use, especially if they have had no prior experience of it (Harris & Rae, 2009), the immense benefits it offers soon become obvious (Webintel, 2018; Driver, 2019a).

2.5.3 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social networking technology that is usually used for business and professional employment-oriented services (Singh & Singh, 2018; Samuel, 2016); with several organisations creating their own LinkedIn page (Plans, 2010). It is estimated that LinkedIn has approximately 303 million monthly active users and over 30 million company pages exist (Stout, 2019). Registering for a LinkedIn account is simple but creating and updating a page can be time consuming.

From a business perspective, LinkedIn is the most popular social networking technology for B2B, as 89% of marketers prefer using it to distribute content (Sobal, 2018). Moreover, marketers prefer using this platform because it is an easy tool to manage, to post links to other social media such as the company's main website, and to “pop up” on Google searches, which is a simple way to show credibility and to achieve an online presence (O'Hare, 2011). While some commentators, such as Singh and Singh (2018), advocate LinkedIn as a major platform for achieving organisational objectives, others (e.g. Samuel, 2016; O'Hare, 2011) believe that alternative platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram are more effective because customers tend to spend more time and attention here and are more inclined to check these accounts more regularly than their LinkedIn accounts.

On the other hand, LinkedIn is the most crucial social media tool to be used for business (Bulik, 2008). A study showed that 71% of B2B marketers perceive LinkedIn as important (Sobal, 2018). Moreover, Sinclair and Vogus (2011) found that 99% of companies in the United States

use LinkedIn. While most organisations use it to provide static and basic information such as their location, number of employees, revenue, few of other organisations use it to advertise for job vacancies (Thew, 2008).

2.5.4 Instagram

Instagram is another popular social networking technology platform, with over 1 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2019). Since its creation, more than 40 billion photos and 500 million daily stories have been shared (Sobal, 2018). According to Worthy (2018), about 90% of active Instagram users are younger than 35 years old. In order to achieve high rates of engagement on Instagram, users have to share posts that are tagged with other users or locations (Kayla, 2019).

For modern businesses, the evolution of Instagram has opened up new possibilities in boosting profits (Sherman, 2018). Instagram earns approximately \$595 million in mobile advertisements revenue per year and is expected to peak to almost \$7 billion by the end of 2019 (Kayla, 2019). Since its launch in October 2010, Instagram has been used to start and manage small online businesses (Standberry, 2019). Instagram has improved business performance and enabled a global reach of target audiences (Alkhowaiter, 2016; Garifova, 2016; Gharabegian, 2018; Driver, 2019b): “The advent of this technology and its variety of benefits has made conducting business easier and more assessable to small business owners globally.” (Henderson, 2018, para. 1). Instagram makes it easy for anyone to do business anywhere (Small Business Development Centers, 2015). A study by Heine (2017) suggests that companies may achieve three times more engagement on Instagram compared to other social networking technologies. Therefore, if marketers are not using Instagram for their small businesses, they risk missing out on valuable opportunities (Jackson, 2019).

Instagram offers businesses a free business page and Instagram stories, one of the channel's most popular features, represent a major opportunity for slick marketing strategies to be implemented as companies seek to build their customer base (Social Report, 2019). For small businesses, marketing strategies such as posting a live video enable companies to give customers a look behind the scenes of interesting aspects of their business, to showcase products and to answer live questions through the comments feature (Silverman, 2018). It has been

argued that if businesses follow the right marketing strategies on Instagram, they can increase sales and boost their brand (Virtanen, Björk & Sjöström, 2017; Alkhowaiter, 2016).

2.5.5 Other Social Networking Technologies

2.5.5.1 *Snapchat*

Snapchat is an image and video messaging app, released in 2011. It allows users to capture and send ‘Snaps’ that are only viewable for a few seconds (Kotfila, 2014), although users now also have the option to save specific Snaps onto a private storage area (Iqbal, 2019). Users can share the location of their snaps with other users (Moreau, 2019). On average, 203 million people use Snapchat every day globally and Snapchatters spend between 20 to 30 minutes on the app, creating and sharing 3.5 billion Snaps daily (Snap Inc, 2019).

The smartphone camera is at the very heart of the Snapchat concept (Schrock, 2015) and initially, Snapchat was used to share pictures between friends, play with augmented reality, and keep up with events (Bayer, Ellison, Schoenebeck & Falk, 2016). The evolution of this platform has been such that business usage of Snapchat has attracted significant research attention (Hampton, 2017; Dumenco, 2017; Driver, 2018; Miranda, 2019; Nkem Ndem, 2016). That said, Snapchat remains dwarfed by the likes of Instagram (Shleyner, 2019) and Twitter, reporting a 3% decline in new users in recent years (Mediakix, 2019). Hence, Snapchat has sought to add a host of new features and tools to retain its users and advertisers (Motley Fool, 2018). These include more distribution and monetization opportunities for Snapchat creators and, while the number of Snapchat users have dropped, advertising revenue has been climbing steadily upwards. Snapchat experienced an increase in ads revenue of more than \$100 million (Wade, 2019); in 2017, it closed with \$285.69 million while by Q2 of 2019, it closed with \$388 million in revenue (Influencer Marketing, 2019). Moreover, Iqbal (2019) reports that the market cap for Snapchat is increasing, peaking to \$24.4 billion in July 2019.

2.5.5.2 *WhatsApp*

WhatsApp is the social messaging service that is arguably become the fastest-growing communication app worldwide (Katre, 2019). According to Ujaley (2018) there are more than one billion WhatsApp users in over 180 countries using the application to stay in touch with friends and family at anytime and anywhere. WhatsApp is a powerful communication tool that

has become widely popular owing to its simplicity (Corpuz & Carnevale, 2019). WhatsApp was created for personal communication between family and friends, but it can also be used for small businesses (Sulleyman, 2018).

A new official WhatsApp Business application was launched in January 2018 (Mehvish, 2018). It is a free-to-download Android app for small businesses established in Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, the U.K., and the U.S., and it will soon be made available around the world (Malik, 2018). WhatsApp Business will make it easier for constant communication between customers and businesses that matter to them. The new app is already been used by more than three million people (Financial Express, 2018) and provides customers with useful information such as a description of the business, the company's email or store addresses, and website (Walter, 2019). WhatsApp Business provides smart messaging tools such as quick replies that provide fast answers to frequently asked questions, greeting messages that introduce customers to the business, and 'away' messages that let users know that one is busy (Jenkins, 2019). It also provides simple metrics like the number of messages read to give businesses useful statistical information.

2.5.5.3 Pinterest

Launched in 2011 (Moreau, 2019), Pinterest was the fastest growing social networking technology in 2014, growing by 97% (Radice, 2019). It had more than 265 million registered users worldwide at the end of 2018 (Economic Nation, 2018). A statistical study that compared Pinterest to other social networking technologies suggested that Pinterest was the fourth best source of social network referral traffic, following Google, directly typing a domain name into a browser, and Facebook (Aquino, 2013).

Pinterest enables users to not only share images associated with project, goods, and services, but also enables them to visually discover new interests by browsing images that others have posted (Meng, 2019). Pinterest is designed like a web-based pinboard with greater organisational functionality (Lammle, 2011). Users are able to pin or save images they find on the web and associate it to different boards that are used to categorize their image collections (Phillips, Miller & Mcquarrie, 2014). Therefore, Pinterest can be a valuable tool for people who are searching for specific things (Smith, 2015), such as home renovation ideas, recipes, wedding dresses, and so on.

The business potential of Pinterest has attracted considerable research interest (Aquino, 2013; Miles & Lacey, 2012). Marketers aim to establish a presence on Pinterest (Sashittal & Jassawalla, 2015) as it provides a new channel for building brand awareness and engaging with target audiences and potential customers (Foreman, 2017). Because Pinterest allows users to re-save pins from another's board into their own (Greene, 2018) it is a powerful tool in terms of peer influence and for capturing new customers.

Generating \$756 million in revenue in 2018 (Richter, 2019), Pinterest is obviously an attractive tool for businesses to consider using, but to effectively achieve their goals, businesses should create a Pinterest business account because they provide extra features such as Pinterest Analytics and Promoted Pins (Peters, 2019). Furthermore, businesses have to be strategic in choosing what to display on Pinterest because this will introduce their business to a whole new audience (Bonnington, 2018). Creating striking headlines on Pinterest which link to the company's website or blog can be a powerful tool for converting new customers (Advantix Digital, 2019). According to Kayla (2019), 93% of Pinterest users use the platform to make purchases or to plan future purchases.

Social media in general and social networking technologies in particular, can be extremely beneficial to home-based businesses who are constrained by marketability, resource constraints and managerial limitations (Mandal, 2015). These are discussed more in the next section.

2.6 Home-based Online Businesses

Home itself involves innovation as it formulates a place to be a central location for work (Mason, Carter, & Tagg, 2011). It has been reconfigured to be a significant place for home-based workers defined as being self-employed running online entrepreneurial activities (Ruiz & Walling, 2005). Daniel et al. (2014) defined home-based business entrepreneurs as those who are both self-employed and self-managed, they are different from those who work from home but are employed (e.g teleworking) (Chalmers, 2008) and those who are self-employment without self-management (e.g contracting) (Peel & Inkson, 2004). Discussing the merits of the definition of a home-based business is beyond the scope of this study as it focusses on technology enabler of entrepreneurs who work from home to be able to manage and grow their

businesses. Such discussion of home-based businesses has been extensively covered in (Clark & Douglas, 2012; Conway, Newbery, Siwale, & Henley, 2017).

The characteristics and classification of home-based businesses are presented in the following section.

2.6.1 Characteristics of Online Home-based Businesses

Home-based businesses are a heterogeneous group that is growing in the business sector (Reuschke & Mason, 2020). The Internet and associated technologies have been instrumental to this growth (Clark & Douglas, 2011; Daniel et al., 2014; Chalmers, 2008) and entrepreneurial activities driven by social media platforms forms the focus of this research.

In describing the characteristics of home-based businesses, Gelderen et al. (2008) developed the acronym SMILES, which stands for Speed, Multiple income, Inexpensive, LEan and Smart. 'Speed' refers to the way in which these businesses are formed quickly and operate in a short rapid cycle. 'Multiple-income' illustrates how some online home-based businesses owners are able to be involved in more than one source of income generation. 'Inexpensive' is the most common feature of home-based business types because the costs of establishing and operating such businesses are relatively low (Phillips, 2002). These businesses are described as 'LEAN' because they are small, virtual, and often use subcontracting and networking with other small businesses to grow (Clark & Douglas, 2011). Gelderen et al. (2008) describe home-based online businesses as 'Smart' in terms of being innovative and finding new ways of achieving their goals.

2.6.2 Classification of Online Home-based Businesses

Salazar's (2001) classification of home-based business makes a distinction between self-employed and self-managed home-workers, with the former being entrepreneurs and the latter being those who work from home but are employed by non-home based businesses (Harker Martin & MacDonnell, 2012; Jaakson & Kallaste, 2010). Mandal (2015) use the term 'home-based business entrepreneurs' to indicate a segment of home-based and self-employed businesses which operate mainly from home and derive the majority of their revenue from online activities.

Self-employed businesses are different to small and medium enterprises as well as small businesses (Mandal, 2015). This distinction initially focused on the number of workers with small and medium enterprises employing between 20 to 200 people (Raymond, 1985) compared with small businesses which, by definition, employ less than 20 people (Reinl & Kelliher, 2008). Self-employment is often associated with receiving help from family members with no fixed number of workers. Mandal (2015) suggest that income-generating activities for self-employment is mixed with household economy whereas this remains separate for small and medium enterprises and for small businesses. Both authors contend that self-employment involves minimal fixed assets (less-than USD \$500), whereas small and medium enterprises involve moderate fixed assets (less than USD \$10,000) and small businesses involve significant fixed assets (up to USD \$100,000). They suggest that each type of business uses technology differently; small and medium enterprise typically use traditional and manual technologies, small businesses use a mixture of current and obsolete technology, while home-based self employed businesses use the most modern technology. Self-employed businesses will use profits for household consumption and will diversify their activities to increase this income and/or to minimise risks, while small businesses and small and medium enterprises generally pool their profits into company reinvestment (Breen, Tasker & Hiebert, 2017).

The manager/owner of home-based businesses is an entrepreneur who is not only willing to undertake risk and uncertainty, but create opportunities (Thompson et al., 2009; Nichter & Goldmark, 2009). Schaper, Volery, Weber, and Gibson (2014, p. 5) describe home-based business as “the process brought about by individuals of identifying new opportunities and converting them into marketable products or services”. Home-based entrepreneurship is associated with the innovation to create something new (Fallatah, 2012). Entrepreneurs often begin by using the Internet to market their products and services to investors and customers and from this; the new business eventually expands with some brands becoming household names (Mathew, 2010).

Home-based businesses may be a good option specifically for women (Surangi, 2016; Mathew, 2010; Thompson et al., 2009; Walker & Webster, 2004; Loscocco & Smith-Hunter, 2004) especially in Arab countries where conservative norms create highly restrictive practices based on gender, has been given some consideration (Mehtap, Ozmenekse & Caputo, 2019). Many researchers have investigated the differences between men and women's motivations for

starting their businesses and why they prefer to operate from home (Shmailan, 2014; Still & Walker, 2006; Zakaria, 2001). Other researchers have examined the role of social media in home-based businesses (Barnatt, 2004; Gelderen et al., 2008; Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013; Liang & Turban, 2011; Sinclaire & Vogus, 2011; Wynarczyk & Graham, 2013). A common finding is that social media works as a communication and marketing tool for business owners and marketers who operate from home, enabling them to significantly grow their businesses due to the increases in technology (Wally & Koshy, 2014).

Home-based entrepreneurship is seen as making a significant contribution to economic growth, job creation, productivity and innovation in both developed and developing nations (Verheul & Thurik, 2001; Clark & Douglas, 2012; Henderson, 2002; Kent et al., 1982; Naser, Mohammed, & Nuseibeh, 2009). “Globally, the average rate for women’s Total Entrepreneurial Activities is 10.2%, over three-quarters the global rate for men’s Total Entrepreneurial Activities” (Elam, Brush, Greene, Baumer, Dean & Heavlow, 2019, p. 19).

Years ago, the government of the United States has recognised the significant contribution of entrepreneurship to the nation’s economy. Thus, they have developed laws and systems to help nurture its growth (Schramm, 2005). Similarly, the Chinese government introduced entrepreneurship as part of its educational curriculum (Li, Zhang, & Matlay, 2003), from which the Chinese economy has now rapidly developed in previous years (Yang & Li, 2008).

As previously mentioned, home-based entrepreneurship is seen as a way of reducing the unemployment rate, especially for women (Assi & Marcati, 2020; Fonseca, Lopez-Garcia, & Pissarides, 2001). According to Mason et al. (2011), home-based online business growth is often associated with rising rates of unemployment. For developing nations such as the Gulf Counties, including Saudi Arabia, unemployment remains a serious problem (Chamlou, 2008; Troemel & Strait, 2013).

2.7 Entrepreneurship in Gulf Cooperation Council Countries

In the last decade, there was a rapid growth of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) economies. The Gulf Cooperation Council includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE (Amadeo, 2010). The GCC supplies about 22.4% of U.S. oil, and owns up to \$36.4 billion

of U.S. capital in 2018 (Workman, 2019). These Arab countries have attempted to diversify their rapidly growing economies beyond a dependence on oil and have sought to educate their people about business support and development (El-Erian, 2016). Hence, the GCC economic growth is largely driven by a surge in local entrepreneurial activities and by the start-ups of small businesses (Indrupati & Henari, 2012).

In Bahrain, entrepreneurial activities have been significantly empowered and supported by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) (Indrupati & Henari, 2012). This organisation has offered Bahraini entrepreneurs help, knowledge and skills to effectively manage their new business (Khan, 2019). In addition, UNIDO has also organised several Entrepreneurs Development and Investment Promotion Programmes (EDIPP) in order to advise Bahraini entrepreneurs about investing and managing small businesses as well as supporting them with project planning and implementation (United Nations Bahrain, 2019). As a result, about 96 Small- Medium Enterprises were established and approximately 270 potential Bahraini entrepreneurs received training on business identification, plan preparation and market analysis (Dohel, 2019; United Nations Industrial Development Organization, 2008). Bahraini entrepreneurs have also been financially supported by the “Tamkeen” program that was initiated by the local government, which aims to develop the private sector and enhance the productivity of the Bahraini labour force. The program started in 2009 and provided a budget of BD 3,212; targeting over 27,560 people (Tamkeen, 2010).

In Oman, Sultan Qaboos Bin Saeed ran the “Sanad” programme in order to increase employment opportunities and support Omani entrepreneurs (Oman Daily Observer, 2011; Khan, Ghosh & Myers, 2005). Through this programme, about 28,000 Omani entrepreneurs were financially supported. The Sanad program offered between 5,000 to 10,000 Omani riyals to individual entrepreneurs and it provided between 20,000 to 50,000 Omani riyals to group entrepreneurial projects (Gulf News, 2010).

In Kuwait, entrepreneurial activities have developed rapidly. Kuwaiti people generally have more exposure to new ideas than their Gulf counterparts (Abu-Aisheh, 2018), in being the first country to hire employees based on education, experience, and knowledge rather than on family connections (Raven & Welsh, 2004). The Kuwait Small Projects Development Company (KSPDC) is the support organisation for Kuwaiti entrepreneurs. They have assisted

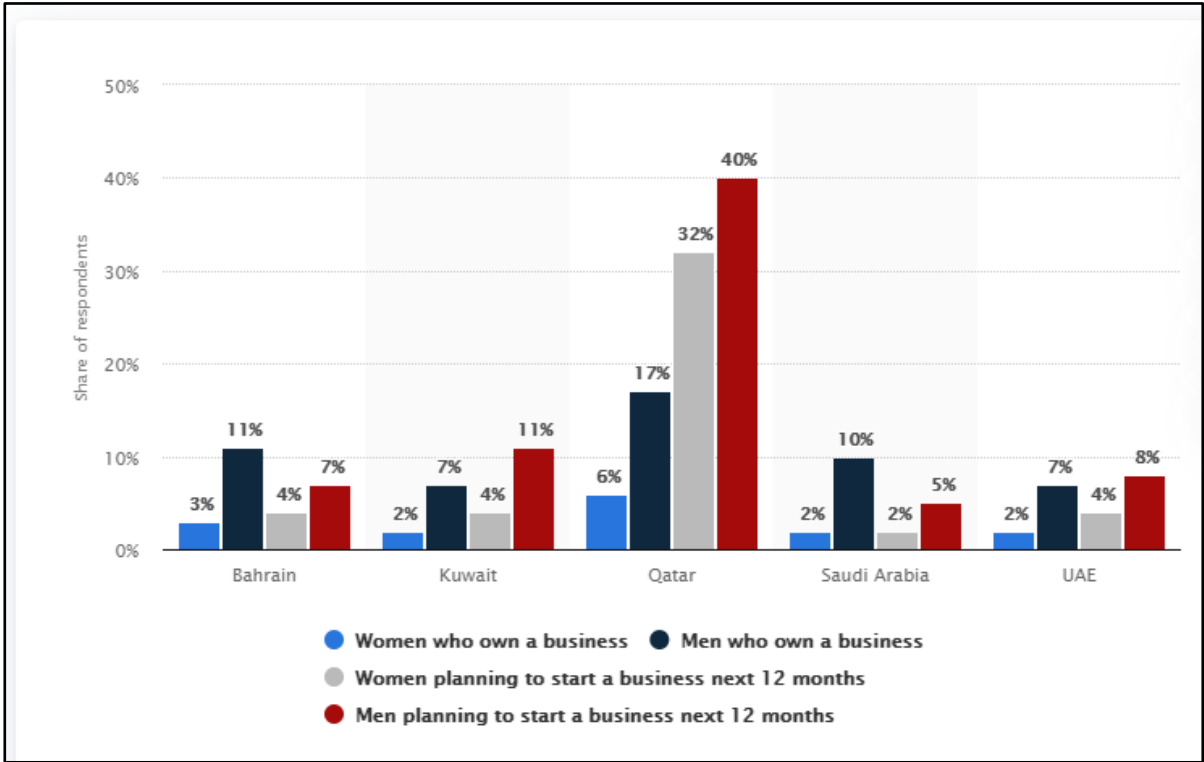
entrepreneurs in Kuwait by loaning them 80%- up to KD 400, 000- of the capital required to start up a business (Calderwood, 2010).

Entrepreneurial activities have been successfully implemented in Qatar. iGate Corporation Suni Wadhvani, who is a graduate from Corporate Innovation and Entrepreneurship Programme, contributed about \$400 million of the capital to entrepreneurial activities (Olayiwola, 2008). Qatari entrepreneurs are supported by the Qatar Development Bank (QIDB), which is committed to helping entrepreneurs establish small businesses (Shachmurove, 2009).

Entrepreneurial activities have significantly affected economic growth in the Gulf countries in the last ten years. The Global Report of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) conducted in 2019 by Elam, Brush, Greene, Baumer, Dean and Heavlow (2019) indicated a clear relationship between entrepreneurship and national economic development in the Middle East including United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia.

A study conducted by Assi and Marcati (2020) showed that women's labour force participation rates in the Middle East are the lowest in the world which reached at 24.6%—at half of the global average, regardless of high rates of enrollment and education literacy levels. A similar previous study conducted by Bugshan (2012) found that the proportions of female entrepreneurs in GCC countries who own or plan to start small businesses are significantly low across all Arab countries, except in Qatar (see Figure 2-1). Qatari women are most likely to have access to advice, money and training in order to realise their entrepreneurial ambitions. “Qatar has made an impressive jump in established women's business ownership rates from 0.3% to 2.7%, accompanied by a reduction in the gender gap in established business ownership from 83% to 42%” (Elam et al., 2019, p.37).

Figure 2-1: Rates of business ownership and plans to start a business in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, by gender, 2012



(Source: Statista, 2020)

The entrepreneurship rate in the UAE was low and they lacked female entrepreneurs in 2012 (see Figure 2-1). However, in the following years, the Business Women’s Council in UAE has sought to increase the number of female entrepreneurs, launching seminars to encourage business women to invest their funds (Bin Haider, 2019). The number of female Emirati entrepreneurs has reached 75% and they have been managing their businesses for an average of 5.9 years (Milenkovic, 2019).

Saudi Arabia continues to be the largest oil producer and exporter of oil worldwide and it has the largest proven reserves of crude oil (Hamilton, Barron & Barnett, 2019). However, its entrepreneurial rates are very low at 4.7% and its proportion of necessity-driven entrepreneurship in entrepreneurial activities rate is reported at 12% (Bosma & Levie, 2010), which is also low. The following sections introduce the context for which Saudi female entrepreneurship has emerged and touch on a key focus of this study: their use of technology to enhance their businesses.

2.7.1 Saudi Arabian Context

This section provides an overview of the historical, cultural, economic, and entrepreneurial landscape in Saudi Arabia.

2.7.1.1 Brief Geographical and Historical Overview

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia extends across four-fifths of the Arabian Peninsula, occupying over 2,240,000 square kilometres (Ochsenwald, Philby, & Teitelbaum, 2018). In the western highlands of Saudi Arabia, lies the Hejaz, which consists of the major urban cities: Jiddah, Mecca and Medina. In the heartland of Saudi Arabia, a region known as Najd, is the capital city, Riyadh. In the eastern part, along the Persian Gulf, are the urban cities, Dammam/ Khobar/and Dhahran, the site of abundant oil fields that have made Saudi Arabia synonymous with petroleum wealth since the 1960s (Library of Congress., 2006). As of December 2019, the population of Saudi Arabia was reported to be around 34 million (Worldometers, 2019) and is expected to grow by 2.18% annually (Ochsenwald et al., 2018).

The modern Saudi state was founded in 1932 by Abd Al-Aziz bin Abd al-Rahman Al Saud (Ibn Saud) after a 30-year campaign to unify most of the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and home to Islam's two holiest shrines in Mecca and Medina (Ochsenwald et al., 2018). Therefore, its king has the official title of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). One of Abd Al-Aziz's male descendants rules the country today, as required by the country's 1992 Basic Law (Library of Congress., 2006). From 2005 to 2015, King Abdallah incrementally modernised the Kingdom. Under his helm, a series of social and economic initiatives were introduced, including expanding employment and social opportunities for women, attracting foreign investment, increasing the role of the private sector in the economy, and discouraging businesses from hiring foreign workers (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). Other milestones reached under King Abdallah's reign include the first-ever elections in 2005 and 2011, and, in December 2015, giving women the opportunity to vote and stand as candidates for the first time in municipal council elections, wherein 19 women won seats (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018).

2.7.1.2 The Saudi Economy

The Saudi population's wealth is generated by oil reserves, the very reason why it has been presumed that most Saudi citizens are relatively rich. However, the rapid population growth has compelled the government to stimulate the economy to maintain high living standards (Al-Maghrabi & Dennis, 2011a). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is known as one of the world's fastest growing countries worldwide because it is able to maintain a very high and stable per-capita income, with a forecasted raise from USD \$25,000 in 2012 to USD \$33,500 by 2020 (International Market Advisor, 2018). Saudi Arabia still holds the title as the leading producer of oil and natural gas because it has about 16% of the world's proven oil reserves. In early April 2016, the Saudi government announced a series of socio-economic reforms, called Vision 2030 (Saudi Gazette, 2016).

2.7.1.3 Women and the Saudi Arabian Culture

Saudi Arabia has a highly distinguished, complex and unique culture, particularly in relation to its treatment of women (Chamlou, 2008). According to Beckerle (2016) only in Saudi Arabia "a woman's life is controlled by a man from birth until death" (p. 11). There are specific and detailed guidelines that all women need to follow, one of which is that every Saudi woman must have a male guardian. This male guardian can be her father, husband, brother or even a son (Troemel & Strait, 2013). The male guardian has the power and control to make decisions on her behalf (Beckerle, 2016), and all important events and/or developments in a woman's life must have the approval of her guardian.

Every Saudi woman, regardless of her economic or social class, age or even educational background, is bound by these guardianship policies (Ncafp, 2012). For example, an adult woman has to obtain permission from her male guardian if she wants to study, travel (locally or internationally), marry, and/or even when exiting prison (Beckerle, 2016). In some instances, Saudi women may also be required to provide guardian consent before they will be allowed to work or access healthcare (Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development, 2014; Winn, 2005). According to Beckerle:

The impact these restrictive policies have on a woman's ability to pursue a career or make life decisions varies, but is largely dependent on the good will of her male

guardian. In some cases, men use the authority that the male guardianship system grants them to extort female dependents. Guardians have conditioned their consent for women to work or to travel on her paying him large sums of money. (2016, p. 11)

This is the very reason why in Saudi Arabia, it would be extremely difficult for women to conduct a range of transactions without a male relative, from renting an apartment to filing legal claims (Troemel & Strait, 2013). However, Saudi Arabia has recently changed its guardianship law; thus, strict rules governing women's lives could be changed either (McKernan, 2019). For example, women can now travel without the permission of a male guardian and have employment discrimination protections (Wagtendonk, 2019).

2.7.1.4 Reforms in Saudi Arabia

It is believed that Saudi Arabia is the world's most gender-segregated nation (Gorney, 2016), but things have been changing gradually (Dege, 2018). Some recent movements suggest shifts towards a more modern society while still retaining major aspects of traditional Saudi culture (Schipp, 2018). For example, Saudi Arabia is the only nation in the world that prohibits women from driving cars, although recently, the country has started to issue driving licenses to a number of women (Chulov, 2018). Moreover, Saudi Arabia is the last nation, other than Vatican City, to allow women the right to vote (Gorney, 2016). Over the last 10 years, a number of changes have occurred which suggest the country's loosening of its restrictive practices towards women. These include consenting women to participate in the country's political space (Helicon, 2016), the government's active encouragement of women to enter the labour market (Chamlou, 2008), and most recently, allowing women to drive and travel without requiring approval from her male guardian (Chulov, 2018).

In 2013, King Abdullah appointed 30 women to the "Shura Council", his highest advisory body (Targeted News Service, 2011). As previously mentioned, December 2015 saw women being allowed to actively participate in municipal council elections, as voters and as candidates (The Guardian, 2015; Lavelle & Al Sheikh, 2013). These elections are perceived as a significant and symbolic victory for women, given that many women had campaigned for this right for more than a decade (Beckerle, 2016). Meanwhile, as part of a broader economic reform program aimed at decreasing the country's reliance on oil, the government of Saudi Arabia issued a series of memorandums urging for women to get involved in the labour market (Organisation

for Economic Co-operation Development, 2014). These initiatives included amending the language in the labour law that had previously restricted women's work to certain fields "suitable to their nature," and removing the requirement for women to obtain her guardian's permission in order to work (Chamlou, 2008).

Although there has been a push from the government to provide greater opportunities for Saudi female entrepreneurs to join the workforce and to contribute to the economy (Cutherbert, 2017), changes in women's status have proceeded slowly (Hubbard & Alsultan, 2017). The aforementioned shifts in policy have met with significant resistance from much of Saudi society (Hubbard, 2017). Working from home and using social networking technologies to operate their business ventures is a means for Saudi women to participate in the workforce without actively transgressing ongoing expectations that women should remain in their homes.

The government of Saudi Arabia has provided women better access to government services and has provided incentives to employers to hire women and to earmark certain positions for women (Almoussa, 2011). Saudi women are now able to secure their own ID cards, no longer need a male relative to identify them in court, and divorced and widowed women can now receive special benefits from the government (Beckerle, 2016; Troemel & Strait, 2013).

2.7.1.5 Education for Women in Saudi Arabia

The education sector has witnessed huge changes in relation to women, particularly in higher education (Adely, Hendrix, & Jehani, 2018). Over the last four decades, Saudi women's access to primary education has greatly improved, with female literacy rates escalating from 2% to 78%. Rates of secondary and tertiary education for women in Saudi Arabia remained low until the 1980s (Pasquesoone, 2011), but within four years, from 1982 to 1986, the number of Saudi girls who enrolled in secondary schools increased from 185,902 to 255,766 (Pasquesoone, 2011). According to Sadi and Al-Ghazali (2010, p. 22) "The Kingdom needs specialized training and education provision to prepare Saudis for work in the industry, with appropriate courses and formal certification schemes on offer". Therefore, the Saudi government built the first women's college in 1970 and by 1990, women represented approximately 47% of all Saudi undergraduates (Alsuwaida, 2016).

The government has sought to increase women's access to higher education since the 1960's, and this has gained extra momentum under King Abdullah's reign (Stefanie, 2015). "The rationale for a need to focus on women's achievements in higher education is considered a key social development indicator measuring women's statuses and conditions in any country" (Hamdan, 2005, p. 45). King Abdullah's goal of increasing female participation in higher education is "considered as the golden era for women's higher education" (Pasquesoone, 2011, para 6), and has manifested in the provision of thousands of scholarships for women to study in universities abroad (Adely, et al., 2018). Current records show that women now account for 62% of all Saudi university students between 2009 and 2014 and this proportion is expected to keep increasing (Beckerle, 2016). Today, Saudi Arabia has 300 women's colleges, and the kingdom now ranks 25th in the world in terms of women enrolled at universities (Pasquesoone, 2011). Moreover, where Saudi women had once been excluded from studying specific subjects, such as engineering, pharmacy, architecture, management and law (Clark, 2014), their participation in some of these fields is now starting to grow.

Women in Saudi Arabia pursue education in the belief that this lays the foundation for women's rights (Beckerle, 2016; Sharman, 2017). A study that evaluated the relationship between educated women and their ability to administer a new business found a significant correlation between the two factors (Yousuf Danish & Lawton Smith, 2012). In addition, Alsuwaida (2016) has identified how education in Saudi Arabia and its capacity to empower women will be a critical factor in contributing to, and maintaining, the survival of the country's economy in the coming years.

Despite having such new liberties, Saudi women still experience highly segregated lives, particularly in public places including schools and universities. In fact, public education in the country remains sex-segregated at all levels by making sure that females and males do not attend the same school. Moreover, men are prohibited from teaching or working at girls' schools and women are forbidden to teach at boys' schools (Pasquesoone, 2011). The traditional and religious belief about gender roles and the old perception that education is more relevant for men still persists resulting in proportionally fewer educational and employment opportunities for women (Drury, 2015). However, according to Schipp (2018, para 21) Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman "says Saudi will move to a more open and tolerant interpretation of Islam, and reforms have begun in areas ... including education and the courts".

2.7.1.6 Saudi Women in the Workforce

Although women account for 64% of the Kingdom's bachelor's degree graduates in public and private universities between 2010 and 2017, employment rates for Saudi women remain low (Alarabiya, 2015; Omran, 2017). Omran (2017) contends that finding a job remains a challenge for well-educated Saudi women; in 2016, around 32% of female university graduates remained unemployed in the Kingdom, the highest figure in the world (Al-Barjas, 2016). The growing number of educated but unemployed women has, in turn, placed pressure on the King to end gender segregation laws (Gorney, 2016).

The commitment by the government to increase the employment rate for Saudi women, especially for those who have attained higher levels of education (Carey, 2018), has led to a range of initiatives. For example, the Labor Ministry has now banned men and non-Saudi women from working in the lingerie and cosmetics sections of stores and from other stores where women's garments and perfumes are sold (Carey, 2018). The Ministry has also started to appoint women as inspectors to monitor commercial centres and markets to ensure that only Saudi women are working in such establishments (Arab News, 2013). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs has started to allow and issued licenses to small business establishments so that women can engage in various trades while working from home (Arab News, 2013; Ministry of Labor and Social Development, 2016).

The unique cultural characteristics of Saudi society has meant that social networking technologies are especially vital for Saudi women who seek to engage in entrepreneurial activities while remaining largely confined to their homes (Gallarotti, 2012). Social networking technologies are the only means by which such women can sell their products and manage their home-based online businesses (Alghamdi & Reilly, 2013) while still complying with the status quo around gender roles (Stanger, Alnaghaimshi & Pearson, 2017). Social networking technologies give Saudi women access to global markets while helping them to maintain their privacy, confidentiality and safety (Alghamdi & Reilly, 2013).

In retrospect, the adoption and embracement of digital technologies by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a revolutionary development. The provision of broadband Internet access to most citizens, with an Internet speed increase of 300% and 90% 4G LTE coverage (Cequens Editorial Team, 2019) has enabled citizens to start their own online businesses and to make more e-

commerce transactions (Cuthbert, 2017). According to a survey conducted by the General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT), Internet usage in Saudi Arabia reached 89.77% users in 2018. The dramatic increase in the use of Internet services and broadband is closely associated with a high use of social networking applications (Mubasher, 2019).

2.8 Importance of Home-based Businesses for Female Entrepreneurs

Across the world, female entrepreneurship is an essential contributor to the social and economic development of a nation. According to Kelley et al. (2012), the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor survey indicates that the total number of women entrepreneurs who are in their early stage peaked at 163 million in 54 economies. The important role of women entrepreneurs in the economic sector has been shown in different studies (Allen, Elam, Langowitz, & Dean, 2008; Organisation for Economic & Development, 2008; Pollard, 2006; Weiler & Bernasek, 2001). The Organisation for Economic Development (2008) reported that more than 10 million European female entrepreneurs have created approximately 15 million jobs and about 6.4 million American female entrepreneurs have generated 9.2 million jobs.

The global outlook for women entrepreneurs is encouraging. According to the Business Environment Rankings (BER) reported by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2014), developed countries in North America, Western Europe and Asia are the best places for a small business to emerge. From 2009 to 2013, Singapore was ranked the world's most investor-friendly region for conducting online businesses. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia was ranked 45th out of 60 countries with respect to its readiness in Internet infrastructures (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014). Within the Middle East, Saudi Arabia has demonstrated the fourth highest level of economic growth (Bahaddad, Houghton & Drew, 2013). Between 2014 and 2018, Saudi Arabia has climbed from its 45th ranking in the world to as high as 41st in terms of being a place to implement small businesses (Economist Intelligence unit, 2014). It is therefore important to understand the perspectives of Saudi female entrepreneurs and the associated issues they face when starting up small businesses.

In previous years, the number of Saudi women in employment was estimated to range between 5.5 % and 15% (Minkus-McKenna, 2009) and it is estimated to constitute 30% of all

government employees (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2009). Equally, there has been a sharp increase in entrepreneurship among Saudi women participating in the business sectors (Welsh, Memili, Kaciak & Al Sadoon, 2014). Privileged Saudi women own a significant amount of financial resources (Yousuf Danish & Lawton Smith, 2012) and have ownership stakes of around 40% of family established online companies (Parker, 2007). Furthermore, the number of females owning businesses in Saudi Arabia has dramatically increased to 15,000 while female-owned private companies represent 4% of the total of registered female businesses in the country in the mid-2000s (AlMunajjed, 2006). Additionally, women own about 10% of real estate in important cities such as Jeddah and Riyadh, and around 30% of brokerage accounts in Saudi Arabia (Parker, 2007). As a result, investments contributed by Saudi business women is valued at up to SR8 billion, which counts for 21% of the total investment in the national economy (Kelley, Brush, Greene, & Litovsky, 2011).

Many of the Gulf countries are now recognising the contribution of women to the economy and increasing social awareness of this has become an important issue, particularly in Saudi Arabia (Raven & Welsh, 2004). Home-based businesses owned by Saudi women are increasingly saturated and it is now imperative for these women to expand into new markets. In the twenty first century, new phenomena have changed the way in which home-based businesses operate and market their products and services, of which social networking technologies are a major example (Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013).

Although studies of home-based businesses are relatively rare in comparison to studies of other types of firms, an increasing body of literature has emerged over recent years (Clark & Douglas, 2010; Laegran, 2008) which focuses on online home-based businesses. Some authors propose that entrepreneurs in many developing countries will never experience substantial growth, despite their creativity and diligence (Nichter & Goldmark, 2009). Studies examining over 28,000 Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in Africa and Latin America show that less than 3% of MSEs expand after start-up (Liedholm, 2002; Mead & Liedholm, 1998). Another study in Mexico revealed that just 12% of MSEs expand in a year (Fajnzylber, Maloney, & Rojas, 2006). However, other authors argue that the growth of MSEs, when measured through a social media lens, may reveal a starkly different picture. A brief description of how entrepreneurship has benefited and grown via social networking technologies is outlined in the next section.

2.9 Home-based Businesses Benefit from Using Social Networking Technologies

Previous research has shown that most home-based female entrepreneurs use social networking technologies because of their popularity with key stakeholders, including consumers, competitors and suppliers (Stanko & Sena, 2019). Many female entrepreneurs confirm that they use social networking platforms to gather customer information, interact with them, exchange information and to provide customer and technical support (Sinclair & Vogus, 2011; Mosweunyane, Rambe & Dzansi, 2019). Online female entrepreneurs often use social networking technologies because of their cost effectiveness and because these women often lack the financial support to create their own website that can enable online transactions (Sinclair & Vogus, 2011; Bahaddad, et al., 2013).

Saudi female entrepreneurs are now establishing more online small businesses than ever before, from which multiple benefits are derived (Danish & Smith, 2012). Owning a small online business enables Saudi women to improve their standard of living, increase their financial independence, enhance their self-confidence, develop their socialisation and communication skills, build new managerial and capabilities skills, and participate in the business environment (Jameel, 2018).

Although some Saudi female entrepreneurs use social networking technologies in a relatively passive way, only posting product advertisements and promotions without interacting with their customers (Bal & Reckhow, 2010), others actively use these sites to communicate with customers, enhance brand loyalty, engage in external communities and collect intelligence (Ukpere, Slabbert & Ukpere, 2014). The major business benefits from using social networking technologies for entrepreneurial activities are briefly discussed in the following sections.

The following dimensions refer to the relationship quality concept that relates to the relationship marketing theory. These dimensions are essential tools of social commerce success, which include customer engagement, electronic word of mouth and brand awareness. Customer engagement explains customer relationship management-CRM and its importance for entrepreneurial interactions on social media. Customer empowerment highlights the relationship between social commerce construct and relationship quality. It shows how

customer referrals and reviews to other customers on social communities could build trust. Electronic word of mouth is an essential tool for social commerce. Brand awareness shows how customers' referrals and recommendations has influence entrepreneurial activities and generates more sales on social networking technologies.

2.9.1 Customer Engagement

The main reason why companies use social networking technologies is to connect with customers in order to maximise financial profits (Rodriguez, Peterson & Krishnan, 2012). Successful customer engagement through social networking technologies requires specific characteristics which are outlined by Carlson, Rahman and De Vries (2018). Firstly, these social networking channels should be observable by the business. Secondly, they should be compatible for individual users. Thirdly, it should be suitable for communication. Customer satisfaction is based on customers' experiences with the companies' products and services offered to them (Oh, Ozkaya & Larose, 2014). New and established consumer brands have improved their online presence by launching their own pages on Facebook in order to keep users and their clients regularly engaged (West, 2019; Asio & Khorasani, 2015).

Lorenzo - Romero et al. (2011) suggest that consumers can also be empowered by social networking technologies as they enable consumers to find more information regarding companies' reputations, brands and services, which lead consumers to make better buying decisions. Therefore, social networking technologies play an important role in marketing strategies, serving as a space in which to encourage customers to engage with businesses and gain their trust and loyalty (Nisar & Whitehead, 2016). It is also a platform for companies to obtain valuable information about their customers' personalities, lifestyles, interests and their attitudes towards these platforms (Heinonen, 2011). Moreover, social networking technologies are a perfect source for receiving customer feedback and suggestions for creating or developing new products and services (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Saudi women entrepreneurs typically struggle to access global markets and engage with international customers, although the Internet is a means of circumventing this obstacle (Nieva, 2015). Through the Internet, businesses are able to sell and promote products as well as engage directly with customers without crossing social and cultural mores (Sklar, 2013). This is one of

the main reasons why the Internet is proving attractive to female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia (Alhabidi, 2013). Despite this, Saudi female entrepreneurs continue to face social restrictions that potentially limit their future scope of outreach and productivities (Basaffar, Niehm & Bosselman, 2018).

2.9.2 Customer Empowerment

Consumers access social virtual environments in order to connect, share, and exchange experiences and information about products, services, companies and brands (Huang, Backman, Backman & Chang, 2016). Consequently, a shift in power is occurring, driven by the Internet, as consumers obtain the power of knowledge from social media. Social networking technologies allow them to gain more information on products, services and companies from several Internet sources (Labrecque, vor dem Esche, Mathwick, Novak & Hofacker, 2013). When customers widely circulate this information to hundreds and thousands of other customers by sharing personal experiences, they are regarded as a “social media influencer” (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey & Freberg, 2011).

Consumers use Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram to voice their positive and negative opinions about specific products and services and are no longer just passive receivers of marketing messages (Kodippil, Jayawickrama, Yugandari, Pamudini & Samarasinghe, 2016). Sinclair and Vogus (2011) argue that social networking technologies empower customers and give them more influence over the advertising, designing, promotion and support of products and services. Therefore, most companies are expected to make changes in products and services based on intelligence collected by social networking technologies (Marois, 2017).

The shift in power has occurred due to the widespread growth of customers using social networking technologies to seek information related to products and company brands (Smith, 2019). Customers find that these sources provide more credibility and relevant information than marketers (Glucksman, 2017). Alshawaf (2013) reported that Saudi Arabian shoppers tend to have more confidence in the opinions and recommendations of peers who have conducted their own research of particular products than in the marketing messages of companies. In Saudi Arabia, there has been a clear increase in the number of customers that actively post and share their online shopping experiences within their individual networks (Abed, Dwivedi & Williams,

2015b). In an environment of online communication, people share and exchange useful information and ideas in order to be seen as trustworthy by their peers (Baruah, 2012). Therefore, the growing use of social media by consumers and their ability to collect and share information is a major factor for companies to consider (Anderson & Narus, 2019).

2.9.3 Electronic Word of Mouth

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) is a form of buzz marketing (Kremers, 2017) that emerged when consumers increasingly use online tools (e.g., social media, websites, blogs, etc.) (Taylor, 2018) to share their opinions about the products and services they consume and to research the companies that sell them (Lee, Shi, Cheung, Lim & Sia, 2011). Electronic word of mouth is regarded as one of the most influential informal media among consumers and businesses (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). This is because consumers usually have more trust in the information and feedback from other consumers than from the information provided by the company itself (Park, Song, & Ko, 2011).

Companies still primarily focus on promotion and traditional advertising (Cheung & Thadani, 2012), but they are also looking to build external communities of fans who use eWOM to spread the benefits of a specific brand or product to their friends (Prasad, Gupta & Totala, 2017). Thus, the use of social networking technologies to spread an eWOM is closely related to building trust which leads to brand loyalty (Delafrooz, Rahmati & Abdi, 2019). Previous studies indicate that eWOM leads to trust and this factor is critical in driving the success of social networking technologies marketing (Chu & Kim, 2011). Mazhar, Jam and Anwar (2012) suggest that a higher level of customer trust leads to more social-commerce activities and conversely, low levels of customer trust lead to a decrease in online social-commerce activities. Hajli (2012) and Gonçalves Curty and Zhang (2013) argue that companies need to not only invest in official websites, but also in social networking technologies as that will enable them to build trust, which is a crucial construct for social commerce (Marsden, 2013).

A major area of relationship marketing is formed in the belief that building a long-term relationship with the customer is extremely beneficial to the businesses themselves (Niedermeier, Wang & Zhang, 2016). Consequently, it plays a major role in marketing effectiveness. Customer loyalty in e-commerce is measured by customers' intentions to repeat visits and to purchase from the same agent, whereas customer loyalty in social commerce is

measured by users' abilities to continue using social networking technologies and remain interested in conducting commercial activities on media sites (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016; Marsden, 2010; Barnes & Bohringer, 2009; Chiu, Chiu & Chang, 2007).

Electronic word of mouth is generally a proactive approach to customer engagement that serves to secure repeat customers and increase the possibility of them revisiting and recommending the destination (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). A common purpose of social commerce is to gain the commercial benefits of relationships in social networks and to obtain customer loyalty (Gamboa & Gonçalves, 2014). Commercial benefits might be driven by consumer use of online platforms to share their opinions and reviews with other users (Serra Cantallops & Salvi, 2014).

Much of the literature in the Middle East and North Africa pays attention to the use of social media platforms and the power of electronic word of mouth marketing (Nichter & Goldmark, 2009; Lee & Youn, 2009; Chu & Kim, 2011; Evans & Erkan, 2014). A platform such as Twitter, which enables microblogging (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel & Chowdury 2009; Magalhaes & Musallam, 2014; Alboqami, Al-Karaghoul, Baeshen, Erkan, Evans & Ghoneim, 2015) is a form of electronic word of mouth.

2.9.4 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is "...a marketing term that describes the degree of consumer recognition of a product by its name" (Kopp, 2019, Par 1). Businesses have been afraid of being left behind in the uptake of technology and they become involved in social media for brand development purposes (Tritama & Tarigan, 2016). According to Kopp (2019) businesses should have a presence on social media sites because a high level of brand awareness is likely to generate more sales.

Jothi et al. (2011) examined how social networking technologies enable effective communication strategies and build brand awareness. The majority of companies (68% of global direct selling companies) use Facebook, followed by YouTube and Twitter in order to build their brand awareness and to directly sell to customers without any specific physical retailing channels or outlets (Ferrell & Ferrell, 2012).

Prior studies have reviewed the models and techniques that supplement and enhance brand awareness on social networking technologies (Oh, Sasser & Almahmoud, 2015; Bilgin, 2018). Quilliam et al. (2012) found four comprehensive techniques for facilitating brand awareness through online platforms: emotional appeals, such as particular messages shared with friends and family members; the number of “Likes” a certain share and/or post has obtained; the number of shares achieved by a message (called a viral reach); and lastly, the effectiveness of advertisements from well-known brands. Viral advertising is a crucial tool for enhancing social commerce because users are able to share and pass on referrals, recommendations, and advice to a vast number of groups at no cost (Chu, 2011).

Although maintaining marketing activities through social networking technologies is regarded as important because it leads to generating trust among customers (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012; Khosraw, 2017), some researchers (Odhiambo & Adhiambo, 2012; Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt & Füller, 2013; ElAydi, 2018) have argued that social networking technologies alone cannot single-handedly create brand awareness or even develop businesses in the Middle East and Africa. For example, a study conducted by Nation Correspondent (2011) found that Kenyan citizens preferred to discuss products among themselves and post comments on social networking platforms. Accordingly, African entrepreneurs have noted that using social networking technologies as a marketing channel might be a waste of time and resources. Similarly, for Arab entrepreneurs, social networking technologies appeared to only have minor significance in developing brand awareness (Odhiambo & Adhiambo, 2012). However, investors are starting to become stakeholders of social networking technologies because they see potential in this instrument to entice more users and paying advertisers (Mosley, 2019).

2.10 Motivation for Entrepreneurship

A significant amount of research attention has been given to understanding the motivations of entrepreneurs in starting up their own business (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2006). There are various “push” and “pull” motivations for initial start-up activities, also known as negative and positive factors (Alstete, 2002).

For women in the Middle East, “push” motivations include redundancy, unemployment, dissatisfaction with previous employment, a need to earn more money and the desire for a

flexible schedule that fits around family commitments (Alstete, 2002; Orhan & Scott, 2001). Similar motivations have been described by U. S. female entrepreneurs (Weiler & Bernasek, 2001) and Chinese female entrepreneurs (Chen, Li, & Matlay, 2006). A study by Bosma and Levie (2009) indicates that the number of female entrepreneurs in developing nations per capita, are more than those in developed western countries. This is because women in developing countries, including Saudi Arabia, lack alternative ways of participating in the workforce. This stems from their limited access to resources and facilities such as standard housing, medical and educational facilities and civil rights (Shmailan, 2014).

The “pull” motivations for Arab women entrepreneurs are associated with factors of choice (Orhan & Scott, 2001). These motivations include being independent, achieving self-fulfilment, being one’s own boss, and a desire for wealth, creativity, social status and power (Alstete, 2002). For Western women, the most important “pull” motivations are the need to be independent and the challenge business ownership represents (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2006). For Eastern women, key “pull” factors relate to government support, self-fulfilment and being financially independent. According to Naser et al. (2009), UAE female entrepreneurs, who share the same religion and language as Saudi women, become self-employed for the range of motivations just described. Another study finds that the occupation of their father and spouse is highly influential in motivating Arab women to become entrepreneurs (Tlaiss, 2015a). In Oman, which has a similar environment to Saudi Arabia, the support of families and husbands are major factors in enabling women to become entrepreneurs (Zamberi Ahmad, 2011). As with Saudi Arabia, Oman is a patriarchal society, and women need the support of men to receive help in managing their business, gain financial assistance and receive valuable business advice (Maden, 2015; McElwee & Al-Riyami, 2003).

Family structure is a primary motivation for female Saudi entrepreneurs to establish individual businesses (Sadi & Al-Ghazali, 2010). In recent years, Saudi families have sought to have fewer children in order to devote more resources and a greater amount of care to each child (Lemon, 2017). With smaller numbers of children to care for, Saudi women have greater opportunities to build and manage individual businesses (Naser et al., 2009).

Other factors that may motivate Saudi women to become entrepreneurs include maturity and obtaining a high level of education (Michaelson, 2019). Assi and Marcati (2020) noted that

education level has a significant correlation with entrepreneurship. Education in Saudi Arabia is mandatory for girls and young women and thus, female literacy rates are high (Alsuwaida, 2016). A previous survey of business women in Saudi Arabia reported that 58% of women who owned businesses had obtained degrees from postsecondary education with 38% completing an undergraduate degree and 11% completing a postgraduate degree (Alturki & Braswell, 2010).

Moreover, maturity is another motivation for most Saudi female entrepreneurs, where many are over 30 years in age (Danish and Smith, 2012). As in past years, Alturki and Braswell (2010) reported that the ages of Saudi business women usually range from 25 to 44 and this figure is confirmed in Elam et al., (2019) study which reported that the participation rates in entrepreneurship among women are in the 25–34 in Middle East countries.

The influence of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and online shopping on women in Islamic countries, including Saudi Arabia, are significant (Abdul-Muhmin, 2010). Women in such countries have many online working options, and a new channel for shopping and communication. Prior to the growth of ICT, women in Muslim societies, in the face of restrictive social and cultural rules, precluded women from operating easily in traditional workplaces (Troemel & Strait, 2013). This has created differences between women living in Western countries and those in the Middle East. The standard of living of gender-equality for Saudi women is completely different to those of Western women: “The development of western-style gender equality may continue to proceed slowly in Saudi Arabia” (Al-Maghrabi et al., 2011a, p. 916). Hence, ICT is extremely beneficial for women in Islamic societies, including Saudi women. In general, ICT enables women to not only work without establishing an office, but it also enables them to shop online without leaving their homes. Indeed, it is more convenient for Arab women to work and shop online as they can then avoid breaking cultural taboos such as interacting with males (Abu Bakar, 2014; Al-maghrabi et al., 2011b).

While there are clear motivations for Saudi women entrepreneurs to become self-employed and venture into entrepreneurship, there are also challenges that they face in their entrepreneurial journey. These challenges are discussed in the following section.

2.11 Challenges of Entrepreneurship

Female entrepreneurs, across the world, face a variety of challenges in establishing and growing a business (Welsh, Memili, Kaciak & Ahmed, 2013; Sharma, 2013; Carter & Jones-Evans, 2006; Betters-Reed & Moore, 2007). The literature has outlined several challenges faced by Arab women entrepreneurs, which either prevent or delay the growth of their business enterprise (Kelley et al., 2011; O'Gorman, 2001; The Center of Arab Women for Training and Research, 2007). These challenges include lack of experience and training (Njoroge, & Gathungu, 2013), lack of capital (Buttner & Moore, 1997; Carter & Jones-Evans, 2006), gender discrimination (Stead, 2017; McElwee & Al-Riyami, 2003; Weiler & Bernasek, 2001) and government regulations (Schaper et al., 2014). Other studies have highlighted cultural constraints, balancing business and social roles, lack of business skills, financial problems, starting business procedures, lack of business opportunities, and lack of business educational programs as significant challenges faced by Arab women (Kelley et al., 2011).

Some female entrepreneurs acquire appropriate training but access to sufficient capital is a serious obstacle (Coleman, 2002). Difficulties in accessing capital lead women to take on more personal debt than men (Clark, 2008; Shmailan, 2014). According to Sharma, Dua and Hatwal (2012), the biggest issue for women in self-employment is the unavailability of capital.

Culture poses a major obstacle to the growth of Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurship (Itani, Sidani & Baalbaki, 2011). Leung, Bhagat, Buchan, Erez and Gibson (2005) consider culture as the values, beliefs, norms and behavioural patterns of a specific group or society, which includes gender-related barriers (Karakire Guma, 2015). In many countries, particularly in developing nations, it is believed that the primary responsibility of women is to be at home with the family (Gudeta & van Engen, 2018; McKay, 2001). Women are expected to meet family commitments first and foremost, with their career aspirations taking a distant second place (Fan & Parreñas, 2018; McElwee & Al-Riyami, 2003; Zakaria, 2001).

In previous years, Saudi women were prohibited from driving, which poses a further challenge for their entrepreneurial ambitions (Al-maghrabi et al., 2011b), although this policy has recently changed (Chulov, 2018). The unavailability of public transport makes travelling very difficult and involves extra costs and delays for Saudi female entrepreneurs. Additionally, they are

unable to tap into the expertise of other business women outside of the country as they are prevented from gaining business visas that would enable them to travel and gain international exposure (Alturki & Braswell, 2010). Andersson, Raihan, Rivera, Sulaiman, Tandon, and Welter (2007) point out that Saudi women entrepreneurs lack business experience and exposure to dynamic skills to successfully implement and establish businesses. All these issues co-exist with a shortage of opportunities for market research, professional development and business (Ba-Isa, 2007), as well as women associations that build and facilitate networking (Sadi & Al-Ghazali, 2010).

Gender discrimination is a major challenge for Arab female entrepreneurs who live in a male-dominated society (Stead, 2017; McClelland et al., 2005). Although Saudi Arabia allows women to register their business (Fakkar, 2007), the business practice agent that registers public businesses for both men and women will request businesswomen to take on a male manager. Furthermore, while Islamic law allows Saudi businesswomen to control their finances, in terms of creating personal accounts and making their own financial transactions, these are subject to the approval of an authoritative male figure, such as a husband, father or brother (AlMunajjed, 2006). In the face of these severe restrictions, social networking technologies represent a means of circumventing traditional obstacles (Helal, 2017).

Government regulations pose another significant obstacle for Saudi women entrepreneurs (Schaper et al., 2014). For the most part, there is a lack of implementing enough entrepreneurial programs to significantly develop the economic status of women (Minkus-McKenna, 2009). However, a landmark conference in 2008, “The Saudi woman between economics and social reality”, served to gather together businesswomen, working women, and all women attempting to develop the related business workforce (Saudi Chambers, 2011). It also provided these women opportunities to meet and engage with a number of important and powerful princes who are in a position to apply more changes to this sector (Arab News, 2017). Positive changes in the Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry are also apparent with the organisation seeking to provide understanding of the vital role of women in the economic sector and providing these women business solutions as well as services (Adema, Ali, Frey, Kim, Lunati, Piacentini & Queisser, 2014). For instance, in 2004, 2,750 Saudi business women had the right to vote in members for the Riyadh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Union of Arab Chambers, 2019).

Danish and Smith (2012) describe the challenges and opportunities that are crucial for the future conduct of businesses using social networking technologies. For Saudi female entrepreneurs, the main challenges are related to technological resources and financial rules related to business expansion. Furthermore, Saudi businesswomen encounter challenges with business networking, high efficiency and productivity, managing competition, and hiring professional staff (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). Although some studies have indicated that accessing loans and supplementing business resources were significant barriers for Saudi female entrepreneurs (Andersson et al., 2007; Robb & Coleman, 2010), Danish and Smith (2012) found that Saudi businesswomen overcome these by tapping into family funds. Nonetheless, the amount of money that is available from internal sources to expand a woman's businesses would be considerably less in value than those available through external, formal sources (Alturki & Braswell, 2010).

In addition to allowing women to participate in the selection of board members of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce (Alturki & Braswell, 2010), the Minister of Trade and Industry has also established a private centre for businesswomen to receive services, guidance and business opportunities. The Khadija bint Khuwailed Centre acts as a professional organisation for businesswomen belonging to the local Chamber of Commerce in Jeddah. Their goals are to facilitate opportunities, support women in national economic development and limit all the obstacles that businesswomen encounter in the meso environment (Khadija bint Khuwailed Centre, n.d).

While businesswomen have received forms of support from the various Chambers of Commerce, it is important for them to also receive women-only business training programmes and specific knowledge about market information (Sadi & Al-Ghazali, 2010). However, the government's application of old laws in relation to the business sector continues to create doubts about the ability of women to manage their own enterprises (Conner, 2013). These laws prevent Saudi women from fighting for and laying claims to their properties, bank accounts and inheritances that are obtained from male relatives (Mehta, 2019). Women are listed on the identity cards of their male kin and all of their business activities are associated with men (AlMunajjed, 2006). Hence, the majority of Saudi female entrepreneurs find conducting online business activities, away from government regulations, far more convenient (Alturki & Braswell, 2010).

As a consequence of the above obstacles and challenges, many Saudi female entrepreneurs begin to quit after five years of their establishment (AlMunajjed, 2006). A likely reason for this trend is that the number and scope of entrepreneurial challenges they have faced in the five-year period is so overwhelming that they decide to give up. Other reasons may include their lack of access to government services, a lack of cooperation between government departments, regulatory challenges and the lack of laws that serve to defend the investments and customers of female business owners (Yousuf Danish & Lawton Smith, 2012). An absence of resources to support the development of a small and medium business into something bigger could also be another challenge and a contributory factor to entrepreneurship failure (Ahmad & Mohan Agrawal, 2012).

Finding and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities through establishing and developing a new business has allowed researchers to apply entrepreneur behavioural theory. Entrepreneurial behaviours are the “concrete enactment of individual or team tasks required starting and growing a new organization” (Bird & Schjoedt, p. 328) and manifest as “discrete units of individual activity that can be observed by an audience” (Bird & Schjoedt, p. 335). This justifies the reason that the behavioural theory- Technology Organisation and Environment framework is considered for this study. These factors play a major significant role in entrepreneurs’ adaption and use of social networking technologies in general.

2.12 Factors Associated with Entrepreneurship Growth on Social Networking Technologies

Previous research on the factors influencing the maintenance of online home-based businesses have largely been conducted in the contexts of developed countries (Al-Jahwari, Khan, Al Kalbani & Al Khansouri, 2018). Minimal attention has been paid to the individual entrepreneur’s point of view in the context of developing countries and in relation to the cultural mores that exist. There has been a tendency to conduct consumer-oriented research which focuses on beliefs about online shopping as this might influence the selection of purchasing channels (Sivakumar & Gunasekaran, 2017; Uzun & Poturak, 2014).

2.12.1 Personal and Entrepreneurial Factors

The sustainability of entrepreneurship among individuals and organisations in several regions across the world, including Saudi Arabia, is significantly influenced by the development of technology (Badzinska, 2016). A large number of studies have been conducted in the field of online trading, and results indicate that entrepreneurs are largely unaware of technology capability in supporting their business operations in a local and global scale (Koh & Maguire, 2004; Tan, Macaulay, & Scheurer, 2006; Taylor & Murphy, 2004; Bahaddad et al., 2013; AlGhamdi et al., 2012).

The entrepreneurs' demographic information, particularly their level of education, play an important role in determining their uptake of maintaining home-based online businesses (Perenyi, Zolin & Maritz, 2018). The majority of the population as a whole in Saudi Arabia are classified as young and highly educated and therefore are inclined to be technologically savvy (Hamdan, 2005). Almousa (2011) found that Saudi Arabian consumers' attitudes towards home-based online businesses are based on their level of education and their Internet usage patterns. In addition, there are many studies that demonstrate how demographic and lifestyle variables are essential factors in determining online shopping behaviour (Adamkolo, Hassan & Pate, 2018; Pratap, 2019).

Previous experiences in using technology will have an impact on establishing online businesses and managing social commerce (Wang & Zhang, 2012). According to Bahaddad et al. (2013), individuals and organisations that have previous experience with the Internet and technology are more likely to accept and undertake online shopping. Not surprisingly, an individual's lack of technical skills will cause that individual to delay his or her engagement with a new technology such as social commerce (Bahaddad et al., 2013; AlGhamdi et al., 2012). One study illustrates how gender affects online shopping patterns as males tend to make more purchases online than females (Stafford, Turan & Raisinghani, 2004) and males spend more money online compared to females (Calik & Ersoy, 2008). The products purchased by males online differ to those purchased by females (Rodgers & Harris, 2003), with the former gravitating towards computer products, whereas the latter typically buy more health and beauty products (Calik & Ersoy, 2008; Alshawaf, 2013). Women are also reported to be generally more apprehensive about the Internet than men (Susskind 2004) which again affects online purchasing trends. A

study which investigated the relationship between demographic variables, Internet usage patterns, and the intentions of Saudi shoppers to make online purchases found that there is a sharp increase in utilising the Internet as a shopping vehicle (Almousa, 2011). Fifty percent of Saudi men and 47% of Saudi women have some experience in online shopping (Hattab, 2012).

Online trading applications can increase efficiencies for entrepreneurs and enable them to achieve a global reach and anticipate in online markets (Bose & Sugumaran, 2006; AlGhamdi et al., 2012). Online trading applications have greater uptake by service-oriented companies and individual entrepreneurs because they do not have difficulties with delivery and shipping systems which often feature as a key problem in online retail, wholesale and manufacturing industries (MacGregor, 2004). A comprehensive study by Qu et al. (2012) suggests that social commerce sales revenue in China is positively influenced by online trading such as incoming suggestions, outgoing suggestions, ratings, reviews and feedback.

2.12.2 Technical and Environmental Factors

Technical factors have a major influence on the sustainability of home-based online businesses (Gatautis & Medziausiene, 2014). These factors include the application of innovations, the infrastructure of communications, safety and security in payment systems, and the features of social media websites (Lin, Yan, Chen & Luo, 2017; Lee Yohn, 2019).

Business innovation technologies in any new application need to be accepted by the public if they are to be successfully adopted and implemented (Jones & Smith, 2004; Zhang & Wang, 2012). Researchers have identified five important stages in the implementation or rejection of social commerce by consumers (Wu, Cai & Liu, 2011; Namil & Wonjoon, 2018). The first stage is acknowledgment, which is important to consumers' development, understanding and experiences of that innovation and its functions. The second stage involves persuasion, where consumers develop attitudes towards that innovation. Their attitudes and decision making processes are built around a set of beliefs about the advantages, compatibility, complexity, observability, and risk taking issues associated with that innovation. For example, consumers who undertake online shopping may believe that it is a means of ensuring reasonable prices, speedy delivery, and securing the availability of desired brands (Cornescu & Adam, 2013). The third stage involves a decision of whether to embrace or reject an innovation. Although consumers may have adequate knowledge about an innovation, they may not necessarily adopt

it for various reasons, such as finding it less than useful for their personal context or needs (Treviño, 2015). The fourth stage is associated with implementation, where consumers, if they have decided to adopt the innovation in the third stage, become frequent users of that innovation (Epstein, Rejc Buhovac, Elkington & Leonard, 2014). Ultimately, the fifth stage, the confirmation stage, finalises the decision making process of adopting and implementing an innovation. In this stage, consumers assess their satisfaction with their online shopping experience and make a decision about whether or not they will continue to use that innovation (CloudCherr, 2019).

The safety and security of users' information and payment systems have a significant impact on customer confidence levels (van den Hoven, Blaauw, Pieters & Martijn, 2018). The secure transfer of data and information through a hierarchy of certification authorities will decrease fears of security risks and increase users' satisfaction with these commercial websites (Bose & Sugumaran, 2006; AlGhamdi et al., 2012). Talat, Azar, and Yousaf (2013) investigated the relationship between perceived security risk and perceived trust in social networking technologies, focussing on how social commerce affects the intention of customers to adopt online shopping. Another study by Zhang and Benyoucef (2016) revealed that even though many users had no previous online purchasing experiences, they regarded social commerce positively and were highly accepting of its services. In addition, the speed of online payment methods is important to ensure the success of social commerce and online shopping.

The features of a social media website play a key role in ensuring the maintenance of online shopping. Because e-commerce activities are conducted through websites, the quality, design and content of individual websites are crucial in ensuring the success of e-commerce (Ahn et al., 2007; Delon, & Mclean, 2004). Existing research reveals the major impact that website quality and attractiveness may have on users' acceptance of online shopping (Ahn, Ryu & Han, 2007). Social networking technologies also require quality websites in order to be successful. Because social commerce depends on social networking technologies for commercial activities, investigating the quality of the websites of online social networks is important (Delon, & Mclean, 2004).

The effect of website quality has been examined in previous studies involving two different approaches. One approach involves examining the effect of specific functions created in a

website. An example of this is Liang and Lai's study (2002), which demonstrates that the intention of shoppers to make online purchases and revisit websites are shaped by factors such as the media richness of a website. The second approach involves investigating how the quality of a website's design affects the perceptions of consumers. DeLone and McLean (2004), for example, evaluated aspects of a website, including its availability, reliability and response time and connected these with how consumers evaluated the support and services offered by the web site service provider.

The decision to undertake social commerce activities may be motivated by factors such as social support, relationship quality and website quality (Shin, 2013). These motivations drive users to share, receive and seek commercial information, product knowledge as well as purchasing experiences with other networks (Lu, Fan & Zhou, 2016). The quality of social networking technologies is formed around the system functions and service provider. A quality system enables users to use the social networking technology to solve problems (Turban, Outland, King, Lee & Liang, 2017). A good quality service provider allows users to obtain power from the platforms by meeting their expectations (DeLone, & McLean, 2003). According to Ahn et al. (2007) and Sabherwal et al. (2006), when social networking technologies are perceived to be of high quality, users form a strong first impression about the platform as a useful vehicle, which may encourage them to use it long term.

2.12.3 Traditional and Cultural Factors

The establishment of home-based online business through social media in Saudi Arabia is largely influenced by cultural and social customs (Assembly, 2015). The success of home-based business and entrepreneurship in a particular part of the world does not necessarily guarantee its success in another region because of the different cultural and traditional factors that come into play (Saleem, 2012; Curbera et al., 2003). The main components of these factors are present in the Arabic social environment, wherein the development of Internet resources in rural areas differ to those in urban areas (Bahaddad et al., 2013).

The capacity of social networking technologies to forge strong networks and connections between people may have a positive influence on the growth of online purchasing and play a key role in solving cultural problems in Saudi Arabia (First Voluntary National Review, 2018). The popularity of social media has allowed those who have traditionally found themselves

socially isolated to connect and interact with others (Kruh, 2017). Indeed, social relationships are that which distinguishes social commerce from other virtual commercial activities (Mata & Quesada, 2014). Social relationships play a key role in people's attitudes when making decisions about purchasing from and/or running an online business (Chen & Shen, 2015).

Social relationships are an important element in social commerce and this term includes social influence, social norms and social support, all of which have similar influences on the wellbeing of individuals (Gómez-Suárez, Martínez-Ruiz & Martínez-Caraballo, 2017; Alshawaf, 2013; Lumen Learning, 2019). A study indicates that social media brings social values to their users by allowing them to build closer relationships with other networks and enhancing the individual's welfare (Obst & Stafurik, 2010). One of the most important elements of participating in online communities is the ability to gain social support (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). According to Liang, Ho, Li and Turban (2011, p. 71) "Social support refers to an individual's experiences of being cared for, being responded to, and being helped by people in that individual's social group". Liang et al. (2011) found that social support is an important element to the success of social media and can be used to measure the quality of social commerce content.

Shopping online is a viable alternative to in-store shopping, providing Saudi women with a number of advantages, including a wider range of products to choose from, and personalisation and customisation options (Devi & Saini, 2015; Chaffey, 2017). Most importantly, it enables Saudi women the ability to shop from home (Bahaddad, et al., 2013). The habitual inclination of Saudi consumers to get in touch with sellers in order to ask questions and obtain further information about products provides a favourable context for the implementation of social commerce (Abed, Dwivedi & Williams, 2015b). In enabling immediate consumer access to information without necessitating face-to-face contact with suppliers of products or services, the Internet allows social commerce in Saudi society to thrive (Wang, Wu, Chen & Yeh, 2012).

One of the traditional and cultural challenges that Saudi women entrepreneurs encounter is gender biases (Yousuf Danish & Lawton Smith, 2012). Female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia are subject to legal and cultural restrictions that do not apply to males regarding their ownership and control of firms (Brush et al., 2009). Women owned enterprises in most developing countries have been found to be extremely different to that of male owned enterprises in terms

of managing entrepreneurial processes (Basaffar, Niehm & Bosselman, 2018). Business-owning women typically receive less training and education programs on setting up, maintaining and developing firms before launching into entrepreneurial activities (Tavakoli, 2013). In addition, there is a lack of female role models for entrepreneurs, senior managers and entrepreneurs who take time off work for child-rearing (Andersson et al., 2007).

The roles and social responsibilities that women are expected to assume can create major obstacles for women's ambitions, expectations and entrepreneurial endeavours (Purwanto, 2016) as well as limit the development of their competencies and entrepreneurial expectations, (Brush, de Bruin, & Welter, 2009). Andersson et al. (2007) found that on the whole, women owned enterprises performed less well. This might be the result of women owned enterprises having lesser funds available in the start-up stage. Additionally, the poorer performance of female-owned enterprises may be connected to the personal goals of the women, who in seeking independence, flexibility, or work life balance, may not devote all their energies towards the financial success of their business (Rietz & Henrekson, 2000).

Traditional social structures have a major impact on female entrepreneurship (Mazonde & Carmichael, 2016). Motherhood has been identified as an element that significantly impacts the sustainability of a business. Robb and Coleman (2010) argue that motherhood can shape the information networks from which the female entrepreneur identifies market opportunities for herself and, therefore, has a significant impact on entrepreneurial processes. A recent study showed that women who devote a lot of time to family will have less opportunities to anticipate in market/financial/industry networks and this influences the growth predictions or even the novelty of the project (Verick, 2018).

2.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined the literature pertaining to home-based entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs' adoption of social networking technologies. It provided a definition of home-based entrepreneurship and outlined the role it plays in economic development, which has coincided with the growth of female entrepreneurs across the world, including the Arab regions. In addition to briefly profiling some of the major platforms of social networking technologies, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest, this chapter outlined the motivations of female

entrepreneurs to start up a small business which can include both 'push' and 'pull' factors. For Saudi women, an important motivation to set up their own business is their limited opportunities to join the workforce. As a result, women have established their own home-based business as a form of self-achievement.

This chapter also explored the challenges faced by women when becoming home-based entrepreneurs, which can potentially limit the success of their businesses. Government regulations, for one, play an important role in entrepreneurial success or failure. Entrepreneurship has been successfully implemented in the United States of America, while it has been barely developed in many of the Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia, due to governmental regulations of these activities. Hence, the literature review has indicated the role of technology as an enabler for Saudi women to start their home-based businesses. Another challenge is related to the limited subsidies of state agencies and banks that women can obtain, thus their businesses often begin on the backfoot with a lack of capital. This lack of capital was the primary reason for many home-based female entrepreneurs to start their business using social networking technologies -- they lacked access to other resources. Another challenge that many female entrepreneurs must contend with is the need to balance the demands of running their home-based business while they maintain family commitments.

It is evident that home-based online business plays an important role for women, specifically in Arab nations. Due to the strictness of Saudi culture and the patriarchal nature of the society, Saudi women have been compelled to create work opportunities for themselves in which social networking technologies play a vital role. The ability to venture into entrepreneurial activities while remaining physically at home is a delicate balancing act made possible by social networking technologies, and which allow Saudi women to fulfil their ambitions without overtly transgressing the cultural and social norms in place. That said, it is one thing to set up a business and quite another to sustain it. This chapter reviewed the factors that have helped home-based female entrepreneurs keep their businesses sustainable, which include personal, technical and cultural factors. Having reviewed the literature relevant to the issues examined in this thesis, the next chapter identifies the research gap that has emerged.

3. Chapter Three: Research Gap

3.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Two, the potential for of social networking technologies used by home-based women entrepreneurs has created a new marketing channel and improved job opportunities, particularly for women. The literature review examined the main areas of research in relation to the global use of social networking platforms, their impact on home-based online businesses owned by women, the ability of social media to offer new innovations for home-based online businesses, and the main advantages, motivations and challenges encountered when using these platforms for home-based online businesses.

The research gaps that were identified in the literature review are discussed in this chapter. This chapter also outlines the research questions that were developed as a result of identifying those gaps.

3.2 Research Gap

Social networking technologies offer great opportunities for both large businesses (Aker, Bhattacharyya, Wamba & Aditya, 2016) and small entrepreneurs (Scuotto, Del Giudice & Carayannis, 2017) to expand their business activities. Previous studies have described how businesses use social networking technologies to generate business value (Harris & Rae, 2009; Indrupati & Henari, 2012; Young, 2009). Some studies have investigated how social networking platforms change business models, refine business interactions, and modify the economy in developed and developing countries (Almoussa, 2011; Parveen, 2012; Kazienko, Szozda, Filipowski, & Blysz, 2013; Buyolo, 2018). Other studies indicated that the business value generated from the use of social networking technologies is represented in the ability of entrepreneurs to create revenue, products, services, employment, quality of life and investment returns while sitting at home (Barlatier & Mention, 2019; Spacey, 2018). According to Tan, Qin, Kim, and Hsu (2012, p. 211) “with millions of registered users visiting social networking sites on a daily basis, the potential business value of social networking sites has become too great to be ignored by their marketers or application developers”. Despite evidence regarding business value generated from social networking technologies, there has been little attention paid to home-based businesses owned by female entrepreneurs in developing countries such as

Saudi Arabia. Therefore, there is a call to clarify and understand the business value that Saudi women entrepreneurs generate from their use of social networking technologies for business activities.

Most researchers have examined the business use of social networking technologies from male rather than female perspectives (Sapleton, 2018; Wang, Li & Long, 2019). Yet, female entrepreneurs do not necessarily imitate their male counterparts in their approaches to business, particularly in developing countries such as Saudi Arabia. Recent studies indicated that there are a high number of Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs compared to male entrepreneurs in the private sector and in the establishment of home-based small businesses (Mastercard, 2018; AlMunajjed, 2019). Therefore, there is a need to understand the reasons for an increase in the number of female online entrepreneurs. An examination of women's home-based entrepreneurial experiences is needed to generate new perspectives about the reality in which women live, especially in developing countries. There is also a need to look at businesswomen's actual use of social networking technologies in order to report any changes that have occurred over time in terms of home-based online business and entrepreneurial activities (Scuotto, Serravalle, Murray & Viassone, 2019). Therefore, this study has narrowed its scope to women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia.

The greatest increase in the use of social networking technologies is in the commercialisation and marketing sectors but the information available is not gender or region specific. The literature provides an explanation of how social networking technologies experienced a simultaneous growth with online marketing in large organisations (Qualman, 2009; Pattison, 2009; Sinclair & Vogus, 2011). Social networking technologies are used for an extensive range of activities, including efforts to increase marketing and productivity, product awareness, communication and product testing etc (He, Wang, Chen & Zha, 2017). Previous studies indicate that businesses are increasingly using social networking platforms to transform their approach to marketing, advertising and stakeholder engagement (Henderson, 2002; Park & Kang, 2013; Walaski, 2013). These studies have investigated the potential of social networking technologies to generate collaboration and integrate social media as an online business strategic plan. Collaborations across these sites reflect the critical role of information technology in business endeavours (Scuotto, Del Giudice & Obi Omeihe, 2017; Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009; Wang, 2010). Yet, these studies have scarcely examined social

networking sites as a platform for conducting business online from home. Therefore, there is a need to explore how home-based women entrepreneurs benefit from using social networking technologies to manage their businesses, particularly in developing countries. The current research fills a gap and concentrates on the impact of social media technologies on the business activities of women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia.

Several studies have considered the motivations that drive the use of social networking technologies by businesses for commercial purposes (Canning & Kosmowski, 2013; Harris & Rae, 2009; Schaper et al., 2014; Stephen & Toubia, 2008). In the case of female entrepreneurs, research (Mathew, 2010; Welsh, Memili, Kaciak & Ahmed, 2013) reveals that the most common motivation for adapting social networking technologies for business activities is that they provide mothers a means of contributing to the family income while enabling them to still take care of their family (D'Andria & Gabarret, 2014; Richomme - Huet & Vial, 2014; Simon & Way, 2015; Vorley & Rodgers, 2014). Hence, motivations for adapting social networking technologies for business purposes need to be explored further to better understand how the use of these technologies enables Saudi home-based female entrepreneurs to enhance their businesses (Sinclair & Vogus, 2011).

Previous studies show that social networking technologies used in business have many benefits such as providing innovative ideas for organisations to enhance their product offerings and the ways in which they conduct their business activities (Wood & Khan, 2016; Pham & Johnson, 2017). However, these studies indicated that there are several barriers associated with the use of such platforms such as legal, security and privacy issues. Since the use of social networking technologies is no longer a fad, there is a need to understand how businesses perceive the benefits of and barriers to social networking technologies and their effects of their adoption. Some of these benefits and barriers apply to home-based businesses conducted by women in Saudi Arabia but there may be others such as cultural barriers that businesswomen in that country have to consider. Also, most of the available literature on female entrepreneurship focuses on the opportunities and challenges faced in the physical business environment (Nadin, 2007; Yousuf Danish & Lawton Smith, 2012; Jennings & Brush, 2013). There has been little investigation of home-based female entrepreneurial activities and the challenges faced when using social networking technologies to operate home-based online businesses (Behyar et al., 2011; Talat et al., 2013; Church & de Oliveira, 2013). Furthermore, little of the research covers

Saudi Arabia particularly a region which requires further study (Jennings, Jennings & Sharifian, 2016; Daniel, Di Domenico & Nunan, 2018). Therefore, this research is aimed at exploring the impact social networking platforms have had on the business activities of women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia.

3.3 The Research Questions

Previous studies of women entrepreneurs and their use of social networking technologies (see Chapter Two) confirmed that there is a significant research gap in terms of understanding the perceptions, approaches and activities of women entrepreneurs, particularly in regard to those in Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, where women face cultural barriers. Furthermore, there is a research gap in regard to home-based online businesses (with their capability to address unemployment issues) and the wider accessibility and use of social networking technologies. Thus, the primary focus of this research is to explore technology enablers to reduce the issues faced by Saudi women entrepreneurs and allow them to grow and enhance their businesses. Also, the perspectives and undertakings of female entrepreneurs in developing countries such as Saudi Arabia have been minimally examined, a knowledge gap that this thesis also attempts to address.

The research questions are:

1. How do Saudi women entrepreneurs currently use social networking technologies to enhance their ability to reach markets?
2. What are the motivations underlying social networking technologies use by Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs?
3. What are the most important issues facing Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs in their business use of social networking technologies?

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlines the gaps that were identified from the review of the literature on the use of social networking technologies for online business activities. The first part of the chapter discussed the research gap in the areas related to this study, while the second part described the research goals and questions generated. Given the highly specific nature of this study it is

crucial to adopt appropriate methodologies that enable the collection of accurate and rich data, a subject discussed in the following chapter.

4. Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research gap derived from the literature review undertaken. It also introduced the main focus of this research, which is to understand the current usage and associated issues of social networking technologies when Saudi female entrepreneurs adopt them for business activities. The study seeks to address three questions: (1) How do Saudi women entrepreneurs currently use social networking technologies to enhance their ability to reach markets? (2) What are the motivations underlying social networking technology use by Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs? and (3) What are the most important issues facing Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs in their business use of social networking technologies?

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology employed in this study. Section 4.2 justifies the research assumptions and paradigms that underpin the research design of this study. In the sub-sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, the theoretical foundations of inductive- deductive perspectives, and qualitative- quantitative approaches are briefly summarised. Section 4.3 provides a discussion of the procedures for data collection and the selected case study methodology are presented and justified. Section 4.4 outlines the ethics procedures and describes the measures taken to address confidentiality, anonymity and avoidance of harm. Then, section 4.5 presents the unit of analysis including the research interview questions along with developed sub-interview questions that have been derived from the literature. Each of these questions is discussed in depth to illustrate the changes that were applied to develop interview questions most appropriate for Saudi female entrepreneurs. Sub-section 4.5.6 outlines the issues of trustworthiness and quality tests in research design including credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability. Finally, an outline of the grounded theory methodology used for data analysis is discussed in section 4.6. Its sub-sections represent the process followed in coding/analysing the interview data.

4.2 Justification of the Research Assumptions and Paradigms

When conducting research, it is essential to consider different research paradigms. According to Scotland (2012), a paradigm comprises of the following components; ontology, epistemology, methodology, and, methods.

Ontology is the study of being (Crotty, 1998), “in other words how researchers look at issues related to the source of being, the identity of being and purpose of being” (p.10). Ontological assumptions are concerned with what researchers’ belief about the form and nature of social reality by considering the three distinct ontological positions which are; realism, idealism and materialism (Snape & Spencer 2003). Realism believes that reality is independent of what people may think or understand it to be, while idealism claims that reality can only be understood via the human mind and socially constructed meanings. Materialism is similar to realism as they think that there is a real world but it is only the material or physical world that is considered to be real (Creaven, 2012).

Epistemology is concerned with the nature and forms of knowledge as well as ways of knowing and learning about social reality (Richards, 2003). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) stated that epistemological assumptions are concerned with how knowledge can be created, acquired and communicated to other human beings. Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with how researchers can derive "true" information in relation to the world (Yeigh, 2019).

Such parameters reflect “a way of thinking about and studying social phenomena” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 11). These paradigms represent insights, beliefs, assumptions, and the nature of reality and truth behind the research (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Thus, it is believed that the research paradigms not only guide the researcher to follow certain methodology, they also influence the researcher to focus on the best methods of acquiring knowledge about phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Methodology is the strategy or plan of action which lies behind the choice and use of particular methods (Crotty, 1998). Thus, methodology is concerned with the kind of methods to be used in a research study as per epistemological and/or ontological assumptions. These paradigms are often described via a number of assumptions that help the researcher to guide his/her inquiries and each paradigm is based on a different set of beliefs. These differing assumptions affect the reality and knowledge which underpin a particular research approach. For example, if knowledge is viewed as hard, objective and tangible, the researcher is required to have an observer role together with an allegiance to the methods of natural science including testing and measuring. However, if the knowledge is viewed as personal, subjective and unique, the researcher is imposed to a rejection of the methods used by natural science (Al-Saadi, 2014).

Methods refers to the specific techniques and/or procedures used to collect and analyze data (Crotty, 1998). The data collected will be either qualitative or quantitative and the methods used in this study are discussed in detail in section 4.2.1

There are substantive overlaps of epistemological and ontological paradigms including the ones that were presented by Lincoln, Guba, and Pilotta (1985). These paradigms are described as positivist and post-positivist. The positivist paradigm is also known as functionalist as Denzin and Lincoln (2003) assert that reality is external and not merely a function of the human mind. Hence, functionalists offer an objective and self-reliant viewpoint of the world. According to Buttery and Buttery (1991), conducting a piece of research using this paradigm requires experimental testing through quantitative methods and numerical data, allowing researchers to accurately measure results. Burrell and Morgan (1979) state that the role of functionalists is to test the hypotheses and demonstrate the truth or falsehood of such hypotheses.

By contrast, post-positivism, which is also known as the interpretive approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), presents reality as subjective. The aim of this approach is to interpret the social world through the social concepts that are created by people in relation to each other in a society (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). It seeks to explore and explain meanings obtained from individuals (Decrop, 1999). Since the purpose of this research is to explore and investigate the Saudi female entrepreneurs' usage of social networking technologies for their home-based online businesses, the research design adopts a post-positivism perspective, also known as interpretivism, that guides the researcher's thinking within the qualitative approach.

The researcher will focus on the framework that was presented by Creswell (2009) as it considerably guides much of this study. The assumptions identified by Creswell (2009) hold that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Thus, the goal of research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied and being able to construct the meaning of a situation (Creswell, 2003).

4.2.1 The Qualitative Foundations of the Methodology

Creswell (1994) proposes two contrasting research paradigms: quantitative and qualitative. These paradigms enable researchers to obtain ideas about the nature of reality, identify suitable

methods and support their research assumptions when implementing a particular research phenomenon (Babbie, 1998).

4.2.1.1 Quantitative versus Qualitative

Quantitative and qualitative approaches differ from each other in regard to the nature of knowledge, data collection techniques and overall objectives (Creswell, 1994). The methodological assumption of quantitative and qualitative approaches are related to deductive as well as inductive perceptions (Antiquity, 1976). The quantitative paradigm, which is associated with a deductive approach form of logic, is suitable for research that presents a numeric measurement of the data under mathematical techniques (Norris, 2013). In contrast, the qualitative paradigm, which is only associated with an inductive approach (Haruvy & Stahl, 2004), is appropriate for research that investigates an in-depth comprehension of a phenomena (Creswell, 2007).

The quantitative approach refers to quantification in data collection and analysis. Typically, data is drawn from statistical sources, and its greater reliance on numbers over words necessitates a large sample size in collecting the primary data (Creswell, 1998). The aims of the quantitative approach is to seek the answer of “what” happens in the social world. Therefore, it involves a conscious distance between the researcher and its object of study by applying a systematic development and validation of measurement, study design and numerical testing of hypotheses (Miller, Poole, & Seibold, 2011). The most popular methods used in data collection are surveys and experiments, which end up with statistical data collected at the research field (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Veal & Ticehurst, 2005).

By contrast, the qualitative approach focuses on “the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 8). In other words, this approach describes a scenario using words instead of numbers (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Data is often obtained from a small sample size, either through case studies, ethnography, grounded theory, or action research (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, the qualitative approach is employed to gather information that answers “why” the phenomena happens in the social world (Bryman, 2004). According to Creswell (1994), the main strength of the qualitative approach is its ability to help the researcher to broadly acknowledge certain phenomena based on deeper understandings and wider explorations. In addition, it involves participants’

experiences and enables them to expand their vision about specific social phenomena (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative approach consists of subjective and interpretive viewpoints rather than objective ‘facts’ (Piekkari, Welch, & Paavilainen, 2009). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 4) “qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world... [and] involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world”.

A comparison between quantitative and qualitative approaches is presented in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Key features of quantitative and qualitative approach

Dimensions	Quantitative approach	Qualitative approach
Underpinning paradigms	Positivism (Comte & Bridges, 2016).	Interpretivism (Byrne, 1998).
Nature of reality	Reality is objective (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).	Reality is subjective (Sarantakos, 2005).
Research objectives	Predict, test, examine, and construct (Creswell, 2003).	Explore, discover, describe, observe, and explain (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).
The role of theory in relation to research	Deductive and inductive; testing of theory (Bryman & Bell, 2007).	Inductive; generation of theory (Bryman & Bell, 2007).
Researcher’s role	Passive; distant from the subject (dualism) (Sarantakos, 2005).	Active; both parties are interactive and inseparable (idealism) (Sarantakos, 2005).
Setting	Artificial (Bryman & Bell, 2007).	Natural (Bryman & Bell, 2007).
Research design	Concerned with testing of hypotheses (Bryman & Bell, 2007).	Concerned with generating theories (Creswell, 2009).
Strategies employed	Survey and experiments (Hussey & Hussey, 1997).	Phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and narrative (Creswell, 2009).
Sample size	Large (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).	Small (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).
Data analysis	Statistical analysis (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).	Text analysis (Creswell, 2009).
Generalisation	Generalise from sample to population (Sarantakos, 2005).	Generalise from one setting to another (Lichtman, 2006).

The next section justifies the selection of the qualitative methods in relation to the adopted inductive approach used in the current research.

4.2.1.2 Deductive versus Inductive Approach

Deductive and inductive approaches are two perspectives that are widely used in social science research. Researchers using the deductive approach develop a theory in order to generate and test a hypothesis (Norris, 2013). The deductive approach aims to investigate the relationship between theory and reality (Bryman & Bell, 2007) and the developed theory and proposed hypothesis are driven from the general to the specific (Creswell, 1994). Such a methodology entails the use of a quantitative approach as a suitable type of data collection (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012).

In contrast, researchers using the inductive approach generate theory from the gathered data and provide an explanation of empirical observations conducted in the real world. The inductive approach aims to specify the research problem and findings from the theory that prompted the whole study. Thus, the flow of this approach is driven from specific to general as it seeks available facts or evidence to generate research findings. Inductive research is considered to be connected to qualitative as well as quantitative approaches to data collection (Norris, 2013; Sarantakos, 2005).

The inductive approach goes beyond the simple description of data. It can be established between qualitative and quantitative approaches, which constitutes a difference in reality between inductivists and/or deductivists (Sanchez-Algarra & Anguera, 2013). According to Antiquity (1976), this approach accepts two ways of establishing hypotheses:

One way is [known as induction by enumeration, this technique is done] by observing data, noticing common features of the data, and then generalising that unobserved members of a particular class have the same features as the observed members. (Antiquity, 1976, p. 376)

The other way of establishing hypotheses is known as “argument analogy” (Antiquity, 1976, pp. 376-377):

It is a special type of the inductive argument, whereby perceived similarities are used as a basis to infer some further similarity that has yet to be observed. [It] is one of the most common methods by which human beings attempt to understand the world and make decisions” (Baronett, 2008).

This study, which focuses on the behaviours, perceptions, motivations and concerns of Saudi female online entrepreneurs, utilises the inductive research approach. It enables the researcher to seek, identify and draw meaning from the social context (Haruvy & Stahl, 2004). While aspects of the data collection will be quantitative in nature, this study is mostly dominated by a qualitative approach.

There are occasions in which a logical element is incorporated that connects the fact ...of describing—with our knowledge.... Undoubtedly, the perception is the same, but this has then to be contextualized in order to be able to make an adequate interpretation of what has been perceived. (Sanchez-Algarra & Anguera, 2013, p. 1239)

Having illustrated the quantitative and qualitative paradigms and their association to the deductive and inductive approaches and discussing the adoption of the paradigm that is best aligned with the requirements of this research, it is important now to look at interpretivism as a required approach for the qualitative paradigm.

4.2.2 Philosophical Foundations of the Research Assumptions

4.2.2.1 *Interpretivism*

The assumptions that guide this researcher's thinking are informed via a social constructivism, often referred to as interpretivism (Creswell, 1994), where meaning and experiences are driven from the social interaction rather than constructed within individuals (Burr, 2015; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). From this perspective, understanding of the world is gained from the individuals' environments in which they live and work (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). In addition, constructivism asserts that the researcher and the participants co-create and construct knowledge through interactions (Lindgren & Packendorff, 2009).

This research is concerned with the use of technology by Saudi female entrepreneurs who run home-based online businesses through social networking technologies. The common paradigm used in entrepreneurial research is interpretive, which requires qualitative methodologies (Carter et al., 2007; Zamberi Ahmad, 2011). Indeed, the nature of the research questions of this study compels an interpretive approach to be chosen since its quest is to answer the “how and why” questions.

The main objective of this study is to explore the views of Saudi women entrepreneurs' use of social networking technologies for business activities. The nature of these views have remained largely unknown. Thus, the researcher uses a qualitative approach to gain an extensive range of views, and to understand the main use of this social phenomenon (social commerce) among Saudi women entrepreneurs. Indeed, using a qualitative approach helps the researcher to encapsulate the participants' knowledge and then generate theories from that knowledge (Benbasat, Dexter, Drury, & Goldstein, 1984; Eisenhardt, 1989). Moreover, the qualitative approach mostly suits exploratory study (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, the researcher uses this approach because it allows her to explore technology as an enabler of Saudi women online entrepreneurship, to explain a female entrepreneur's life-experience and to understand the social phenomena from their daily and actual business lives. According to Nadin (2007), researchers cannot capture, explore and explain alternative forms of entrepreneurship without the use of qualitative research as "there are many insights on entrepreneurial processes that only qualitative analysis can generate" (Hofer & Bygrave, 1992, p. 98).

The following section briefly describes the data collection procedures of this thesis and outlines an appropriate data collection technique for this study.

4.3 Data Collection Procedures

There are multiple ways of conducting social science research including "experiments, survey, histories and the analysis of archival information" (Yin, 2003, p. 1). Each research strategy has its characteristics for doing the research depending on three main conditions: (1) the type of research questions, (2) the control applied over the events, and (3) the focus on the phenomena.

Case study is one of the example methods used in a qualitative study (Creswell, 2003; Stake, 2008; Yin, 2009). In the following section, the researcher introduces and justifies case study research as a suitable method that is used to address the research questions for this study. Moreover, it outlines alternative methods of data collection in qualitative research and by comparing these, it justifies the project's use of in-depth interviews.

4.3.1 Case Study Research Method

A case study method can be applied in either qualitative or quantitative research depending on the method in which data is collected and analysed, and it depends on the research design that considers an embedded case design with multiple units of analysis (it is been more discussed in section 4.5) (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009, p. 18) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. The primary question motivating this research is how Saudi women entrepreneurs use social networking technologies to enhance their ability to manage home-based online businesses. The study evaluates a real-life phenomenon within a contemporary setting to understand technology as an enabler for Saudi female entrepreneurs and how it generates business benefits for them. It examines the most commonly encountered issues facing Saudi women entrepreneurs while using social networking technologies for their businesses. Social networking technology usage encompasses a wide range of benefits and issues that are experienced by entrepreneurs while operating home-based online businesses over which the investigator has only minor knowledge.

It has been suggested that “the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena” (Yin, 2009, p. 4). It is true that in regard to this research topic, the use of social networking technologies for business is a complex social and business phenomenon for Saudi female entrepreneurs which is lacking clearly defined boundaries. Since the governing objective of the study is to make facts understandable, the case study methodology is an appropriate research technique. It offers tools for moving back and forth between existing data and gathering new data, which contributes to providing a level of detail and understanding of the complex phenomena (Dubé & Paré, 2003). Furthermore, it “can look directly at the sequence of events that produced an outcome, rather than just the outcome” (Peters, 1998, p. 141). Case study research is a preferred strategy because it addresses the “how” or/and “why” questions; not just the “what” that were being posed when the researcher has little control over events, and when the focus is applied on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life experiences (Yin, 2003). By employing the case study methodology in this research, the researcher is able to ask and discuss how the phenomena is used and what motivations underlay the use of the phenomena. According to Yin (2003) the more that the research questions require an extensive and “in-depth” description of social phenomenon, the more that case study research

is appropriate. It allows the researcher to better understand and identify the existence of a phenomenon.

The case study method focuses on defining cases and exploring a setting in order to understand it rather than analysing cases (Cousin, 2005). It “can be defined as an intensive study about a person, a group of people or a unit, which is aimed to generalize over several units” (Gustafsson, 2017, p. 2). The focus of a case study design is based on a specific unit that can be an individual, group, role or organisation (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, case study research can have a double function, and can consist of single as well as multiple case studies in regards to the country, organisation, programme, and community where it is used to study science, evaluate programmes and their processes and develop theories and involvements from the outcomes (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003).

Case study can be either holistic that has only a single unit of analysis, or embedded, that has multiple units of analysis (Yin, 2003). Therefore, it is widely advised that researchers have to identify the type of case study that should be implemented because it forms the research design (Gustafsson, 2017). The researcher has to consider which format of a case study --- single or multiple case -- is better to use for the understanding of the phenomenon (Gustafsson, 2017). Another important aspect to consider when identifying the type of case study is the context (Yin, 2009). If a researcher has chosen a single case study, then the research “...depends in an individual case, not by the methods of inquiry used”. Therefore, “the object of the study is a specific, unique bounded system” (Stake, 2008, pp. 443, 445). On the other hand, if the researcher has applied multiple case studies, the research needs to include more than one single case. It is assumed that a piece of research with multiple case studies tends to be a comparative study because it enables the researcher to understand the differences and similarities between the cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Rowley, 2002), and this is not the target in this study. Moreover, utilising multiple cases requires greater effort while conducting the study. Multiple case studies can be extremely expensive and time consuming to implement.

A single case study approach has been employed in this research because it offers the opportunity for the researcher to explore the case with an in-depth understanding of the phenomena from a variety of perspectives over time (Ozcan, Han & Graebner, 2017). A single case study is appropriate since the focus is within the context of Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs as the overarching case study for this research. This study consists of a multiple content of analysis for

each case (why and how Saudi female entrepreneurs use of social networking technologies for business, what are the motivations, and issues related to the use of these technologies), each of which is explored individually. Thus, single case study is implemented in this study because it is ideal for investigating process research that largely focuses on questions examining “how and why things emerge, develop, grow, or terminate over time” (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas & Ven, 2013, P. 1). Results from these units were synthesised together to produce an overall picture. The significant strength of using single case studies is that it is more general towards theory. Therefore, a single case study approach is adopted in order to make generalisation increasingly possible (Yin, 2003).

As was noted earlier, the object of a single case study helps in regard to establishing theory for several reasons. This might occur when the case is extreme, unique and/or has something special to reveal (Rowley, 2002). This is the case for this research topic which is unique in that it relates to Saudi female entrepreneurs who use social networking technology as a tool to enhance their home-based online businesses. The researcher desired to find out more about Saudi women entrepreneurs’ experiences in using social networking technologies for their businesses. Moreover, the researcher was curious to discover how, in the socio-cultural context of Saudi Arabia, the benefits of these technologies are realised.

In order to clearly identify and provide explanations of phenomena, the researcher had to employ an appropriate method for data collection suitable for a qualitative research such as the case study. An explanation of possible data collection techniques for a qualitative approach is provided below.

4.3.2 Data Collection Techniques in Qualitative Approach

There are number of possible data collection techniques that are suitable for qualitative research including observations, interviews, documentation, and audio visual resources (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Kim, 2013; Sarantakos, 2005). The advantages and limitations of these methods are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Types of data collection techniques in qualitative research

Data collection types	Advantages	Disadvantages
Observation	Obtain experience and explore topics that might be tough for participants to discuss (Merriam, 2001). Record information as it is revealed (Bryman & Bell, 2007).	Requires good observation skills (Kim, 2013). Private information cannot be reported (Creswell, 2003).
Interviews	Provides extracts and historical information from the participants (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Have control over the interviewing environment (Kim, 2013).	People are not equally articulate and perceptive (Creswell, 2003). Provides information in a designated place rather than the natural setting (Creswell, 2003).
Documentation	Convenience in terms of accessible time (Sarantakos, 2005). Saves time and expenses involved in transcribing (Bryman & Bell, 2007).	Requires significant effort as documents must be interpreted with a great deal of care (Kim, 2013). Some important information may not be accessible publicly or privately (Creswell, 2003).
Audio visual techniques	Includes photographs, videotapes and other art objects, hence captures attention visually (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Attest to formal transaction (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).	Gives new meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Not being accessible publicly or privately (Sarantakos, 2005).

Of the various qualitative data collection procedures, the interview is seen as the most suitable for case studies because most case studies are about human activities that should be reported and interpreted through specific interviewees' perspectives (Yin, 2003). Justification for selecting the interview as a suitable data collection procedure in this research is presented in the following subsection.

4.3.2.1 Interviews

The most common and appropriate method of data collection when conducting a case study research is the interview. An interview is a method in which the data and results are related to direct conversations between researchers and individuals (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch, 2004). Furthermore, according to Gubrium and Holstein (1997), an interview is a contextually based method conducted when gathering information in order to discover a participant's experiences, meanings, feelings and ideas about their worlds. Because interviews enable the researcher to conduct the investigation in a naturalistic setting (Yin, 2003), it was deemed the most

appropriate for the nature of the study. Interviews allow the researcher to gain rich insights into Saudi female entrepreneurs' experiences, including their values, beliefs and aspirations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) regarding the phenomenon of using social networking technologies for entrepreneurial home-based online businesses.

The main advantage of interviewing is that it benefits exploratory research by enabling the researcher to understand the whole picture of "how" and "why" the phenomenon has existed (Yin, 2003). As the primary goal is to understand how and why Saudi women entrepreneurs use social networking technologies for business, interviews were the obvious choice. Furthermore, "qualitative interviewing is an important adventure; every stage of an interview brings up new information and opens a new window into the experiences of the people" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 1). Hence, conducting interviews with different Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs enables the researcher to understand and then explain how and why they use these technologies for businesses (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). Furthermore, a qualitative interview helps researchers to concentrate on the depth of data; it provides a flexible method of data collection and it enables the researcher to develop a strong relationship with interviewees. In this way, a trusting relationship is built between the researcher and the participants, which is helpful when seeking further clarification of an interviewee's comments and acquiring cooperative contribution to the research (Cohen & Prusak, 2001).

However, the researcher should take into consideration the limitations of qualitative interviewing which might influence the quality of the data (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Having a conversation with an unfamiliar person could affect the validity of the obtained information. The interviewee might feel pressured to provide particular responses to some questions or refuse to give valuable and/or insightful information to other questions (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, an interviewer's lack of sensitivity and flawed questioning techniques might also influence proper communication with the interviewees (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The different types of interview methods are presented below before the choice of semi-structured interviews for this study is discussed.

4.3.2.2 Types of Interview

There are three main types of interview methods: structured, unstructured and semi-structured (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Hazeri Baghdadabad, 2008; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Kim,

2013; Sarantakos, 2005). Determining which approach to adopt is dependent on the goal of the interviewer, the sample size, and the presentation role between interviewers and the participants (McMurray, Pace, & Scott, 2004). The interview types are summarised in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Types of interviews

Area of comparison	Structured interview	Unstructured interview	Semi-structured interview
Definition	Requires an exact wording for the questions and necessitates restricted responses (Hazeri Baghdadabad, 2008).	Known as open-ended interview, it focuses mostly on the form of guidelines instead of the rules (Sarantakos, 2005).	It sits between structured and unstructured interviews in terms of eliciting information from respondents (Kim, 2013).
Aims to	Expand comparison among interviewees (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).	Offer data with a great range of information and allow deep understanding of the research phenomena (Hazeri Baghdadabad, 2008).	Observe nonverbal behaviour and good control over the investigated environment (Bryman & Bell, 2007).
Flexibility in interview questions	Lacks the flexibility in asking or answering questions (Merriam, 2001).	It is flexible in structuring the interview questions (Sarantakos, 2005).	It is flexible with the order of questions (Bryman & Bell, 2007).
Researchers' role	Design the interview questions in advance. Behave in the same way when asking questions to get the same response (Merriam, 2001). Be neutral; guide the interviewees back to the main topic (Hesse-Biber & leavy, 2011).	Be neutral probing; freely prepare or re-prepare interview questions (Baghdadabad, 2008). Provide participants an opportunity to represent their thoughts through their cognition (Merriam, 2001). Consider a few broad interview questions to allow free time for the respondents to take the lead on the discussion (Hesse-Biber & leavy, 2011).	Be flexible with forming interview questions in regard to the stipulating, wording and arranging (Sarantakos, 2005). Behave freely and pursue any sudden perspective that appears during the interview (Kim, 2013). Enable participants to share similar opinions and viewpoints to gather rich data for interpretation (Kim, 2013).

This research adopts a semi-structured interview approach because it offers the researcher the flexibility to retain an overall focus on a specific topic and to also pursue any significant issues raised by the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The researcher can ask particular questions as guidance for more discussion and follow new leads as they occur (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). According to May (2001), a semi-structured interview enables the researcher to seek clarification, interpretation and elaboration of the participants' responses. Individual opinions and personal reflections would lead to a deep understanding of the social phenomena (Creswell, 2003), which, in this case, is the use of social networking technologies by Saudi female entrepreneurs to conduct home-based online business activities.

4.4 Ethics Procedures

Before carrying out this study, permission was obtained from the University of Waikato Human Ethics Committee. The committee ensures that this study carries minimal risks in terms of consent standards, confidentiality and anonymity issues, avoidance of harm and dissemination of findings. A brief discussion of these issues is provided in the following subsections.

Consent form: Before data collection began for this research, participants received a consent form to sign. The consent form contained a full explanation of the research objectives and a clear discussion of the different sections of the interview.

Confidentiality: Within a research, confidentiality means that the personal details of participants, such as their names, exact ages and so forth, would not be made publicly available. Therefore, prior to the interviews, participants were assured that their identities would remain anonymous and their personal information kept confidential throughout the study.

Anonymity: The anonymity of participants was maintained by using pseudonyms when their responses were discussed in the thesis.

Avoidance of Harm: No physical and/or psychological harm would be imposed on participants in the course of the project. In addition, the voluntary nature of participating in this study and the opportunity for participants to withdraw at any time serves to counter any potential feelings of coercion on the part of participants.

Dissemination of Results: Participants were advised that the findings of this study would be presented as a PhD Thesis. Participants were informed that a copy of the results could be provided upon their request. Publications in academic journals that draw from this study would, of course, also maintain the anonymity of participants.

4.5 Unit of Analysis

Krippendorff (2013) clearly stated that defining the unit of analysis in an exploratory case study research assists in understanding how the results of the study relate to the broader body of knowledge. The unit of analysis is typically based on individuals, group, role, position,

relationship, organisation, social category or society in general (Singleton & Straits, 2018). The researcher interviewed a group of Saudi women entrepreneurs to draw relevant knowledge among those collected units. The researcher ensured that one unit does not depend on another, hence, treating them as independent elements.

4.5.1 Participants/ Sampling Selection

Dubé and Paré (2003) emphasise that identifying appropriate participants for data collection is critical in any research. Suitable participants serve to ensure the reliability of results from the study and provide a solid foundation from which new theories can be generated (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003). When selecting participants, the researcher should consider “the intent of the research [if it is] description, theory building, or theory testing... [because it] yields more general research results” (Benbasat et al., 1984, p. 373). Moreover, Singh (2018) stated that researchers should consider the two major groups of sampling techniques used to select the units/ cases that the researchers include in their sample:

- Probability sampling techniques use random selection to help researchers select units from their sampling frame to be included in their sample. Different types of probability sampling technique exist: simple random sampling, systematic random sampling and stratified random sampling.
- Non-probability sampling depends on the subjective judgement of the researcher when selecting units from the population to be included in the sample. The subjective judgement requires the researcher to select units/cases from the population. Therefore, selecting units/cases becomes a complex task. Different types of Non-probability sampling exist including quota sampling, self-selection sampling, convenience sampling, snowball sampling and purposive sampling.

This research adopted non-probability sampling techniques because these are more appropriate for exploratory and qualitative research. In these types of research, the aim is not to test a hypothesis about a broad population, but to develop an initial understanding of a small or under-researched population (McCombes, 2019). According to Eisenhardt (1989), the concept of a sampling is important as it defines the set of criteria from which the research population is to be drawn. In qualitative research, the number of selected participants depends on the depth

of the study (Dubé & Paré, 2003). Therefore, the target number of participants in qualitative studies often depends on what is known as “Theoretical Saturation” (Sarantakos, 2005). This means that the researcher should continue interviews with new participants until there is no more significant information obtained from the extended interviews, or there are no more participants available. This approach determines the sample size of a study, as data collection halts once no new, interesting and relevant information or themes occur in the data investigated (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Richards, 2005).

The researcher conducted interviews with Saudi female entrepreneurs until no more new information emerged regarding the study phenomenon. Prior to data collection, the decision was made to aim for 30 interviewees, but in the interests of theoretical saturation, the number of participants ended up being 40. It was appropriate to continue data collection until there was no new data emerging after several interviews. This was based on the subjective assessment of the researcher as she realised that only minor additions to the findings were being uncovered in the latter interviews, and subsequently, she decided to end with 40 interviews.

The selection of participants for this study was based on four specific criteria in order to achieve the ideal informant as suggested by Neuman (2013):

1. The participant had to be a Saudi Arabian female entrepreneur. This is essential because they are the unit of analysis, so they are best qualified to answer questions regarding their behaviour. Therefore, their role would enable them to supply the kind of information being sought by the researcher (Kamel & Hussein, 2002; Travica, 2002).
2. The participant had to be involved in the field of online businesses. Participants must operate their home-based businesses fully online; female entrepreneurs who conduct part or all of their business activities from a physical store were excluded except those who were participating in family productive markets.
3. The participant should be able to spend time with the researcher. The informants should be willing to co-operate with the interviewer to exchange knowledge (Burgess, 1982). Total commitment by the participant was established before interviews commenced.

4. The participant should be familiar with conducting a variety of business activities on social networking technologies. It was advised by Burgess (1982) that researchers must carefully select their key informants and make sure that they are objective and unbiased. This meant that the researcher had to ensure that her list of participants were a diverse set of representatives from different business groups and sectors (explained in sections 4.5.2 and 4.5.4). Participants were selected from entrepreneurial online groups on Facebook, WhatsApp and other social networking technology sites. This enabled the researcher to meet a wide range of women entrepreneurs who were conducting a variety of business activities through these virtual groups and to gain information from their various perspectives about the underlying issues of using social networking technologies for home-based online business.

The selection of participants for this study was carried out based on the above criteria and section 4.5.4 discusses this process in greater detail. Appendix A provides a summary of the participants.

4.5.2 Pilot Interviews

In the exploratory part of any research, it is important to conduct a preliminary or pilot study before holding the actual interviews (Dubé & Paré, 2003). According to Yin (2009), pilot studies enable the researcher to familiarise her/himself with the field chosen for the study. Furthermore, it allows the interviewer to finetune questions based on the responses received in the pilot study. The pilot study enables the researcher to ensure that the interview questions are connected, relevant and in alignment with the research objectives and questions (Robson, 2002; Yin, 2003). Also, pilot interviews enable the researcher to recognise and to avoid potentially detrimental interview techniques (Chenail, 2011).

The research process followed for data collection is illustrated in Figure 4-1. The researcher developed this figure. It was began with conducting the pilot study, from which the knowledge obtained, used and developed to refine the interview questions, before the main study was conducted. It shows the stages that were followed in the research design of data collection and it illustrates the transformation of knowledge into the outcomes of this study.

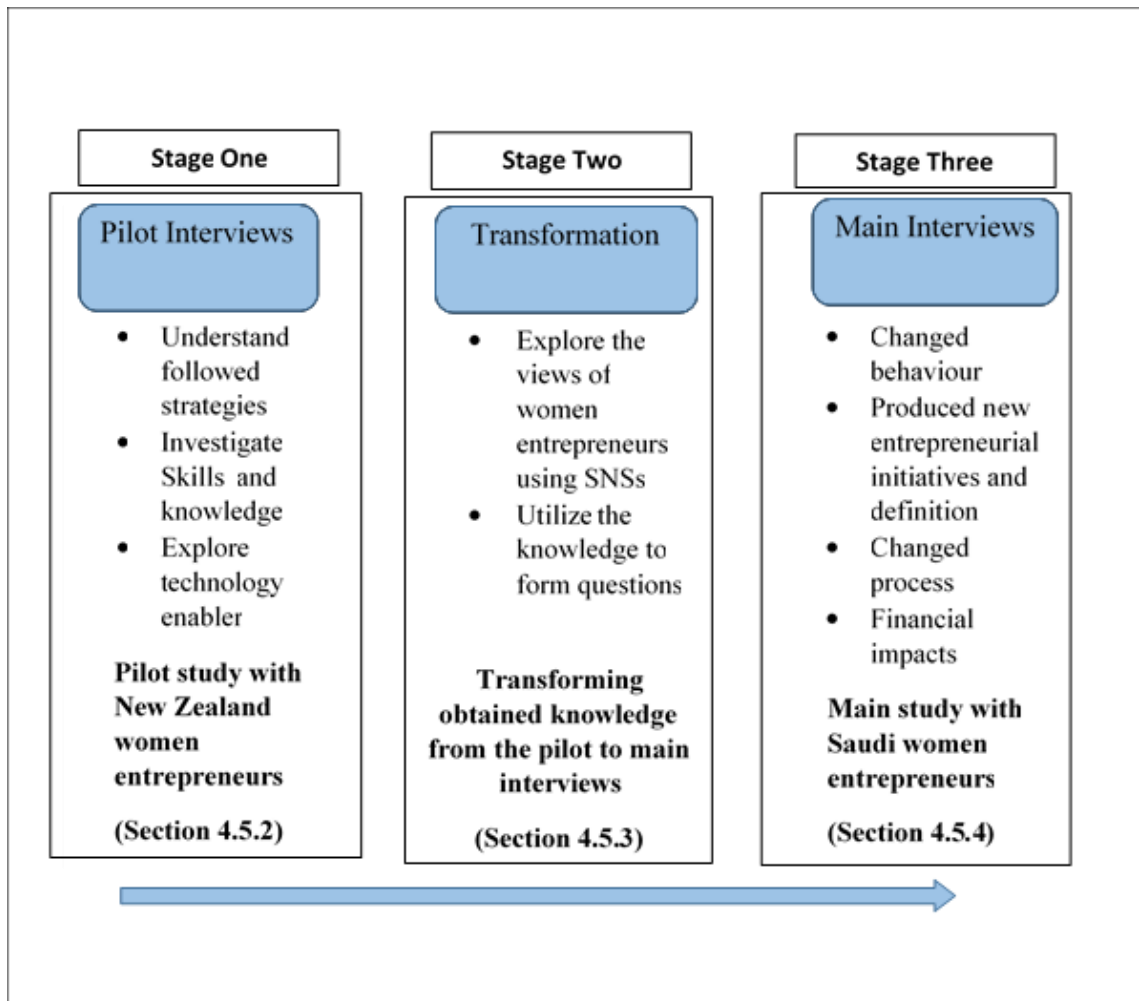


Figure 4-1: The research process followed for data collection

The first stage is the pilot study. Pilot testing of the interview questions and structure is essential (Yin, 2003). The pilot study was conducted with ten New Zealand women entrepreneurs since their use of social networking technologies to run their home-based online businesses is a relatively common phenomenon. The cultural context in which Saudi women operate is obviously absent in the New Zealand women’s experiences and as such, the information from the pilot study provided a broader understanding of how women are using social networking technologies to operate their online businesses before the study narrowed its focus to the Saudi cultural context.

As with the main study, the pilot study reported on specific areas, such as how female entrepreneurs use social networking technologies to manage their home-based online

businesses; what critical factors motivate them to use them, and what key benefits and issues they encountered while using social networking technologies for entrepreneurial activities.

In order to find New Zealand female participants for the pilot study, the researcher looked at social networking sites such as Facebook that consisted of groups of New Zealand women entrepreneurs and joined a number of them. The researcher had already become a member of online entrepreneurial groups such as *Young entrepreneurs of New Zealand*, *TSL Lets talk Business*, *New Zealand Entrepreneurs* and *New Zealand entrepreneurs' publisher*. It should be noted that these groups are mixed gender rather than exclusively female. However, through these groups, the researcher was able to identify potential female participants and invite them to participate in the pilot study. Following agreement, the researcher sent out, through Facebook Messenger, an online pre-interview information sheet to each participant in order to outline the study goals.

The interviews were conducted through Facebook Messenger, an Instant Messaging (IM) application, as participants were based in diverse locations and time constraints precluded travel for face-to-face interviews. Several studies have illustrated the possibilities of alternative methods of face-to-face interviewing which include instant messaging applications used for interviewing (Jeong, 2007; Kazmer & Xie, 2008; Mithas, Costello & Tafti, 2011; Tree, Mayer & Betts, 2011; Wang et al., 2010). This point is further clarified in section 4.5.4.

4.5.3 Transformation

The second stage is transformation (Figure 4-1). It involved reviewing the literature and discussing possible outcomes with relevant subject experts before conducting the pilot study and the main study. As with the main study, data collected from the pilot interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed but the information obtained from this process was not included in the findings of this thesis which focuses on Saudi female entrepreneurs. Rather, undertaking the same process of data collection for the pilot study as for the main study served to give the researcher a wider base for understanding why and how women entrepreneurs use social networking technologies for home-based online businesses. The insights gained from the pilot study helped the researcher to finetune the interview questions posed to Saudi female entrepreneurs.

Conducting the exploratory study required the researcher to build knowledge relevant to the adoption and use of social networking technologies for business and how these technologies have helped female entrepreneurs to achieve business benefits. Therefore, there was a need to involve the stages of *understanding, identifying and developing* (outlined in more depth below) in order to refine the interview questions that would be put to Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs, considering their context and culture.

4.5.3.1 Understanding of the Phenomena

Gaining an understanding of the adoption and use of social networking technologies for business and entrepreneurial activities involved a review of the literature regarding entrepreneurship, social networking sites and business, social commerce and entrepreneurship growth, and benefits of using social networking sites for business operations. Moreover, a review of establishing small and medium enterprises by female entrepreneurs was applied to develop an understanding of the most common motivations that exist for this social phenomenon. The researcher's experience and knowledge of using social networking technologies, as well as previous interaction with some entrepreneurs, both New Zealanders and Saudi Arabian, enabled her to have a broader view of the adoption of social networking technologies to promote different entrepreneurial activities. This led the researcher to identify and consider key aspects to be covered in the interview questions posed to Saudi female entrepreneurs.

4.5.3.2 Identifying Main Factors to Improve Interview Questions

The primary interview questions that were set for the pilot study (Appendix B) were broad and not specific to any business area. Nonetheless, these questions were used to guide identification of the key factors that influence entrepreneurs' adoption and use of social networking technologies for their businesses.

After the interviews with New Zealand female entrepreneurs were completed, some important factors that may influence the adoption and use of social networking technologies for business were identified and included for the questions posed to Saudi female entrepreneurs in the main interviews. These factors include:

- The nature of the businesses that is being conducted through social networking technologies
- The processes of using of these technologies
- The motivations for their use
- The issues encountered while using these technologies

4.5.3.3 *Developing interview questions*

Following the pilot study, the main changes implemented involved adding additional interview questions rather than changing the existing ones in order to better address the Saudi Arabian context. The additional questions were designed to gain richer insights into the perspectives of the Saudi female entrepreneurs, particularly in relation to issues involving time, customer services, communication, payment and delivery issues. Table 4.4 summarises the key changes made.

Table 4.4: Changes applied on the interview questions

Interview questions	Changes applied	Reasons for the changes
First of all, can you tell me about your business?	None	Just a start with the participants to know their business types and their use of social networking technologies.
Can you describe for me how you adopted social media into your process?	New sub-questions added	Posing a very broad question was essential to identify the type of social networking technologies used; gain a sense of their experience in using these technologies for business; and determine whether they keep up with the development of these technologies and why.
Can you give me an example of the motivations that make you set up a home-based online business on social media?	None	One of the objective for this study is to identify the factors and/or motivations that influence entrepreneurs' adoption and use of these technologies for their businesses.
Can you give me an example of any risk you took in mind when you started your business on social media?	Yes	This question itself had not changed, but the order in which it was asked in the interview was swapped with the subsequent question as the researcher realised it is more logical to talk about the benefits obtained from the use of social networking technologies first before asking about the cons.
Can you give me an example of the issues that you encounter when using social media for business?	Yes	As with the previous question, this question itself had not changed, but the order in which it was asked had been swapped with the previous question.

Can you describe a time when you had to make an important decision with limited facts about product delivery and quality	None	This aspect of delivery problems was mentioned a lot during the pilot studies, thus it was interesting to keep this question and examine it in the context of Saudi Arabia, since females in Saudi Arabia were prohibited from driving at that time until 2017.
Can you tell me how technology helps you to organise the time that you spend between family priorities and tasks of your business?	New question added	The responses from the pilot interviews suggested that the benefits of having free work time (flexibility) was highly important to female entrepreneurs and needed to be raised in the main interviews.
Can you give me an example of the expected problems in the field of online commerce and what are the solutions proposed to avoid such problems?	New question added	In order to gain a more in-depth understanding of the problems faced and the solutions proposed when SNTs were being used, an additional question was included in relation to this.
Can you tell me how you deal with customer complaints, in terms of gaining their satisfaction?	New question added	Customer complaints were experienced by New Zealand entrepreneurs for several reasons. Thus, it was important to investigate whether customer satisfaction influences the adoption and use of these technologies for business.
Can you tell me about the reasons for running an online home-based business on social media?	New question added	It was important to explore the reasons behind their adoption because it would lead the researcher to identify the business benefits obtained from the adoption of these technologies.

Following the modifications to the interview questions, the final order in which the questions would be asked was also given consideration and fine-tuned.

Having gained an understanding of how western (New Zealand) female entrepreneurs use social networking technologies for their businesses, the researcher then reviewed the literature from the Saudi context in order to ensure that key issues relating to this context were covered in the questions for the main interviews. Appendix C contains the interview questions that were refined to specifically relate to a Saudi context.

4.5.4 Main Interviews

The third phase was the main study (Figure 4-1). This stage began after the researcher formed an understanding of the usage of social networking technologies for business by New Zealand female entrepreneurs in the pilot study. Once the questions for the main interviews were finalised, the researcher contacted Saudi female entrepreneurs who had indicated their willingness to participate in the study.

Two data collection techniques, online and face-to-face interviewing, were used in order to conduct the interviews. When initial contact was made, there was some doubt that the Saudi female entrepreneurs would be willing to meet face-to-face, despite the researcher being a Saudi woman herself, for reasons outlined below.

One cultural and religious element that was important to consider was the need for the Saudi women to obtain permission to participate in the study. Normally, Saudi women do not communicate with strangers, leave their houses or greet guests without their husbands' knowledge and permission. The recording of face-to-face interviews obviously posed a challenge in this context as Saudi women rarely allow their voices to be recorded for fear of being identified. Nevertheless, the researcher asked for permission to record the face-to-face interviews, but had prepared an alternative means of interviewing via Instant Messaging (IM) when permission was not granted.

Another unexpected complexity arose with some participants initially stating their willingness to participate in face-to-face interviews, but who then asked to be interviewed using an alternative means at the very last minute. In total, four interviews were conducted using instant messaging and the remaining 36 interviews were conducted face-to-face. Of these 36 participants, two refused to have their voices recorded for privacy reasons, as they were afraid to be identified. In these cases, the researcher took handwritten notes. The others (34) agreed to having their voices digitally recorded on a mobile phone. Further discussion of the use of instant messaging for interviewing is provided in the next sub-sections.

The researcher took time to carefully explain to participants that all information gathered would be held in the strictest confidence and their identities would not be publicly released. The face-to-face interviews took approximately 30-60 minutes while interviews conducted through instant messaging took slightly longer than 60 minutes, as more time was needed to type and to read the text.

The next subsection discusses how instant messaging applications are widely accepted as an alternative means for conducting face-to-face interviewing. It further describes the procedures followed in selecting and interviewing the participants.

4.5.4.1 Instant Messaging for Internet Interviewing

The shift from a traditional face-to-face interview to one conducted online reflects the difficulties researchers can sometimes face in reaching participants they need to interview. Dimond, Fiesler, DiSalvo, Pelc, and Bruckman (2012, p. 278) point out that “qualitative interviews can be successful in any medium, particularly when researchers give attention to particular issues involved”. Indeed, the benefits of instant messaging interviews include feasibility and flexibility since instant messaging serves to reduce the distance, time and cost involved in face-to-face interviews (Fontes & Mahony, 2008; Stieger & Goritz, 2006).

Online interviewing through instant messaging is widely accepted (see Table 4.5). In fact, Internet-based interviews have a number of advantages over traditional interviews. Through online interviewing, the researcher can easily reach a large number of participants because distance is not a problem (Koetsier, 2013). Furthermore, online interviews enable the researcher to collect data quickly because the online interviewer asks questions and the participant, who is also online, responds immediately, making it alike to a chatroom (Sarantakos, 2005).

The following Table 4.5 indicates a number of studies that employed instant messaging interviewing as a data collection procedure.

Table 4.5: Studies used instant messaging (IM) interviewing as a data collection procedure

Authors and Articles	Instant Messaging application	The study	Advantages of IM interviewing
Implementing instant messaging using named data (Wang et al., 2010).	Used IM called (Libpurple).	Demonstrates the advantages of IM as a serverless application to facilitate the interaction among architecture.	IM enables users to successfully engage and chat with each other without infrastructure support.
Qualitative data collection technologies: a comparison of instant messaging, email, and phone (Dimond et al., 2012).	Used phone, email and IM including GChat, Skype, and AIM.	Examines the differences between the three types of technologies including IM, phone and email, particularly concerning word count and qualitative codes.	There are significant differences between the three methods but there are no differences in the number of unique quantitative codes.
Qualitative interviewing in Internet studies: Playing with the media, playing with the method (Kazmer & Xie, 2008).	Used IM (LEEP), phone and email.	Focuses on functional and methodological effects to generate the medium for technology-based interviewing.	Qualitative interviews can be successful in any medium.

Using instant messaging for internet-based interviews (Stieger & Göritz, 2006).	Used IM (AOL) and email.	Identifies the advantages and drawbacks of each technique.	Advantages of IM include circumventing costs involved in travelling for face-to-face interviews,
Grounding in Instant Messaging (Tree et al., 2011).	Used phone and MSN Instant Messenger.	Investigates how people interact differently across different communicative media.	IM is better used by an experienced communicator. IM, unlike phones, enables more multitasking communicators.
Instant messaging in on-site and online classes in higher education (Jeong, 2007).	Used IM including SARS.	Investigates the successful factors for IM communication between students and instructors.	Main factors for effective communication include the availability of the instructor, positive use, instructing students about IM's intended role and establishing fixed office hours.
What's up with WhatsApp?: comparing mobile instant messaging behaviours with traditional SMS (Mithas et al., 2011).	Used IM (WhatsApp) and SMS.	Little is understood about how and why people have adopted and appropriated instant mobile messaging applications for communication.	Perceived value of WhatsApp communication. The reasons for adoption are cost, social interaction, trust and privacy.

4.5.4.2 Research Interviewing Tools –WhatsApp and Facebook

WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger are social networking messaging applications that work on different devices including mobile phones and tablets (Koetsier, 2013). These applications allow users to send messages through Wi-Fi and not through SMS, which potentially saves users text messaging fees (Kirk, 2012). The use of WhatsApp and Facebook as instant messaging for communication is growing rapidly (see Figure 4-2) (Norris, 2013). WhatsApp is becoming the second most frequently downloaded application on Google Play after Facebook (Litsa, 2019). The researcher chose WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger because they are free applications and are widely used in the Middle East.

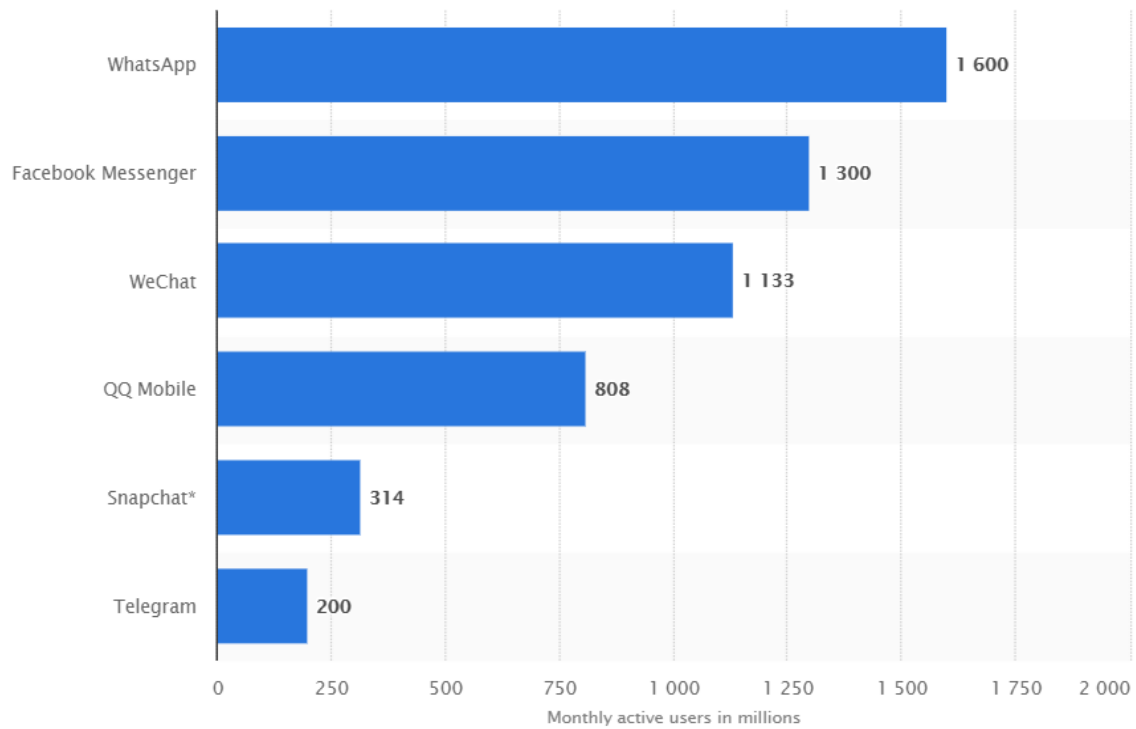


Figure 4-2: Most popular global mobile messenger apps as of October 2019, based on number of monthly active users, (Source: Statista, 2019)

Nonetheless, interviews conducted through instant messaging have some disadvantages. One of these is the requirement for both the interviewer and the interviewee to be simultaneously online (Evans, 2012; Koetsier., 2013). Another issue is that electronic invitations to participate in research projects may be viewed as yet another nuisance e-mail (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Moreover, since WhatsApp is an online application, it has some privacy, safety and security issues (Maybury, 2013). In order to alleviate these issues, the researcher undertook a number of measures. For example, the researcher arranged for a specific interview time that was convenient for participants in order to ensure that she was simultaneously online with the participants. In addition, the invitation had been issued through female entrepreneurial groups, which enabled the researcher to secure the direct agreement of participants. Lastly, the researcher used the Permissions feature that is provided on tablet devices to avoid installing applications from unknown sources.

For the online interviews, the researcher pre-typed the questions in the interests of efficiency but asked them one at a time so that she could follow up immediately on any significant

responses by participants that needed clarification or further elaboration. Prior to the commencement of the interviews, participants were provided with consent forms through WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. They were required to complete these before the interviewing commenced.

4.5.4.3 Sampling selection for the Main Interviews

One non-probability sampling techniques used to select the units/cases is "self-selection". The key perspective of self-selection is that research subjects (individuals or organisations) volunteer to take part in the research on their own accord as they are not approached by the researcher directly (Singh, 2018). The strategy of self-selection sampling is associated to the research designs and research methods. For instance, survey researchers may replace an online questionnaire and invite people within a specific organisation to participate, whereas scientists and qualitative researchers may advertise the need for volunteers to take part in their research interviews (Sterba & Foster, 2008).

In order to implement self-selection sampling in this study, the researcher publicised a need for units/cases, checked the relevance of those agreed units/cases in order to decide to either invite or reject them based on the criteria already mentioned in 4.5.1 (Faku, Radebe, Matshitse, Mogashane, & Granger, 2015). Thus, the selection of participants involved the researcher searching websites, and social networking sites of Saudi women entrepreneurs. The researcher joined a number of female groups on WhatsApp including *Algoryshop*, *Al hassa women entrepreneurs*, *Danatyshop*, *Zohoorshop* and *Beauty is the charmer*. Through these groups, the researcher posted an invitation prod-cast, outlining important information about the study objectives. The researcher also made contact with a number of Saudi female entrepreneurs who run small to medium home-based online businesses.

The prospective participants were identified through family-productive festival groups that regularly arrange women's markets (bazars) in public places. Before making contact with the women, the researcher sought and obtained permission from the appropriate channels. Once permission was granted, the researcher ensured that participants were familiar with the objectives of the study, the measures taken to ensure the confidentiality of the information they provided, and the time commitments involved in undertaking the interviews. Participants were assured, prior to the commencement of the interviews, that they could withdraw from the study

at any time and the confidentiality agreements that they signed reiterated their right to ask or refuse to answer any questions that arose during the interview. Initially, some participants expressed concerns that they lacked sufficient knowledge to answer the interview questions. The researcher addressed these concerns by providing them with a simple definition of women entrepreneurs and a description of entrepreneurial activities.

4.5.5 Formatting Interview Questions

Interpretive research requires the interviewer to be able to conduct a successful interview. One of the important roles of the interviewer is to guide the interviewee if necessary (Latin American Public Opinion Project, 2010), as it is rare for interview participants to behave similarly or even provide similar information (Kenning, 2019). The interviewer is advised to start the interview with a common opening question while holding difficult and sensitive issues until the end of the interviews in order to allow rapport to develop (King, 1994). Furthermore, the interview questions should be presented in the simplest form, because that can significantly affect the way that interviewee interprets the questions and the given responses (Yin, 1994). In setting the scene for the interview, it is important to involve descriptive information at the beginning. Meanwhile, the interviewer should keep the discussion focused in the desired direction during the interview's progress (Jamshed, 2014).

The researcher followed a four-stage interview procedure while conducting the interviews. This consisted of opening questions, transaction questions, main questions and ending questions. This interview structure is designed to build trust (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In addition, during the interviews, the researcher followed specific probes that could be used to improve the quality of the responses. Some of these probes were silence, sounds such as “uh” or “umm”, calls for further information or details, calls for reactions or solutions to solving particular issues, and asking additional impromptu questions (Lincoln & Gaba, 1985).

During the interviews, the researcher started with general questions regarding participants' attitudes towards social networking technologies, such as frequency of checking and uploading posts and which applications are most frequently accessed. This provided an opportunity for rapport to develop between the interviewer and the interviewee. Next, participants were asked about the motivations and factors that led them to become involved in social commerce activities. This served to strengthen the trust between the interviewer and her participants as

they started to provide answers and communicated freely. Then, they were asked to share their experiences of using social media for their businesses. By this stage, many interviewees communicated openly but a few provided minimal details in the belief that they might be disclosing their trading secrets.

In most cases, time determined the point of concluding the interview as it was aimed to spend approximately 30-60 minutes for face-to-face interviews and just over an hour for online interviews because they required more time for typing and answering questions. At the end of each interview, the interviewer briefly repeated her interpretation of what the participant had stated in order to avoid misunderstandings. The interviewer also expressed her appreciation of the participants giving their time to participate in the study in order to encourage the likelihood that participants would view the experience positively, and be able to make further requests for information (King, 1994). Finally, participants were asked to fill out a short questionnaire that consisted of some demographic information, such as their age and level of education. This questionnaire was filled out through WhatsApp for the online interviewees, and filled out manually for the face-to-face interviewees.

In line with the approach of the semi-structured interview, the questions asked across the various interviews were not identical and evolved, based on participant responses. For example, some questions asked were impromptu to gain clarification of the participant's statement, but these could contribute to the formulation of questions for subsequent interviews.

Participants were asked to talk about their experiences of using social networking sites for their entrepreneurial activities, particularly in relation to buying and selling through these applications. The questions asked in the interviews are detailed in Appendix C. This list of questions served as a guide to address each research question, and other questions were added during the interview to clarify issues and statements raised. A list of demographic information is provided in Appendix D. It was based on the overall research questions and required participants to indicate their level of education, age group, and to write down clearly how many years they had been using social networking technologies for entrepreneurial activities. Having demographic and background information collected in a questionnaire allowed the interviewer to focus the interview on questions that were less easily answered in writing.

The next section identifies different dimensions of ensuring trustworthiness of this qualitative research.

4.5.6 Trustworthiness

Reaserchers strive to make their research a high standard of excellence and trustworthiness. They aim to produce a high-quality research that accurately reflects the participants’ experience in the setting (Bailey, 2018). Trust is associated with belief (Gefen, 2004) but in social science, trustworthiness is primarily associated with establishing validity and reliability in a qualitative study (Gerrish, 2000). A research project’s trustworthiness requires results to be as accurate as possible, and for the responses of participants to reflect their original meanings and intentions.

There are four different key dimensions and concepts associated with evaluating the fundamental requirements for quantitative research: internal validity, reliability, generalisability and objectivity (Mårtensson, Fors, Wallin, Zander & Nilsson, 2016). These criteria do not apply to the qualitative research’s paramdigmatic assumptions, research designs, methodology, and types of analysis (Bailey, 2018). Therefore, some qualitative researchers use an alternative set of criteria associated with trustworthiness. The criteria considered in qualitative research includes credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Lincoln et al., 1985). Table 4.6 presents a comparison of quantitative and qualitative research in terms of defining each criterion used in the field research.

Table 4.6: Evaluative criteria for field research. Adopted from (Bailey, 2018, p. 145)

Quantitative research	Qualitative research
Internal validity: Studying what you intended to in order to accurately represent the phenomenon of interest.	Credibility: Findings are believable, authentic and plausible as judged by the participants and others.
Reliability: Consistency of findings if repeated.	Dependability: Conclusions seem logical based on detailed descriptions of procedures.
Generalisability: Results from the sample apply to the larger population from which the sample was drawn.	Transferability: Results provide insights useful in other settings and make theoretical contributions.
Objectivity and value free: The results are independent of the researcher, and researcher’s values are not relevant.	Confirmability: The findings are firmly linked to the data.

The following sections outline the criteria considered in qualitative research and how it was achieved in this study.

4.5.6.1 Credibility

Rouse (1997) stated that credibility hinges on a researcher carrying out their research in a correct, systematic order. The researcher should be sure about obtaining the right meaning from the interviewees (Pope & Mays, 2006) because it implies believability of results. According to Bailey (2018, p. 145) “Participants in the setting are key to determining whether your results are accurate representations of their experiences and, therefore, whether your work is credible.” A credible study is principally concerned with ensuring that the researcher had collected and interpreted the data, so that the findings and conclusions are correct and accurately represented.

There are some approaches that has been applied in this study in order to enhance credibility. The first approach is that the researcher spent adequate time with participants to identify and remove any potential complaints. In addition, the researcher explored in depth the participants’ experiences by asking them to give real life examples that they face during their journey of establishing their businesses (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999).

The data was collected through interviews that converge or lead to the same finding. It is believed that “the more you can show such convergence, especially on key findings, the stronger your evidence” (Bailey, 2018, p. 160). This was considered by asking the same questions, but within different contexts. For example, the interviewer could ask an entrepreneur about the degree to which trust plays a major role in gaining customers through social networking sites. Later in the interview, that same issue could be addressed by prompting the entrepreneur to give an example from their experiences. For example, an entrepreneur may initially state that trust does not play a significant role in gaining customers, but a description of their actual experiences may suggest otherwise. Follow-up confirmatory feedback was sought in order to ensure that what was disclosed during the interview was true and consistent with what the interviewer understood.

Because the interviews with Saudi entrepreneurs were conducted in Arabic, the services of an expert in English was required to assist with the process of translating the information from Arabic to English. A specific translation technique was employed in presenting the original content and its English translation side by side.

4.5.6.2 Dependability

This dimension checks the consistency of the investigation process regarding its systematic consciousness with obtained information and interpretation of data. Dependability is associated with credibility, as one dimension cannot be presented without the other (Speziale, Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). While dependability is concerned with correct analysis of data, credibility is concerned with correct data being collected. To have a valid qualitative research, the result of the study must be reliable and imply consistency. In other words, if any other researcher has asked the same questions again, at another time, it should elicit relatively similar results from interviewees.

According to Straub (1989), the researcher is required to conduct a pilot study in order to assess its dependability and address any vague interview questions, revise the interview design and solve any problems that arose in the pilot study. In the current study, the interview questions were piloted with a small sample of New Zealander female entrepreneurs (outlined in details in section 4.5.2). Quite simply, it is a measure of sufficient documentary of a research process. Similar conclusions should be drawn when other researchers follow the same research process and conduct it in a similar way.

Given that the researcher plays a significant role in the qualitative investigation and interpretation, the reporting of the data must be in a form that is easily understood by others in order to have the results interpreted similarly (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). In order to achieve this, the researcher followed a specific coding scheme, presented in section 4.6.2. An example of the coding rigour is presented in Appendix E, which consists of an extract from one of the interview transcripts, and it illustrates the coding process, which is accompanied by the grounded theory analysis that has been applied in this study.

The main concern in conducting qualitative research is the reliability of the result. This can be determined by having another person analyse the data and observing if similar results are reached (Bailey, 2018). In this study, the researcher involved a qualified academic individual who has substantial coding experience to examine a short extract from one of the interviews and to analyse it (the coding process is shown in Appendix E). Most of the presented results, where possible, were also supported by quotes and extracts from relevant transcripts and/or other sources such as interview notes (Lincoln et al., 1985).

4.5.6.3 Transferability

Transferability is another evaluative criterion for qualitative researchers. Transferability refers to the generalisation of results and theory. It involves researchers attempting to generalise theories that are applicable and similar to other studies and circumstances (Kelle, 2000). Therefore, its emphasis refers to the degree of having thick description of congruence that exists between contexts or cases in this study and the degree to which the result can be generalised outside the study. According to Bailey (2018, p. 146), “local conditions, specialised knowledge, in-depth accounts, and a highly contextualised understanding of a particular setting” might affect the degree of generalisation. Therefore, gaining maximum understanding of the cases within the study and ensuring that they are representative of a wider community would increase the likelihood of generalisation.

In this study, the researcher collected data from 40 participants who live in different regions in Saudi Arabia in order to minimise the concern of transferability. In addition, the sample of participants came from backgrounds and varying industries, and the social networking technologies used for business were of varying levels of establishment and importance. This enhanced the ability for the results to be generalised. Appendix A presents short summaries of each interviewee’s background information which supports the idea of reaching various participants from different industries that are associated with generalising results.

4.5.6.4 Conformability

Conformability is an important evaluative criterion to ensure the quality of a qualitative finding (Anney, 2014). It also ensures that the findings are well interpreted (Bryman & Bell, 2007) and ensure that “the interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer’s imagination, but are clearly derived from the data” (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392). In this research, most of the presented results, where possible, were also supported by quotes and extracts from relevant transcripts and/or other sources such as interview notes.

Previous studies indicated that confirmability can be achieved through an audit trail, reflexive journal and triangulation (Bowen, 2009; Koch, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Bowen (2009) stated that “audit trail offers visible evidence—from process and product—that the researcher did not simply find what he or she set out to find” (p. 307). In order to achieve this, data were

reviewed, discussed and refined by the researcher's supervisors and made sure that the findings are firmly linked to the data.

Confirmability also evaluates the research procedure in order to have a logical flow when other researchers attempt to replicate its steps (Mandal, 2018). To achieve this, the researcher has followed a specific coding scheme that is accompanied by the grounded theory analysis. To ensure the reliability of the result, the researcher asked the supervisors of the study, who has substantial coding experience, to examine and analyse a short extract from one of the interviews in order to investigate if similar results are reached.

The following section discusses the data analysis procedures underpinning grounded theory as a data analysis approach and also the software used as a data analysis tool.

4.6 Data Analysis Strategy

Data analysis in qualitative study can be formed with different strategies including theory, patterns and naturalistic generalisations in order to describe the perspectives developed in the study (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative data analysis provides richness but it has difficulty in finding analytic paths through that richness of data (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Thus, it was important to consider a number of different data analysis procedures and adopt the most appropriate one for this study. There are many well-known and accepted approaches for the analysis of qualitative data, which are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Qualitative data analysis approaches

Qualitative data analysis procedures	Purposes of the usage	Research process
Narrative analysis	Attempts to study personal lives and asks individuals to provide experiences examined through their lives (Creswell, 2003).	The obtained information is reformed and/or restored from the researcher's viewpoint as a narrative chronology. This collaborative narrative reflects a combination of the participant's and the researcher's lives (Sarantakos, 2005).
Grounded theory analysis	Seeks to derive a general theory from the data collected in a study. The data could be reported from a process, action, or interaction that is grounded on the participant's viewpoint (Behyar et al., 2011).	The researcher must follow different stages when collecting data, refining and categorising information (Behyar et al., 2011).

Ethnographic analysis	Aims to observe a specific cultural group under a natural setting for a period of time using primary data collection or observation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).	Involves contextual data in relation to the lived realities applied in the field setting (Bryman & Bell, 2007).
Thematic analysis	Seeks to theories the socio-cultural contexts. It widely explores events, activities, processes, or individuals' experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Yin, 2003).	Uses six phases of analysis; "familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report"(Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

The nature of the study and the expected results should be the main guide to the method of analysis (Yin, 2003). This qualitative research adopted the grounded theory approach to data analysis as it was deemed a suitable method for analysing case study evidence and for analysing interview data (Audiss & Roth, 1999; Calloway & Knapp, 1995). A brief description of the use of grounded theory for analysing qualitative data is discussed in the following section.

4.6.1 Introduction to Grounded Theory

Grounded theory methods first emerged from the work of Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s. Since its proposition as a research method, it has undergone many transformations. Subsequently, at least three different approaches to grounded theory have been classified; classic, straussian, and constructivist. Over time, the proponents of the method began to diverge on the methodological procedures of grounded theory, implementing independent lines of work. On one hand, Glaser continued to defend the original approach; thus, becoming the main exponent of the Classic perspective of the method (Evans, 2013). On the other hand, Strauss and Corbin merged new instruments of analysis and stages for developing the theory and they founded the Straussian perspective of Grounded Theory. By the 2000s, the Constructivist perspective of the method had been introduced by Glaser’s former student Charmaz (Kenny & Fourie, 2015).

The different approaches of the grounded theory mainly came about because of evolving scientific thought and changes in the paradigms that guide qualitative research (Silverman, 2016). Each grounded theory approach has share many common characteristics but different in the data analysis approaches. Before discussing grounded theory’s data analysis systems, a brief summary of common characteristics of the method is provided in

Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Common characteristics of grounded theory

Grounded Theory approaches	Common Characteristics
Classic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theoretical sampling: is “the process of data collection with the objective of searching for places, people or events that potentiate identifying modifications between concepts, as well as the category density, their properties and dimensions according to information needs identified in developing the research (Santos, Cunha, Adamy, Backes, Leite & Sousa, 2018, P. 2).
Straussian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constant comparative analysis: Based on a process of constant data comparison, where collected data are precisely analysed line-by-line in order to generate conceptual codes (Glaser & Holton, 2004). Memos: Once concepts begin to emerge through the process of constant analysis and comparisons, the researcher starts to reflect on the data and this is recorded in the form of memos (Kenny & Fourie, 2015).
Constructivist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantive theory and formal theory: Grounded theory is generated from a specific context, a theory only applying to the investigated field emerges, which is called substantive theory. In turn, formal theory requires in-depth study, involving the generation of abstract concepts that can be applied in a generalized way to a broader reality (Glaser & Strauss, 1999).

The differentiating characteristics of the three main methodological perspectives of grounded theory are related to the philosophical basis, use of literature, and the data analysis system. These are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Differentiating characteristics of grounded theory

Grounded Theory approaches	Differentiating Characteristics		
	philosophical basis	use of literature	Coding system
Classic	Moderate positivism : considered to be the philosophical basis due to Glaser’s connection to neutrality and objectivity in developing the theory (Kenny & Fourie, 2015).	Researcher begins data collection without any knowledge of the pre-existing literature (Evans, 2013).	Original coding system consisted of two steps: Substantive coding and Theoretical coding (Kenny & Fourie, 2015).
Straussian	Post-positivism Symbolic Interactionism: Proposed by Strauss and Corbin in their books (Del Casino & Thien, 2009).	Use of literature throughout all the research phases (Kelle, 2007).	Defined new stages for data analysis system: Open coding, axial coding and selective coding. They were developed with the objective to highlight the active position of the researcher in facing the data and in elaborating the theory, which enables theoretical support before and during data collection and analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).
Constructivist	Constructivism and Symbolic Interactionism: Charmaz developed the principles of Symbolic Interactionism in systematic coding procedure. Her emphasis was on the meaning, the language, the interpretation and the interaction; thus, linking grounded theory to the constructivist paradigm as an interpretative methodology (Kenny & Fourie, 2015).	Using literature throughout all stages and compiling it after data analysis in order to be able to understand the existing scientific production on the researched topic and develop the researcher's argumentative potential without compromising their creativity (Heath, 2006).	It considers theory as reciprocal construction between the researcher and the research subjects. Data can be analysed within two main steps: initial coding and focused coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Wang, Windsor and Yates (2012, p.95) stated that “rather than starting from a set theoretical framework, grounded theory relies on researchers distinguishing meaningful constructs from generated data and then identifying an appropriate theory”. Therefore, it is believed that grounded theory is useful in investigating complex issues that have not previously been addressed in order to understand the concepts and relationships in particular populations or places that are still undeveloped or weakly connected (Graham & Thomas, 2008).

This study has adopted the Straussian perspective of grounded theory, the method was developed as an alternative to the hypothetical-deductive tradition of qualitative approach at the time (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The Straussian perspective was employed because it considered innovative as it proposed the development of theories from data obtained through research. Straussian approach involves generating a theory from the data and it is characterised by “the constant comparison of data with emerging categories and theoretical sampling of different groups to maximize the similarities and the differences of information” (Creswell, 2003, p. 14). Grounded theory aims to discover and develop an inductive theory directly grounded in empirical data.

In the Straussian grounded theory approach, the researcher would explore a particular field of study, predict and explain the social phenomena at hand and allow the theory to be developed and built from the data (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010; Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1999). It requires searching for meaning and patterns within the data. Several researchers think that analysing data starts after all the data has been collected, but that it should be continued during each stage of the research process including gaining access, building relationships, interacting in the field, interviewing and collecting field notes (Bailey, 2018). Continuance of analysis in each stage of the data collection period would enable the researcher to determine the theoretical saturation or theoretical sampling, which counts as being a significant element in grounded theory (Schiller & Gegenfurtner, 2016).

One of its key elements is the use of theoretical sampling that refers to collecting more data at specific points in the analysis (Bailey, 2018; Bernard, Wutich & Ryan, 2016). Achieving the theoretical sampling involved searching for meaning and patterns within the data in order to find relevant information to answer the research questions and meet the research objectives. Theoretical sampling remains central to the method because it leads to theoretical development

and refinement rather than for the sake of increasing sample and diversity. Indeed, by considering all the requirements of conducting a grounded theory research, the researcher would be able to consider that the sampling, coding and theory building are all developed together.

To arrive at a theory, the researcher followed certain inductive procedures in order to have a critical, cognitive and creative study (Creswell, 2003). Carrying out these steps enabled the researcher to develop a grounded theory in an effective and sufficient manner. These procedures are illustrated in Figure 4-3.

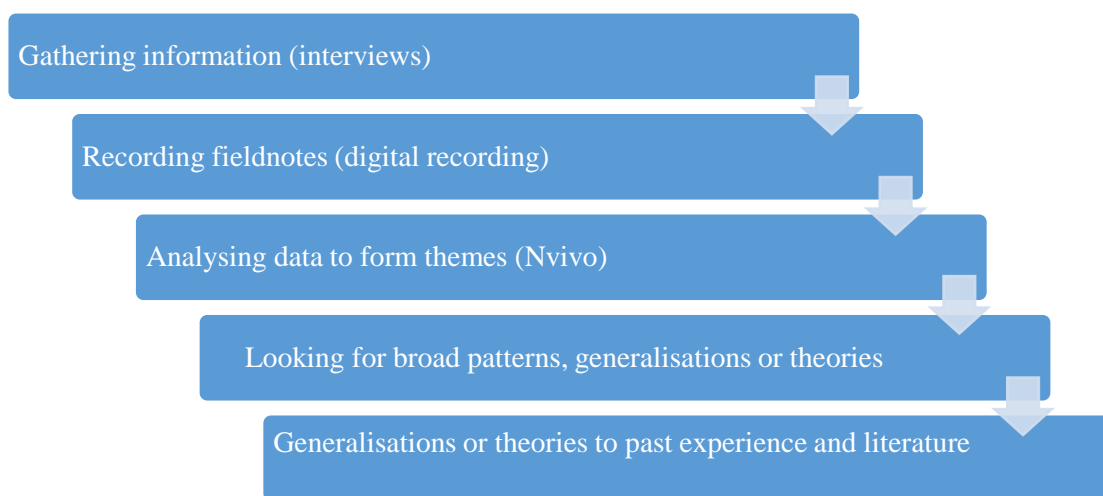


Figure 4-3: The inductive procedures for qualitative study (Creswell, 2003)

This study followed three main systematic processes in order to analyse data. The first stage was that the researcher had to choose the categories of information examined. In the next phase, the researcher examined the connections between the categories. Lastly, the researcher identified the main themes that were associated with other categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1997).

4.6.2 Coding and Grounded Theory Process

Codes are defined as labels, keywords and/or brief summaries of a large extract of data (Bailey, 2018). It is associated with the process of reading a vast amount of raw data to assign descriptive codes, group relevant data, and eliminate unwanted information until the rest of the data is organised in such a way as to be useful for generating analytical insights. However, sometimes coding becomes difficult because the same data are coded multiple times, added and refined until figuring out what it all means in regards to the research questions is completed (Yin, 2003).

Coding is strictly required within qualitative research whether or not the researcher has used grounded theory as a method for analysing data. Furthermore, coding is an important part of grounded theory methods but it does not itself own the coding (Bailey, 2018). There are three main layers of coding that are supported by the grounded theory approach. Glaser (1992) presented the original two layers, which involve dividing the text into concepts and then synthesising it back together in large theoretical categories. Strauss and Corbin (1997) included the third layer of coding in grounded theory which is called “axial coding”. In this stage, the researcher looks to discover the relationships among concepts. These steps were followed by this study and are detailed below.

4.6.2.1 Open Coding

The first step in the grounded theory development process is called open or initial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). It begins with the very first line of the first interview that the researcher coded. Coding in this step goes line-by-line, identifying potentially useful concepts and naming them. Line-by-line coding is a common procedure used to classify data and assign a code to each line of text. This procedure of coding requires more than one code to a sentence.

Next is the process of fragmenting data into conceptual components (Bernard et al., 2016). Simply put, it involves identification, naming, categorising and explaining events found within the data. Coding is an iterative process, which requires the researcher to read, code, reread and code again (Bailey, 2018). These codes can stick closely to the original data, and be named with the exact words in the original data. These codes are called “incidents” that represent the individual elements of information. Once the researcher identifies these incidents from the raw data, he/she can organise these incidents into concepts and categories.

Incidents are the basic layer of coding as they can consist of several words, a sentence, or even a whole paragraph. A collection of related incidents would form a concept, which emerges from a set of descriptive incidents (Glaser, 1992). These concepts are then grouped into categories or sub-categories. Category is “a general term used to represent a variety of ways of grouping data” (Bailey, 2018, p. 164). A category is formed through a classification of concepts that describe participants’ explanations of particular events (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Overall, as the researcher progresses in doing the first level of coding, he/she determines that the data might relate to broader concepts. Hence, coding proceeds to a higher set of codes and represents a higher conceptual level known as “category codes” (Yin, 2016) or “axial coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

4.6.2.2 Axial Coding

Axial coding is the next step of the grounded theory coding process. It involves relating categories to each other. The procedure entails coding individual elements and forming concepts, from which the data is restructured and rebuilt into categories and sub-categories that are intended to reveal relationships between the categories (Hussey & Hussey, 1997).

While coding is in progress, the researcher should notice the similarities and differences of categories and sub-categories in order to be able to put them into larger and more inclusive categories. This involves the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Once the process of coding has been completed for all categories and concepts, a major understanding of the possible relationships should be established, which would indicate the existence of potential and significant research outcomes that go via the grounded theory process, throughout the development of complete theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1999).

Indeed, the identified categories, concepts and the relationships that were established by the coding procedure should be supported by the data, in the next stage, which is called “selective coding”. It is important to do so in order to determine whether the identified phenomenon and relationships are still appropriate and matched with the data.

4.6.2.3 Selective Coding

This is the last stage of the coding process and it is often considered to be the most difficult part while coding. It requires developing stories from the phenomena previously identified. Selective coding is best reached when all the categories have been integrated into a single storyline that considers all data, categories and relationships (Bernard et al., 2016). In the selective coding stage, the analyst has to decide what is relevant for the study and what is not. Hence, not all information should be coded, as only a small portion of the codes assigned and categorised are useful (Yin, 2016).

In order to complete the selective coding, the researcher is required to provide all the “core” categories that were previously identified (as phenomena) during the axial coding and write a few sentences for each “core” category to formulate the stories. The coding in the selective stage is done at a higher level of analysis, which simply allows the analyst to represent theories that are made up of concepts (Yin, 2016). The most important procedure is to move from descriptions to a higher level of abstractions (Bernard et al., 2016). The descriptive concepts, derived from the “core” categories, help in representing the stories that can then be written in the form of results and discussion, which are presented in Chapter Five and Six respectively.

Appendix E provides further details about the coding process employed in this study. These types of coding were applied precisely with the use of NVivo, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, which is discussed in the next section.

4.6.3 Computer- Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

Using computer- assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) can make some of the tasks associated with coding easier. One of the CAQDAS that is commonly used for qualitative research is NVivo11. This software enables the researcher to organise and manage the primary collected data (Renold, 2001) and, even though the data range may be extensive, it allows the researcher to easily identify themes, patterns and categories which are then used to generate a theory (Bringer, Johnton, & Brackenridge, 2006). A brief description of the use of NVivo is presented below.

4.6.3.1 NVivo11

Released in 2008, NVivo11 is a qualitative data-analysis software that has been widely used to assist different methods of data analysis within social science, management and business studies (Jones & Diment, 2010). This program enables the coding and analysis of text, image, audio and video data. In addition, it offers various ways of organising material, either in the form of themes, subjects (participants), or objects (places) (Lakeman, 2008).

The NVivo11 software facilitates working with the analytical process to the same manual process that is accomplished with transcripts. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to have systematic and rigorous analysis and enables the researcher to work through the whole

interview interpreting, summarising and annotating without forgetting sections along the way. It allows the researcher to move swiftly between codes, nodes and written extracts, keeping her/him to the original data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

Researchers are, however, divided regarding the extent to which software functions produce analysis. Some believe that analysis within a software programme is simply achieved by organising the data into hierarchical categories. Others argue that analysis can be enhanced by the ability of the researcher to work well with the chosen discipline (Gilbert, 2002). The researcher attended multiple NVivo11 training sessions in order to ensure her proficiency in operating the software.

4.6.3.2 NVivo11 and Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is the dominant methodology for computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software users (Bourdon, 2002). While some researchers believe that qualitative data analysis software assists them with grounded theory (Bringer, Johnston & Brackenridge, 2006; Peters & Wester, 2007), others adopt a different perspective on this association (Macmillan & Koenig, 2004). Using NVivo11 does not require the researcher to follow a specific structured method in analysis; instead the analysis comes out of a process of coding, conceptualisation, and categorisation (Allan, 2003). Moreover, NVivo11 functions in building theory, and consists of active processes rather than a mechanical function, from which grounded theory will emerge (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). These functions used for coding are discussed next.

4.6.3.3 Coding Procedures on NVivo11

NVivo 11 requires the manual handling of data at different points. Moreover, it requires specific file formats (Jones & Diment, 2010). Simply put, the analysis including the linking of themes, contexts and categories, was actioned by the researcher rather than by the software (Sotiriadou, Brouwers & Le, 2014). Data analysis through NVivo11 is principally subjective which compels a high level of engagement on the user's part during the analysis process. It enables the researcher to read through all the transcriptions, and annotate briefly a summary of what is happening and/or what the participant was doing/ saying in that part of the interview (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

As previously discussed, axial coding requires the researcher to re-read each extract under a particular Node in order to begin to analyse across cases of interviews. During this process, the user needs to interpret, transform and categorise concepts in the data, which leads to demonstrating crucial relationships from which theoretical conclusions are derived (Wickham & Woods, 2005).

Following this, the researcher undertakes selective coding where he/she has to select transcripts in order to form seminal quotes that serve to illuminate the analysis. This can be achieved by using the core theme identified with other themes and it allows more interpretation of much of the data in the phenomenon studied (Sotiriadou et al., 2014). The researcher consequently flagged important incidents by creating memos with seminal quotes and creating a node called “seminal quotes”.

4.7 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this research is to explore as a social phenomenon the motivations of Saudi women entrepreneurs who use social networking technologies for entrepreneurial purposes. The research is underpinned by an inductive approach in order to develop theory from the gathered data and from empirical observation, and in the data collection process, used a qualitative approach in the form of semi-structured interviews.

The qualitative approach enabled a better understanding of how and why Saudi women entrepreneurs use social networking sites for social commerce. This chapter described how a qualitative research method was conducted and enabled the researcher to widely explore, identify and understand this social phenomenon among Saudi women entrepreneurs. It outlined the data collection process that was undertaken, starting with a pilot study with New Zealand women entrepreneurs in order to understand the entrepreneurial process among women, and to identify appropriate interview questions for Saudi women entrepreneurs. In doing this, the researcher was able to investigate technology issues encountered by New Zealand women entrepreneurs that might similarly occur with Saudi women entrepreneurs.

This chapter also outlined procedures used during the main interviews with Saudi women entrepreneurs. It discussed the measures undertaken to embrace trustworthiness in qualitative

research and it outlined the data analysis strategies that were considered in this study. The chapter explained the appropriateness of grounded theory as an approach to develop a theory about the study phenomenon. It also outlined the main systematic set of procedures that were employed, including coding and the use of NVivo11 software. Finally, major ethical issues that occurred while interacting with participants through interviewing were also discussed.

The next chapter will present the findings of this study.

5. Chapter Five: Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings which were derived from the analysed interviews. The first part of this chapter, section 5.2, presents demographic information associated with the participants. The second part of this chapter, section 5.3, highlights the grounded theory results which managed as following; Section 5.4 outlines the different purposes of using social networking technologies for entrepreneurial activities while section 5.5 identifies the motivations of the participants for using social networking technologies. Section 5.6 covers the business advantages identified by the participants in using social networking technologies while section 0 summaries the issues they had encountered.

5.2 Key Entrepreneurs' Profile

The total number of participants in this study was 40 and all of them are Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs (a general summary of the characteristics of the participants is shown in Appendix A). All have operated online businesses at home through social networking technologies, enabling them to sell various types of products and services. Table 5.1 summarises the nature of their business.

Table 5.1: Key entrepreneurs' profile

Business types	Business description	No. of entrepreneurs
Fashion retail	Clothing, bags, shoes, accessories and the like.	10
Food catering	Food items such as cakes, sweets, cookies, and buffets.	10
Creative crafts	Hand crafts, party decorations etc.	7
Cosmetic retail	Makeup, skincare creams or other beauty products.	7
Stationery retail	School products, stories and educational books, toys and the like.	2
Interior design services	Home interior design solutions, furniture, or the like.	2
Multimedia services	Photographing, filter designs or other media services.	2

Approximately three-quarters of the businesses are home-based, being either solo operations or micro-business, with up to three employees. The remaining businesses are home-based but also

have some form of physical retailing, with either rented or owned premises, although they were still primarily small operations.

Almost all participants (36 out of 40) were relatively new to run home-based businesses and had spent less than four years in business. The remaining four participants had spent between 10 and 15 years in business. However, there was a difference in the time spent using social networking technologies for business activities between the two groups. Those with less business experience spent, on average 3.9 years, whereas those who had more business experience spent, on average 3 years. This elaborates those participants who were newer to entrepreneurial activities had adopted social networking technologies in the early stages of their businesses compared to their more experienced counterparts, who adopted social networking technologies at a much later stage.

Figure 5-1 shows the number of years in business and number of years adopting social networking technologies for business. The graph shows that the younger the business, the higher probability of adopting social networking technologies while the reverse holds true.

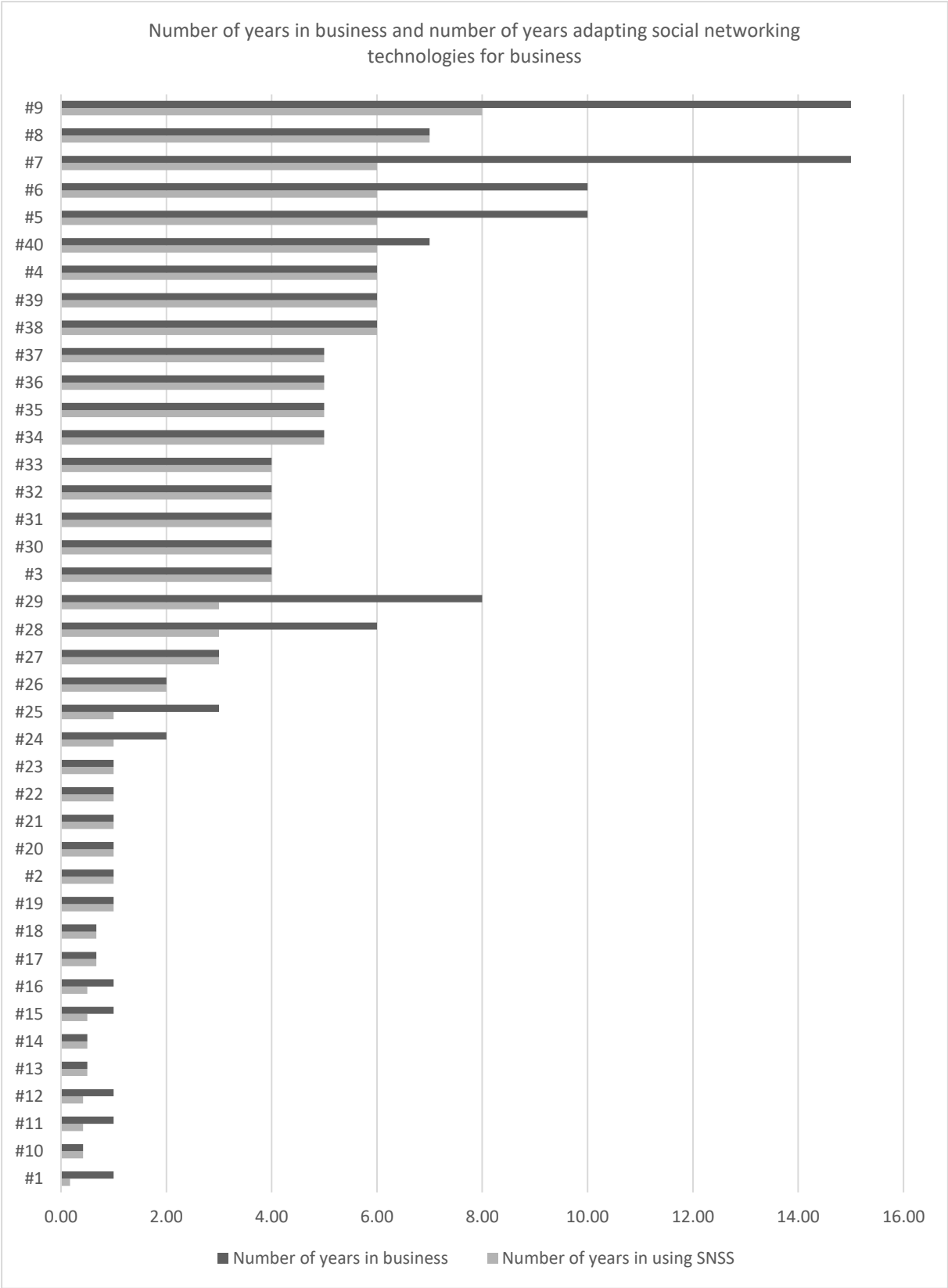


Figure 5-1: Number of years in business and number of years adapting social networking technologies for business

5.2.1 Participants' Age Range and the Use of Social Networking Technologies

Table 5.2: shows the ages of participants. It shows a reasonable distribution of people between the age group of 15 to 54 years old. The average age of participants was 23 and it is clear that all participants were relatively young, 37% are less than 44 years old and none is above 54 years old.

Table 5.2: Age range of participants

		Frequency	Percent
Age Range	15-24 years old	7	17.5
	25-34 years old	15	37.5
	35-44 years old	15	37.5
	45-54 years old	3	7.5
	Total	40	100.0

A cross-tabulation is presented in Table 5.3 to identify how many multiple social networking technologies each of the group have used for their businesses. It reveals that most of the participants were using two or three separate social networking platforms for entrepreneurial activities.

Table 5.3: Respondents' age group and number of social networking technologies used

		Number of Social Networking Technologies Used			Total
		1	2	3	
Age Range	15-24 years old	0	4	3	7
	25-34 years old	1	7	7	15
	35-44 years old	5	6	4	15
	45-54 years old	1	1	1	3

Figure 5-2 synthesises the data from Table 5.2 and Table 5.3. It shows that Instagram is the most commonly used site among participants across the board. Conversely, Facebook is minimally used by participants in the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups and not at all by those in the

15-24 and 45-54 age groups. Both WhatsApp and Snapchat attract significant use by participants across all age groups and Twitter, like Facebook, appears to be minimally used, despite its huge international profile.

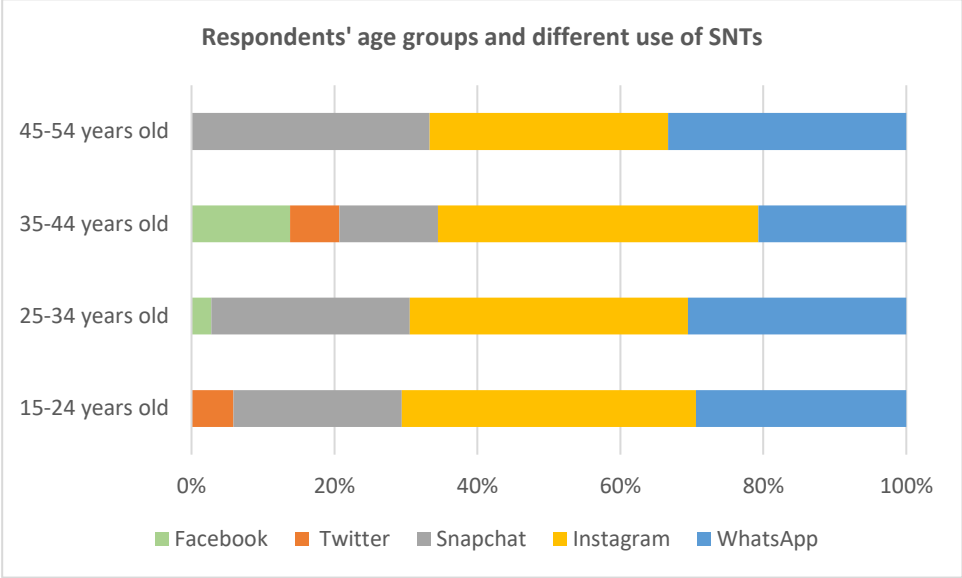


Figure 5-2: Respondents' age groups and different use of Social networking technologies

5.3 Grounded Theory Results

This section presents the interview data based on the grounded theory approach. The systematic process of data analysis within grounded theory involves a standard format comprising three main phases (see Chapter Four, section 4.6.2); **incidents** which consists of information that reflects actions (open coding); **concepts** which are formed via connecting incidents (axial coding), and **categories** which illustrate the story formed by connecting concepts (selective coding). Incidents identified for each theme that coded from the interview data are presented in Table 5.4

Table 5.4: Incidents identified for each theme

Themes	Number of incidents
Use of social networking technologies for business activities	866
Motivations for adopting social networking technologies for business activities	359
Advantages obtained from using social networking technologies for business activities	850

Potential problems occurred while using social networking technologies for business activities	932
Total number of incidents	3,007

The themes emerged and coded into concepts and classified into categories will now be discussed.

5.4 Use of Social Networking Technologies for Business Activities

Table 5.5 takes the first theme from Table 5.4 and classifies it into categories, concepts and incidents.

Table 5.5: Use of social networking technologies for different business activities

Category	No. of incidents	Concept	No. of incidents	Incidents	No. of Sources
Following strategies to maintain integrity of business and attract customers' attention	369	Business brand building strategies	226	Integrating marketing strategy that combines online and offline elements in conducting business.	32
				Spreading electronic word-of-mouth.	30
				Establishing different business accounts on different social networking technologies.	11
				Posting different topics on different social networking technologies.	4
		Advertising and marketing strategies	143	Promote new arrivals and offering discounts.	36
Communicating with customers	368	Communicate with customers regarding details of orders	125	Agreeing on delivery time and place.	9
				Checking with customers to ascertain the order is accurate.	18
				Receiving and confirming orders.	19
		Answer customers' questions	27	Answering customers' inquiries.	17
		Build customer trust	216	Displaying screenshot of customers' messages to approve the quality of the products.	15
				Advising customers about the quality of the products and how to use them.	28
Keeping up with the trends	80	Communicate with agents	23	Helping with remote communication to manage products.	8
				Collaborating with each other to sell products.	5
		Follow popular models for new products	57	Aligning their activities with other entrepreneurs.	8
				Investigating seasonal products from other traders' accounts.	6
Sharing business information	32	Provide personal contact information	21	Displaying contact information on home page.	9
				Send contact information via private messages.	2
				Specifying special numbers for different gender.	3
		Provide product information	11	Easy channel to provide images and detailed information of available products.	7
				Convenient and fast channel to publish product information.	3
Planning for growth and development	17	Create commercial online marketing groups	17	Building own customers' online community.	7
				Provide their own online courses and lessons for customers.	7
Total number of incidents	866				

Table 5.5 shows how Saudi female entrepreneurs use social networking technologies for different business activities. The number of incidents resulting from the entire coding process is 866. The incidents were placed into 10 groups to generate concepts from which five categories emerged. The following sub-sections will discuss these categories in more detail.

5.4.1 Strategies to Maintain Integrity of Business and Attract Customers' Attention

Maintaining the integrity of their business and attracting customers by following strategies is the category that shows the highest number of incidents. Two related concepts are included in this category: business brand building strategies and advertising and marketing strategies.

5.4.1.1 Business Brand Building Strategies

Participants indicated that social networking technologies were useful for building their business brands. They are able to conduct their businesses online as well as offline. Thirty-two interviewees believed that entrepreneurs without physical shop and operate their businesses solely online are less successful as they are not well known and unable to attract many customers. Those interviewees stated that running a physical shop and using social networking technologies were believed to be complementary strategies in attracting more customers as each approach having its own set of advantages.

I think it is important for a female who trades at home to participate in festivals and open business accounts on social networking sites because that will allow her to gain many customers, especially if she started the business recently. (Interviewee no.4).

Nineteen out of the 32 interviewees, specified above, stated that they followed the strategy of integrating offline and online businesses because it enables them to establish a presence and be quickly recognised by potential customers. They assert that social networking technologies were essential vehicles for helping them to establish their presence in the market and increase their visibility in the industry. One interviewee indicated that the strategy of integrating online and offline businesses has helped to increase her customer base in different regions, in meeting them offline and informing them about her online store.

The advantage of participating in exhibitions is that the seller will become more famous and recognised, as customers come and take your business card, which includes your Instagram and Snapchat accounts and your phone number, where they can contact you on WhatsApp. (Interviewee no. 5).

The remaining 13 interviewees suggested that meeting customers face-to-face first helped to increase customer confidence before they decide to buy online. Those interviewees indicated that because customers had already inspected the physical product beforehand, their willingness to purchase online had increased. One interviewee reported having a higher level of sales in her physical store compared to her online store:

In fact, the products offered in bazaars receive more sales than the ones offered on social networking technologies. Customers hesitate to buy from these platforms, because they cannot check it and they do not trust the quality of the cloth and the type of the fabric of the bag as well as its shape. (Interviewee no. 17).

The importance of word of mouth as a strategy to maintain the integrity of their business and to attract customers had been emphasised by three quarter of the interviewees. Specifically, 17 participants mentioned the difference between word-of-mouth in a face-to-face context and electronic word-of-mouth. Those interviewees felt that, relative to other methods such as traditional advertisements, word-of-mouth was the most effective means of growing their customer base because the opinions of fellow consumers or personal contacts were perceived by potential customers to have a higher degree of reliability and trustworthiness.

Two interviewees stated that they initiated word-of-mouth publicity about their products and services by inviting people to their physical stores and talking to them face-to-face. One interviewee noted:

Word-of-mouth communication helped me to promote my business and customers helped me to publish ads for my project and attract more customers. (Interviewee no. 18).

In another example, an interviewee who produces cakes explained that she shared a sample of her products with her mother's guests. Her mother's praise becomes a way of advertising her products:

If my mother has neighbours gathering at her place, I serve some of the cakes and sweets. My mother would praise me and admire my work in front of her neighbours as she tells them that I offer delicious and distinctive type of sweets. (Interviewee no. 21).

Family members and friends of entrepreneurs were important in establishing word-of-mouth publicity for the participants, whether this was done via a traditional means or online. Snowballing was another method mentioned by 13 of the interviewees. That is, family members shared information about the participants' business with their contacts and, in turn, those contacts shared that information with their own contacts. One interviewee described how the use of social networking technologies was central to the formation of her business reputation, built up through word-of-mouth publicity:

Actually, my family, friends, and colleagues had a big role in supporting and publicising my business, as they helped me with distribution a good word-of-mouth regarding my products.... Hence, I got a quite big number of customers and followers on Instagram. (Interviewee no. 3).

Participants noted that their regular customers also facilitated positive word-of-mouth publicity for them using social networking technologies, which required no effort on their part. They suggested that the familiarity of customers with these technologies makes the acquisition of new customers much easier:

When a user tells others about an account on Snapchat [for example], they rush to add it. (Interviewee no. 33).

Eleven participants stated that in some cases entrepreneurs established their business pages on different social networking platforms in order to grow their popularity and user base. They believed that each social networking platform attracts a certain group of users and that they should be active wherever their customers are available. It was interesting to note that some interviewees believed that the number of sales through Facebook were modest compared to platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat, which have overtaken the popularity of Facebook in Saudi Arabia.

Interviewees who had established accounts for their business on different social networking platforms believed that each platform had its own particular advantages. Choosing the right

medium for business depends on the target group to be reached and the objectives to be achieved.

One interviewee felt that WhatsApp, Instagram and Snapchat each had distinct purposes:

I split my work when managing the project to help fit the use of social networking applications. I use Instagram to display images and provide information about the product. At the same time, I have devoted the use of WhatsApp to communicate with customers and chitchat with them about the products, for example, the colour of the dress, the shape, the price, and the size etc. (Interviewee no.32).

Four of the 11 interviewees observed that different social networking technologies had their own attractive features. Snapchat, which enables live videos to be cast, was seen by one interviewee as a superior option to Instagram:

I like using Snapchat for trading more than Instagram. Snapchat offers you different options in the way of displaying products. Through Snapchat I can add filters on images, which plays a big role in attracting customers. Unlike Instagram that carries dead images which does not show the spirit nor the impact on impressing customers. Snapchat enables you to view the products through tangible and alive videos that show the moment. (Interviewee no. 3).

Another six of the 11 interviewees stated that they perceived Instagram to be the most widely used application in Saudi Arabia and therefore, they saw it as the best platform for marketing. According to one interviewee:

I think Instagram was dedicated to the trading industry since it first existed. It was a world for e-commerce as many people have shifted from using Facebook to Instagram. It is possible this is the main reason for the popularity of trading activities on Instagram, because it existed at the time of the advent of electronic commerce in Saudi Arabia. (Interviewee no. 6).

Indeed, application had its advantages and disadvantages and that one was not necessarily better than another. Snapchat and Instagram have different durations in terms of the visibility of posted images; with Snapchat, posts disappear after 24 hours whereas posts remain indefinitely in Instagram, as observed by one interviewee:

I think Snapchat is a suitable tool for advertising. I assume that customers do not get bored with Snapchat advertising because the image lasts only for 24 hours unlike the Instagram. However, this can only be used for short-term advertising. On the other hand, Instagram is more suitable for trading for the long term because it displays the images forever. This is good because the

customer can return to the goods and browse whenever he/she wants. Instagram shortens the time for the seller and the customer in terms of the supply of goods. If the customer asks to see some goods, the seller can direct them to his/her Instagram account. (Interviewee no. 5).

A few entrepreneurs (4 out of 40) indicated that using different social networking technologies helped to optimise their customer base as customers were inclined to follow them on multiple platforms. For example, one interviewee who sells cakes and sweets uses Snapchat to inform her customers that she will be on Instagram to demonstrate how she uses sugar paste to create roses. Her customers on Snapchat who are interested in learning more are thus led to follow her on Instagram. Similarly, another interviewee explained that she advises her Instagram followers to follow her on Snapchat to discover more information:

I put some ads on Instagram that I will visit a particular brand's shops and I will cover some of their products and goods. So, if you want to see these new goods, you must follow me on the Snapchat. (Interviewee no. 35).

5.4.1.2 Strategies for Advertising and Marketing

Seventeen participants emphasised that social networking technologies hold potential success for entrepreneurs if they are carefully integrated them as a marketing strategy tool and nearly all participants felt that their use of social networking technologies had increased as a result. Social networking technology platforms were seen as providing entrepreneurs with their own unique "space or environment." One of the interviewees indicated that these applications offer open and unlimited advertising space. For instance, Instagram enables photos and videos about new and available products to be widely shared. An interviewee who plants flowers said:

I used social networking technologies as a kind of marketing and advertising channel. I launched an account on Instagram and began to promote my products. Sometimes I shoot a video and sometimes I shoot a picture of the plant. (Interviewee no.15).

WhatsApp enables entrepreneurs to widely disperse information about special offers and discounts on their products. One interviewee suggested that the private messages she sends to customer groups in WhatsApp enhances customer engagement because they feel part of a special group. According to her, once she distributes information to her WhatsApp customer groups, she receives a high number of orders.

5.4.2 Communicating with Customers

More than half of the participants (22 out of 40) use social networking technologies to build and maintain a network with other users including friends/relatives and potential customers. These platforms are used to create online communities that generate social and/or professional interactions. The platforms enable people with common interests to be connected and to have a forum to discuss issues related to products and services. Interviewees used these interactive tools to view, engage, and share product information with customers, which enhances customer engagement.

5.4.2.1 Build the Trust of Customers

Approximately three quarters of the participants indicated their awareness of the power of online communities to build customer relationships and trust. Social networking technologies provided platforms for creating sustainable online communities that enabled them to continuously engage with customers and to share advice about products and their methods of use, which helped to build trust among customers. Interviewees mentioned that trust develops when customers believe that the entrepreneurs have their interests at heart when sharing information and advice. Customer perceptions of the entrepreneurs as accessible and trustworthy are crucial. One interviewee involved in fashion retail recounted a time when she alerted a customer to the poor quality of her product. Although she knew that this disclosure would affect her sales, she believed that gaining her customer's trust and loyalty was more important in the long run.

Social networking technologies demonstrate the role of online communities in switching the nature of the content shared on these platforms from controlled content to open approaches. A small number of interviewees felt that their diminished ability to control information about their business would have an impact on customer trust. The peer-to-peer communication enabled by these platforms allow users to review services and products and to influence potential users. Interviewees perceived that these peer reviews would be more influential than the traditional reviews they promoted themselves.

Fifteen of the interviewees felt that the influence of customer reviews was so powerful as to determine the purchasing decisions of potential customers. As a result, some interviewees noted

that they include screenshots of their customer reviews in their websites in order to convince potential customers. According to one interviewee,

When the customer receives it [the product], she communicate [*sic*] with me on WhatsApp in short conversations to thank me and give compliments about the design and the taste of the cake. And here ... I ask permission [to screenshot and provide it] as documentation for my production [in order] to build customers' trust. (Interviewee no. 33).

5.4.2.2 Communicating with Customers Regarding Details of Orders

Nearly all of the participants, 37, indicated that social networking technologies enabled them to receive and confirm customer orders, ascertain the accuracy of these orders, and arrange suitable times and locations for the orders to be received.

Nineteen interviewees noted that they used one platform to display their products and services and asked customers to place their orders on another platform. For instance, one interviewee described how she communicates and confirms customer orders on WhatsApp although the orders are originally placed through Instagram. Another interviewee who is involved in interior design uses WhatsApp to communicate with her customers and receive their input during the process of design and production. From choice of colour to the selection of specific wood grains, her customers can, using WhatsApp, maintain an ongoing dialogue with her about their preferences in order to ensure that the products they order are tailored exactly to their specifications. This level of personalisation and customisation helps to build customer trust.

On the other hand, eighteen out of 37 of the interviewees described the usefulness of WhatsApp in enabling immediate exchanges between themselves and customers to ensure that orders were accurate and that suitable arrangements could be made for their delivery.

5.4.2.3 Answering Customer Enquiries

Just under half of the participants (17 out of 40) said that the nature of social networking technologies, and the communication channels they enable, have led customers to become more demanding and to have higher expectations. A few interviewees felt that they were expected to be available 24/7 and that they would lose customers if their enquiries were not immediately answered. One interviewee involved in catering services reported that she sets aside a specific

time every day just to respond to customer enquiries. Another interviewee, who works in fashion retail, explained that responding to customers was a major priority:

I have to answer customers as soon as possible, and do not let them wait for long. I hate to ignore inquires and if I'm busy I try to find the time to answer my customers. This made me earn a good reputation because I care about my customers and not ignoring them. (Interviewee no. 32).

5.4.3 Keeping Up with the Trends

All participants stated that social networking technologies are not only used by entrepreneurs to engage with customers but offer a means for connecting with vendors, partners, and other parties in the supply chain, enabling collaboration and the sharing of information. This next level of interaction involves, but is not limited to, business networking.

5.4.3.1 Communicate with Businesses

More than a quarter of the interviewees mentioned that they use social networking technologies as the main means of developing entrepreneurial activities. They noted that these platforms enabled parties to connect and to communicate even if they are geographically dispersed. Eight of the interviewees felt that with all of the different available platforms, it was important for entrepreneurs to understand the different ways of utilising these tools to achieve one's marketing goals. For example, some entrepreneurs use social networking technologies for collaboration purposes during product development. An interviewee who operates in fashion retail felt that she could easily collaborate with others as a result of these platforms:

Dealing with them is easy, simple and convenient so you are asking for the design you want while you are sitting at home. This method made it easier for me to communicate with other designers who are not necessarily available at my area, so I can communicate with them through these apps. (Interviewee no. 21).

Five entrepreneurs use these tools to engage with their colleagues and other entrepreneurs in order to help each other, to solve common problems, and to generate new ideas:

We got acquainted with each other and we created a WhatsApp group. It has been four years since we get together and everyone is ready to help the other. They never not spare any effort to provide help and consultation to themselves

or to the others about new designs of cakes and its prices and so on. (Interviewee no. 20)

One interviewee reported that she used social networking technologies to gain feedback from other entrepreneurs about the development of her marketing plan. Through exchanges with other entrepreneurs, she was able to set a realistic target for her sales and a realistic timeframe in which to achieve this target. She also suggested that peer support through these networks was instrumental in helping her to achieve her target. The WhatsApp group in which she participated involved more than 150 members.

5.4.3.2 Following Popular Models for New Products

Eight participants reported using social networking technologies to ensure that they kept abreast of trends and new products. One interviewee said that if she did not regularly visit the profiles of other entrepreneurs, she would miss out on the latest product updates and feel alienated from her competitors. Another interviewee described looking at competitor accounts on Instagram to discover popular products that she offers in her online store.

A few of the interviewees also mentioned using social networking technologies to visit the homepages of celebrities and learn about the seasonal products they use. This enables them to comment on these products, stock similar items in their online stores, and leverage on the star power of the celebrities to generate sales. As one interviewee disclosed:

Through Instagram I investigate the products that celebrities and artists mentioned. It gives me a chance to know about the seasonal products available among merchants and be able to provide the same products to my customers. (Interviewee no. 9)

5.4.4 Sharing Business and Personal Information on Social Networking Technologies

Social networking technologies are more than just popular platforms to communicate with others. More than half of the participants, 24 out of 40, stated that these platforms enable users to create personal information profiles and to generate a following of these profiles, which can contain a range of information, including photos, videos and instant messages.

5.4.4.1 The Provision of Personal Contact Information

Fourteen interviewees reported using social networking technologies to ensure that customers could contact them. They believed that this was the key to generating sales. The way in which those interviewees shared their personal information on these platforms can be divided into three main groups.

The first group, nine of the interviewees, displayed their personal contact information on their own home-page profiles on Instagram. They believed that sharing their business contact information in their personal profiles was a more effective strategy in reaching customers than creating a special business profile on Instagram.

The second group, two interviewees, had concerns about sharing their personal contact information on these platforms, fearing criticism from conservatism. There was a perception that Saudi society does not respect entrepreneurs who display their personal contact information in publicly accessible spaces. These entrepreneurs would send their contact information using the private messaging functions on these platforms. They believed that it was essential, for both the entrepreneur and the customer, to exchange contact information in order to develop mutual trust. One interviewee described using private instant messages on Instagram to share her contact information with her customers before asking them to connect with her on WhatsApp to place an order. She suggested that providing multiple ways of contacting her served to increase her credibility with customers.

The third group, three interviewees, typically provides very basic contact information on their personal profiles, such the name of the store and place of residence. This group were averse to listing their personal contact information on their home-pages or through private messages. Instead they preferred to display their contact information on business cards which lists separate phone numbers for male and female customers. This practice enables them to directly deal with female customers while male customers could be directed to their husbands or other male relatives. In addition to avoiding criticism from their community, these women felt that this practice helped them to avoid the embarrassment of talking to men:

We have put a special phone number for women and another one for men to avoid this problem and exposure to embarrassment. (Interviewee no. 27).

5.4.4.2 The Provision of Product Information

Around a quarter of the interviewees view social networking technologies as mechanisms that allow them to exchange and share important information and to create online communities around their brand and/or products. One interviewee reported using these platforms to alert her customers on the arrival dates of specific products. Many interviewees emphasised the importance of remaining active and ensuring fresh content while using social networking technologies. They also suggested that it was important for entrepreneurs to engage in discussions with their customers about the products before receiving their orders.

5.4.5 Planning for Growth and Development

Fourteen of the entrepreneurs stated that marketing on social networking technologies allows users to connect to one another based on their interests. Thus, entrepreneurs sought to create their own commercial online marketing groups as they plan for business development and growth.

5.4.5.1 Creating Commercial Online Marketing Groups

Seven out of the 14 participants, specified above, recognised that customers like to belong to certain communities. Thus, they sought to build an online community of followers with whom they could engage and maintain an ongoing dialogue. For these entrepreneurs, the communities were an important means of interacting with customers rather than just a marketing channel. One interviewee described creating different WhatsApp groups to ensure that interactions and communication were targeted for the specific interests and needs of each group.

The other half of the participants specified above, used social networking technologies to provide online learning for their customers. One interviewee in food retail described these platforms as a space for posting instructive videos on cooking which also help her to grow her business. A video recording enables her to teach a large audience without needing the equipment and setup of a face-to-face cooking class. Social networking technologies become unique places of opportunity for entrepreneurs beyond generating sales. Overall, there was a belief that as the technology improves, so too will their businesses.

5.4.6 Section Summary

This section outlines various strategies that Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs were using to maintain the integrity of their businesses and to attract new customers. This section identified five categories of social networking technologies usage which include;

- Managing the business,
- Communicating with customers,
- Keeping up with trends,
- Sharing business information, and
- Planning for the growth of the business.

The next section explores the motivations of these women in using social networking technologies for business activities.

5.5 Motivations for Adapting Social Networking Technologies for Business Activities

This section discusses the second theme mentioned in Table 5.4 and outlines its categories, concepts and incidents in Table 5.6

Table 5.6: Motivations for adapting social networking technologies for business

Category	No. of incidents	Concept	No. of incidents	Incidents	No. of Sources		
Need for professional growth	193	Unemployment and limiting working options	92	Need for money/ own income.	24		
				Limited work opportunities.	15		
				Qualified without job/create opportunity themselves.	9		
				Unemployed.	6		
		Unsuitable previous working environment	73	Length of working hours/flexibility.	35	Being supervised by a manager/own boss.	12
						Advantage of previous experience.	5
						Micro-competition	28
		Compete traditional products/ provide innovative and unique products.	2				
Desire for personal development	147	Support from family and friends	71	Family and customer support.	33		
		Personal talent	48	Do something they like.	14		
				Turn it into profitable source.	15		
		Boredom	18	Eliminate free time/ entertainment.	15		
Ambitions	10	Being business manager/ popularity.	7				
Interest in assisting the community	19	Benefit society/ offer services	19	Meet customer demand.	5		
				Change people's habit.	2		
Total number of incidents	359						

Table 5.6 summarises the motivations of adapting social networking technologies for business activities. The total number of incidents is 359 and they were grouped into eight concepts. These concepts were then grouped into three categories which are now discussed; need for professional growth, desire for personal development, and interest in assisting the community.

5.5.1 Need for Professional Growth

All participants used social networking technologies to operate their own businesses, a step brought about by three main factors: unemployment, unsuitable roles and work conditions in the past, and a desire to compete with other entrepreneurs.

5.5.1.1 Unemployment and Limited Work Options

More than half of the interviewees expressed the desire to have their own money which was a primary motivation for starting their own business. A home-based online business enabled them to generate income while juggling with domestic responsibilities. While Saudi women have traditionally not expected to have their own source of income, the emergence of new technologies has also brought about a shift in mindsets and Saudi women now are more concerned about employment and having their own source of income. One interviewee reported that she could not rely on her husband's income as it was insufficient to cover her needs and those of her children. Thus, she decided that running her own business would enable her to be more independent.

Other participants, 15 out of 40, described the limited options available to them when they tried looking for jobs, despite being well educated. Furthermore, nearly a quarter of the interviewees expressed frustration that obtaining high qualifications did not increase their job opportunities. One interviewee felt that work options for Saudi women were highly limited and another felt that the low salaries for female staff precluded Saudi women from joining the workforce. One interviewee suggested that self-employment was a preferable option to remaining unemployed:

One of the reasons that make me start my business was unemployment where all my sisters were employed. (Interviewee no. 2).

5.5.1.2 Unsuitable with the Previous Working Environment

The dramatic rise in the number of home-based online businesses in Saudi Arabia has been linked with several factors. Majority of the interviewees, 35 out of 40 participants, described their previous experiences in the workforce as far from ideal, which motivated them to start their own businesses. Factors included long and inflexible working hours, which took these women away from their family commitments. The flexibility that self-employment offers is highly appealing, as one interviewee disclosed:

The working hours are in my hand, so I do not confine myself to long working hours. I am so relieved to work, I sleep and wake up at the time I want. (Interviewee no. 28).

More than a quarter of the interviewees mentioned that they feel uncomfortable having someone supervising or managing them. Working from home offers them more freedom and autonomy. One interviewee described her anxiety when she was working under the supervision of managers. For her, a home-based work environment enabled her to feel more relaxed. The freedom and flexibility that self-employment allows is a factor that should not be underestimated in the conservative cultural context of Saudi Arabia. Moreover, interviewees suggested that self-employment provided job security, as previous managers in the workforce could be less than sympathetic about their family commitments.

Very few interviewees stated that they want to capitalise on their previous experiences of buying and selling online as a motivation to start their own online businesses. Those interviewees had some form of experience in online trading; either by working in companies or having entrepreneurial family members, and therefore, the prospect of starting their own business did not appear unfeasible. One interviewee, whose business is in fashion retail, suggested that this venture derived from her own personal experiences as a mother. Having become familiar with ordering clothes for her children online, she felt capable of assessing the quality of products, estimating the turnaround time of orders, which gave her the confidence to start her own business. This suggests that experimentation in an online environment is crucial.

5.5.1.3 *Micro-competition*

Half of the respondents indicated that they were motivated to start their own online businesses when they saw others doing it. On the other hand, very few respondents described a spirit of competitiveness as a motivating factor; when they saw what their competitors are selling, they try to offer more innovative products. Interviewees indicated that regularly looking at the profiles of their competitors prevented them from becoming complacent. For example, one interviewee said:

The bags that I make are different from regular bags, as I make it more attractive with different matched colours. These bags are innovative and distinctive products that were presented in beautiful and attractive forms. (Interviewee no. 2).

5.5.2 Desire for Personal Development

All participants motivated to use social networking technologies due to their desire for personal development. Four factors play a role in relation to personal development: the support of family and friends, personal talents and capabilities, boredom, and ambition.

5.5.2.1 *Support from Family and Friends*

A large number of the interviewees, 33 out of 40, assert that social networking platforms helped entrepreneurs to develop and run their businesses through which family and friends contributed significantly. They mentioned about the fact that one very prominent cultural characteristic of Saudi Arabian culture is the strength of family bonds. The families and extended families of Saudi entrepreneurs support each other financially and emotionally. One interviewee described how her sister would take some of her products to school and sell it to her friends.

The above-specified interviewees revealed that family and friends provided them with the technological support they needed to set up their online businesses. One interviewee admitted that her nephew helps her to market her products using social networking technologies. Another interviewee indicated that family members helped her to identify new products to sell which are not locally available:

I always get advice from my brothers and sisters in providing products. They often ask me to order products that are largely required and in the same time not available in our country. (Interviewee no. 4).

5.5.2.2 *Personal Talent*

Personal talent was another significant factor mentioned by 29 of the interviewees in relation to their desire for personal development. Fourteen out of the 29 interviewees discussed their desire to exploit their talent in doing something that they enjoyed. For these interviewees, displaying their talents publicly were more rewarding than financial gains. One interviewee suggested that the compliments she had received from her family and friends led her to develop her hobby into a business:

My relatives and friends encouraged me to exploit this talent in photography and gave me the motivation and confidence to turn my dream into reality. (Interviewee no. 30).

On the other hand, fifteen out of the 29 interviewees articulated their desire to make financial gains from their personal talents. For example, a florist realised that she could generate income from her personal talents, following constant requests by family and friends to arrange flowers for them.

5.5.2.3 *Boredom*

More than a quarter of the interviewees disclosed that boredom was a factor in leading them to start their own business. Those interviewees described the need to fill their time by doing something that they enjoyed. The expectation that women should remain in their homes, even while their children are at school and their husbands are at work, increases the likelihood for boredom to set in and the desire for distraction from the mundane realities of motherhood. Running a home-based online business offers an ideal solution as this can be fitted around family commitments which are expected to take top priority.

5.5.2.4 *Ambitions*

The final factor related to the desire for personal development involves the ambitions of the interviewees. Only seven interviewees mentioned about having high qualifications from reputable universities and this alone proves that they have high ambitions and want to achieve

professionally as having their own job. Therefore, it is not surprising that those interviewees described ambitions relating to owning a job and managing their own business and/or becoming popular and recognised within their community.

5.5.3 Interest in Assisting the Community

5.5.3.1 Benefit the Society/ Offering Services

Only a small number of interviewees, seven out of 40 participants, indicated that an interest in assisting their community motivated them to use social networking technologies in their online businesses. One interviewee in fashion retail started her business because local suppliers were unable to meet consumer desire for internationally designed products. Another interviewee identified a niche market in selling healthy food based on a growing public awareness of the importance of eating well. Because these businesses are based on the existing demands of consumers, the interviewees are confident of their success.

These interviewees revealed a desire to provide a product or service that will benefit the society or community in which they belong. Their first priority, however, is to meet the demands of their target customers and, from there, eventually change people's habits by encouraging them to buy their product and/or services once they become loyal customers. For example, an interviewee involved in stationery retail suggested that her business served to instil a love of reading in Saudi Arabia:

As I told you that the culture of reading in Saudi Arabia is not liked at most, so I wanted to renew this thought and spread awareness of the importance of stories in our society. I wanted people to read and educate our children and encourage them to love reading, as do foreigners, the child acquires a lot more through reading, especially bedtime stories. (Interviewee no. 19).

5.5.4 Section Summary

This section discussed the key motivations of interviewees in using social networking technologies for their home-based online businesses. The mmajority of participants indicated that their foremost motivation for using social networking technologies was to enable business growth. Their desire for personal development is influenced by four factors, including:

- Support of family and friends,

- Personal talents and capabilities,
- Boredom, and
- Ambition.

The following section outlines the advantages identified by the interviewees in their use of social networking technologies for businesses.

5.6 Advantages of Using Social Networking Technology for Business Activities

Table 5.7 takes the third theme from Table 5.4 and classifies it into categories, concepts and incidents.

Table 5.7: The advantages of using social networking technology for business activities

Category	No. of incidents	Concept	No. of incidents	Incidents	No. of Sources	
Useful to use	537	Create a number of opportunities	285	Reach large number of customers from different ages and areas	35	
				Develop the project	31	
				Have job opportunities at home/ e-marketing	30	
				Increase income	28	
				Provide services to the community	17	
				Understand customers' needs	7	
		Advertising Channel	67	Best tool to improve advertisements	22	
					Fast ways of producing advertisements	16
		A good avenue to showcase and learn/obtain new skills	65	Develop and gain new skills	36	
					Gain good reputation	20
					Obtain experience	9
		Saves money	61	Save marketing expenses and market for free	21	
					Save store expenses	15
Commonly used among people-popularity	50	Customers available 24 hours-popular in the society	23			
			We are living the technology era	11		
Control the way of use	9	Avoid working in mixed environment- control type of followers	7			
Easy to use	272	Convenient to use it for marketing	Used along with other social networking technologies	22		
			Convenient to manage responsibilities and do other tasks while working from home	21		
			Easy to reach business goals and objectives while working from home	8		
		Easy to use and manage	80	Easy to manage the project	26	
				Easy to communicate with customers and vendors	19	
Greater range of exposure in analysing and testing the market	41	Provide some form of security before supplying products	Advertise the products prior to offering for sale in order to test the market	17		
			Minimise deception	8		
		Provide means to analyse available products in the market	9	Compare prices	6	
				Compare the quality of the products	3	
Total number of incidents	850					

The total number of incidents in this section is 850 and these incidents were grouped into 10 concepts, from which three main categories emerged.

5.6.1 Useful to Use

All interviewees noted the usefulness of social networking technologies for their businesses. Social networking technologies were useful in terms of creating a number of opportunities, being used as an effective advertising channel, being a good avenue for showcasing, learning and obtaining new skills, enabling them to save and make money, being a tool that is very popular and widely used by many, and lastly, allowing them to control access.

5.6.1.1 Creating a Number of Opportunities

Thirty-five of the interviewees mentioned that social networking platforms have enabled them to reach a large number of customers across different age groups and across the world. One interviewee who operates in the stationery retail field pointed out that she received orders from children as young as ten. Although this usually led to children coming with their parents or drivers to pick up their orders, she expressed concern that children of such a young age were allowed to use handheld devices and to purchase items through social networking technology platforms. Despite these concerns, interviewees frequently noted the capacity of these platforms to reach customers located far away:

Social networking technology enables me to reach customers located in areas far from my region such as Dammam (150km) and Hafr al-Batin (500km).
(Interviewee no. 7).

Three quarters of the interviewees suggested that social networking technologies had helped to develop their business globally. One interviewee involved in fashion retail reported that her customer base was no longer restricted to Saudi customers but expanded to Kuwait, Qatar, and UAE.

Twenty-eight interviewees said that home-based businesses created through social networking technologies can be established quickly, and have high potential for quick growth. Other interviewees, 17 out of 40 participants, viewed their businesses as a means of providing services for their communities. For example, one interviewee observed that Saudi women are very sensitive about buying clothes from a male seller. She said “I have to serve those women who cannot get what they need because of the type of seller”. She perceived social networking technologies as central to her ability to provide a service to women.

A few interviewees said that their continual use of social networking technologies for their entrepreneurial activities enabled them to better understand their customers' needs. For example, an interviewee working in fashion retail felt that Snapchat enabled her to gain insights into the preferences of her customers based on their feedback. When she posts images of products, feedback from customers, such as “this colour is nice” or “that shape is better” enables her to gain a better sense of their tastes and current trends. Another interviewee reported offering special prices or discounts on her products over certain months when she anticipates that sales will be slow. Her special offers help to offset the normal lull in sales. This case illustrates how, social networking technologies enable entrepreneurs to plan their business activities accordingly, based on their greater insights into the preferences and behavioural patterns of their customers.

5.6.1.2 Usefulness as an Advertising Channel

More than half of the interviewees stated that the features of social networking technologies were the most effective forms of advertising their products and services to their target audience. Features on a platform such as seeing the number of ‘likes’ or ‘views’ give the entrepreneurs a sense of the product’s appeal. The ease with which different social networking accounts and emails could be linked made the process of advertising effortless and instantaneous:

It [is] well prepared for trade because of the advantage of your ability to link your accounts to “LinkedIn, Instagram and email. (Interviewee no. 8).

Sixteen interviewees indicated that these platforms enabled them to reach rural customers as being fast ways for advertisements. One interviewee who runs a business in food catering stated that electronic advertisements could expose new products to rural customers who often had limited options because of their geographical isolation:

Usually village people are not used to celebrate different occasions like what city people do. For example, they do not care about celebrating birthday parties, Mother's day, and the wedding anniversary. However, social media opens their eyes to these occasions and they are able to watch these ideas and beautiful designs provided by dealers for this purpose. They began take care about these things and order adequate number of different type of cakes. (Interviewee no. 29).

5.6.1.3 Showcasing and Learning/Obtaining New Skills

Another benefit of using social networking technologies for business activities is that they provide an avenue to learn, adopt and eventually highlight new skills. The majority of the interviewees, 36 out of 40, stated that through these channels, they could build their reputations and showcase their capabilities.

Twenty out of 36 of the interviewees indicated that social networking technologies had improved her abilities to engage with customers. For example, one interviewee explained that previously customer questions would make her nervous and irritated, but the use of social networking platforms have helped her to control her nerves and enhanced her marketing and communication skills. Other, nine interviewees, said that their communication skills, enhanced by their regular use of social networking technologies, elicited positive feedback from customers. Thus, they gain a sense of pride and increased confidence in themselves as those entrepreneurs felt that they were finally doing something worthwhile likewise using social networking technology to manage businesses and which contributed to their community.

5.6.1.4 A Money Saver

Many interviewees, 21 out of 40, saw social networking technologies as a vehicle for saving money. Money that would normally be spent on traditional forms of marketing, such as using mass media channels and travelling to attend bazaars, could now be saved because social networking platforms enabled the entrepreneurs to market their products and services for free. They suggested that online forms of advertising were more effective, indicating a win-win situation in their adoption of social networking technologies.

I use these platforms for ads because they spread quickly with cost free. There is no need to pay the famous social media users to advertise for me. Once I establish an ad on social networking technology, it widely spread around. It goes to my followers and then reaches their followers as well. For example, when my friend see my ads, she will forward it to her parents and friends and they will send it to their families and so on. From this scenario my advertisements will be largely spread from one user to the others without any cost. (Interviewee no. 4).

Fifteen of the interviewees indicated that the costs involved in operating a physical store, such as paying rent, insurance, and utilities, could be saved if the business was run entirely online. In a similar vein, other interviewees suggested that these platforms enabled them to close their

business ventures or switch to a different industry without incurring significant expenses. The demands of customers, which are articulated through social networking technologies, may also drive businesses to evolve. For example, an interviewee from the fashion industry reported that her initial business focused on children's clothing, but consumer demands led her to expand her range to sunglasses, glasses frames, school bags, and shoes. Another interviewee recounted her ability to switch from one field to another without losing much money because minimal costs were involved in her use of social networking platforms:

At first, I offered European children's clothes. Then I moved to sell household electrical machines for the kitchen or vacuum cleaners etc. After that, I moved to sell chemical detergents that are used to remove stains and hard materials. Finally, I trade with bedsheets and make-up. It was an adventure for me to move between multiple types of goods but I did not lose that much money. (Interviewee no. 9).

5.6.1.5 Useful because of Popularity

Another benefit that entrepreneurs receive from using social networking technology for their businesses is the popularity of these applications among users. A great number of the interviewees, 23 out of 40 participants, revealed that social networking technologies are extremely popular nowadays and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For instance, an interviewee from an interior design service said that she took advantage of the popularity of social networking technology and used it for her business. She further indicated that the vast number of available users on these applications persuaded her and other entrepreneurs to use them for advertising and marketing. Another interviewee who operates in cosmetic retail disclosed that she gained advantages from using these platforms in her business because they offer her an opportunity to communicate with her customers at any time of the day, and on any day of the week. She claimed that customers are available on these applications all the time, and she stated that:

I benefited from using social network sites as most people use them and they are available 24 hours on these sites. While some of the users go to sleep, the others wake up to browse these applications. (Interviewee no. 10).

Entrepreneurs believed that through these platforms they would be able to gain more customers and sell their products very quickly because it is common knowledge that their customers tend to browse or inquire about their products or services at their own convenient time.

A quarter of the respondents mentioned that it was useful for them to use social networking technology for their entrepreneurial activities since it is obvious that they are living in an advanced technological era. They stated that many people around the world, even in Saudi Arabia, have smart phones and have created accounts on different social networking applications for many different reasons. Thus, the participants assumed that they have to keep up with this phenomenon and use these platforms for their benefits. For example, some interviewees highlighted that they have to use these applications for business even if they face some difficulties since these social networking platforms have become the most popular phenomenon among people these days. As one interviewee from food catering said:

My use of these sites was 100% true. You know that we are in an era of development and that we are supposed to keep up with this development. (Interviewee no. 21).

5.6.1.6 Useful in Controlling Ways of Communication with Customers

A handful of the interviewees, seven out of 40, referred to their enhanced ability to control the way they communicate with customers as an advantage of using social networking technologies for their businesses. Some interviewees felt that the usual taboo of communicating with men was circumvented if they restricted themselves to text messages only.

It is not a problem communicating with men if there is no voice communication involved. The communication will limit to writing and messaging. When I have a call from unknown number, I do not respond to him and if he wants to talk to me, he should text me through either WhatsApp or SMS. (Interviewee no. 9).

Other interviewees described their struggle to talk to people they do not personally know. Social networking technologies provide them with a means of managing their communication with these people because they can edit the content of their messages. Furthermore, some interviewees felt that these platforms gave them greater control over who their followers were:

I advantage from managing my business through social networking in controlling ... the viewers and followers for my accounts. I used WhatsApp because it enables me to communicate with people and add them from their phone numbers. Here I control the followers as I am sure that all my contact list are women. (Interviewee no.7).

5.6.2 Ease of Use

All interviewees emphasised how social networking technologies were easy to use for marketing and operational purposes. More than half, 22 out of 40, of the participants observed that social networking platforms provided them with a powerful marketing tool and that the information they listed on one account could be replicated in other platform accounts with minimal effort. Moreover, twenty-one of the interviewees suggested that social networking technologies facilitated the operational running of their businesses and that this process was considerably easier than running a physical store. As one interviewee said:

Through my experience, managing the project across social media applications is much easier. My responsibility in managing the actual shop was greater than it is been managed on these applications. (Interviewee no. 25).

It should be noted that, prior to opening their social media accounts for their respective businesses, the foremost concern of these female entrepreneurs, according to them, was whether they could use these technologies without undermining their cultural beliefs. The ease with which social networking technologies can be used for entrepreneurial activities is thus of vital importance to them.

5.6.3 Greater Exposure in Analysing and Testing the Market

More than three quarters of the interviewees suggested that social networking technologies gave them an opportunity to expose themselves to a wider market, and to test the market before committing to the supply of products. Social networking platforms gave them an opportunity to test the market before they committed to opening a physical store.

5.6.3.1 Provides some Forms of Security Before Product Supplying

Seventeen of the interviewees noted that advertising the products or services through social networking technology is beneficial because it gives them some form of security in which they can advertise the products before actually having it in stock or buying it from the suppliers. Following that strategy makes them feel more secure and that they will not lose money or their efforts will not be put to waste. They explained that this strategy of advertising products before purchasing them would assure them that they would have actual buyers who are ready to buy

the products. For example, an interviewee from the cosmetic retail trade claimed that these platforms allow her to advertise her products before stocking them and she is able to avoid any business misadventures such as having products but no customers to purchase them. She said that:

On the other hand, these sites kept them away from this issue by giving them the opportunity to announce the goods before they provided it. Indeed, these apps helped traders to avoid all the trading adventure when it comes to provide the goods. (Interviewee no.9).

Eight out of 40, interviewees commented that exposing their products and services through social networking technologies would benefit them because they are able to minimise deception. This is actually one of the most common problems when selling products online. In fact, one of the interviewees disclosed that she has had personal experience in dealing with customers' deception. She gave an example when a customer would tell her that they will order a cake, and when the seller had finished baking the cake, the potential customer who is supposed to be the buyer will either not reply anymore or will say that they have not ordered this and to cancel it. In that case, the seller feels not only she was wasting too much of her time dealing with unserious buyers, preparing and baking the cake for them but she also has lost the money she spent buying the ingredients to make the cake. Thus, they benefit from the use of social networking technology by posting photos, providing more details of products and services, and getting more information about or from the buyer which enables them to be able to minimise this kind of deception and to make sure that the order is legit. As an interviewee from the food catering industry explained, these platforms help her to minimise deception and confront the buyer if she tells her that she did not order this product and is about to cancel the order. She noted that:

In receiving orders, I rely on ... WhatsApp because it depends on the written text messages and keeps documenting the customer's request. I can refer to it back, if the customer told me that she did not order this request. Thus I shoot picture of our conversation and show it to her as a means to avoid deception. (Interviewee no. 21).

5.6.3.2 Provide a Means for Market Analysis

Only six interviewees indicated that social networking technologies gave them an opportunity to survey their competitors and to reach a more accurate pricing of their goods as a result. One

interviewee described having a shared agreement between herself and her competitors about the pricing of goods so that customers were less able to negotiate for lower prices:

The social media apps have allowed customers to compare prices and production easily. We, the WhatsApp girls group, always try unite our prices or make them close so customers do not complain from our high prices or do not utilize our low prices. (Interviewee no. 20).

Very few interviewees revealed that having lower prices led to quicker sales, but on the flipside, others feared that having lower prices would lead customers to question the quality of their products.

5.6.4 Section Summary

This section highlighted the advantages identified by the interviewees of using social networking technologies for running their home-based online businesses. Social networking technologies were perceived as:

- A vehicle for creating new opportunities,
- An effective advertising channel,
- Showcasing,
- Learning and obtaining new skills,
- Saving and making money, and
- Controlling their customer base.

However, the interviewees also identified a range of challenges encountered in their use of social networking technologies, and these challenges are discussed in the next section.

5.7 Potential Problems of Using Social Networking Technologies for Business Activities

Table 5.8 discusses the fourth theme mentioned in Table 5.4 and classified it into three main categories: technology related problems, potential risks, and cultural problems. The challenges of using social networking technologies for business activities are presented in order of importance (according to the number of respondents who mentioned them).

Table 5.8: Potential problems faced by Saudi women entrepreneurs when using social networking technologies for business

Category	No. of incidents	Concept	No. of incidents	Incidents	No. of Sources
Technology related problems	594	Keeping pace with new developments	102	Development of social networking technologies causes a loss of concentration.	32
				Different social networking technologies used in business.	25
		Absence of direct communication	100	Confusion and mistakes in labelling products.	17
				Invisibility of online communication.	15
				Not being able to see tangible products.	13
		Trust-related issues or concerns	77	Building up trust.	21
				Anonymity.	20
				Dishonesty.	8
		Lack of online trading techniques	66	Need for management and technical skills.	14
				Need for personal skills such as patience.	9
				Need for marketing skills.	9
		Online business-related criminal activities	48	Inappropriate customer behavior.	20
				Fraud and theft.	7
		Buying and selling regulations	48	Absence of laws that protect customers' rights.	16
				Concerns regarding present and future business regulations.	6
				Customers' ability to purchase online.	3
				Customers do not understand commercial laws.	3
		The need for additional resources to manage online presence	33	Making personal contact with overseas or local helpers.	8
				Assigning experts to help them manage their online business.	7
Concerns regarding personal reputation	21	Negative comments affect reputation.	11		
		Competition and price comparison.	6		
Knowledge and technical issues	17	Devices and internet connection issues.	14		
Privacy issues	11	Providing personal contact information which might be made public.	8		
Greater exposure online	247	Concerns around accepting large orders	78	Accepting a large number of orders causes accumulation of goods.	30

		from social networking technologies		Copying the ideas of other businesses.	11
		Risk of criticism	65	Receiving negative comments.	16
				Risk of wasting time.	13
		Lack of clear plan when establishing and managing businesses	52	Responsibilities affecting performance.	14
				Basing the business on luck.	12
				Partnering with another person.	8
		Safety risks	23	Meeting strangers at home.	12
				Disclosing address or house location.	8
		Technical related risks	23	Hacker and/or spy.	10
		Economic risk	6	Changes of economy level.	4
Culture	162	Limitations in having any business dealings with men on social networking technology platforms	81	Limitations set personally.	21
				Society's strong opinion against women communicating with men through social networking technologies.	14
				Limitations set by or involving the family.	5
				Cultural point of view regarding the dominance of husband over wife.	8
		Gender-biased cultural perception when communicating with men	52	Adept use of social networking technologies.	14
				Request the respect of followers.	9
				Only text messaging for communication.	23
Total number of incidents	932				

Table 5.8 shows the range of problems encountered by Saudi female entrepreneurs when using social networking technologies for business. The number of incidents reported from the entire coding process in this section is 932. The largest number of incidents (523) related to technology problems while the smallest number of incidents (133) related to cultural problems.

5.7.1 Technology Related Problems

The use of social networking technology has caused Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs many issues related to business management through these platforms. Some of these issues are related to keeping pace with new developments, lacking to direct face-to-face communication, and having trust-related issues. Some of these issues are due to: personal circumstances and issues

of seller/trader, poor online trading techniques, online business-related crime activities, issues with buying and selling rules and regulations, the need for additional resources to manage online presence, concerns regarding personal reputation, knowledge and technical related-issues, and privacy issues.

5.7.1.1 Keeping Pace with New Developments

Majority of the interviewees, 32 out of 40, pointed out that the rapid development of social networking platforms can be a challenge in terms of using them appropriately for their businesses. The wide array of platform choices made it difficult to determine which ones were best suited for their business purposes. The effort involved in keeping up to date with the latest developments could be a distraction from running their business but at the same time, interviewees felt that they needed to use the platforms that were most popular with their customers. For example, one interviewee shifted to Snapchat after noticing a decline in the number of sales through Instagram. Another interviewee recounted a similar experience:

Problems related to the awareness of using social networking sites for trading are the most topical subject. From time to time, there are new programs appear which influence people to use them immediately and leave the old program. For example, I have a page on Facebook for trading, but I receive few responses compared to Instagram. Perhaps it is because more people left Facebook and went to Instagram. However, now most people have left Instagram and started to use Snapchat. I have asked a customer to view my ads on Instagram, but she told me that she does not have Instagram any more as she has deleted it since the emergence of the Snapchat. (Interviewee no. 4).

Those interviewees, specified above, felt that they could not afford to spend the time to learn the new features of existing platforms or shift to platforms with which they were unfamiliar. However, as one interviewee observed, entrepreneurs could also not afford to ignore new technological developments and changing trends. She described her refusal to open a business account with Snapchat because it would have meant spending a lot of time learning how to use it. However, she admitted that her lack of a Snapchat account subsequently placed her at a disadvantage as her competitors were using it and it was highly popular in Saudi Arabia.

More than half of the interviewees contended that the development of new social networking technology platforms have made it difficult for them to judge whether existing platforms are still appropriate for their business purposes. One interviewee felt that, rather than trying to keep

up with all the different platforms, it was best to focus on just one or two. Certainly, there was a perception that not every platform lent itself to entrepreneurial activities.

I did not use Twitter or Facebook for the purpose of trading because I do not like them, I feel they are more suitable for politics and formal use but not for trading and commercial. (Interviewee no. 3).

Of course, the danger of remaining bound only to the platforms with which one is familiar is that one's marketing strategies can become stale and fail to attract new customers.

5.7.1.2 Absence of Direct Communication

The absence of direct communication was another issue that all interviewees found challenging in their use of social networking technologies. Seventeen interviewees felt that the lack of verbal communication with customers and vendors could cause issues, including mislabelling of products or having inaccurate orders. For example, one interviewee described the importance of reviewing her WhatsApp messages in order to track down individual customer orders. She felt that this practice, while proving time consuming and requiring some effort, reduced the possibility of delivering the wrong order to the wrong customer. Another interviewee stated that customers could also provide the wrong information through social networking technologies, leading orders to go astray:

Some customers send the wrong home location or there are some customers who do not know how to send their home address or describe their location. So you get some of the fears of loss for delivering specific orders to the wrong house and handed over to the wrong person. (Interviewee no. 1).

Nearly three quarter of the interviewees felt that online communication was more difficult than face-to-face communication. One interviewee who provides interior design services suggested that the lack of direct communication with customers makes her job difficult as it was challenging to pinpoint what her customers wanted in their designs. Occasionally, interviewees resorted to arranging face-to-face contact in order to make the sale:

So the only way is to send them to Instagram account to view the photos. After they see the pictures and decide what they want, they ask to see it on reality. So I allow them to come to my home for that purpose because they want to see something tangible not from the digital. (Interviewee no. 4).

5.7.1.3 Trust-related Issues or Concerns

Gaining the trust of customers was another issue identified with the use of social networking technologies. A number of interviewees, 21 out of 40, said that the lack of an immediate, face-to-face exchange of payment for product could cause anxieties for both the entrepreneur and the customer, anxieties related to a lack of trust. This resulted to customer hesitant to purchase online because the entrepreneur may take the payment without sending the product. On the other hand, the entrepreneur fears that if she sends the product to the customer first, she may not receive payment for it. Some of the interviewees, specified above, described strategies, such as the immediate dispatch of products following received payments, for building customer trust.

Anonymity was another issue discussed by half of the interviewees. Because social networking platforms provide an opportunity to create fake identities, issues of trust arise on the part of both the customer and the entrepreneur. One interviewee noted that customers who have been previously scammed online by paying for goods that they never received were less inclined to purchase online again. Another interviewee stated that since entrepreneurs are not be able to fully ascertain the identity of their customer, they are at risk of supplying goods for which no payment is received. Alternatively, one interviewee felt that it was unnecessary to ascertain the identities of their customers because the interaction was purely a financial transaction.

5.7.1.4 Lack of Online Trading Techniques

Another challenge of doing businesses through social networking technologies as mentioned by 30 of the Saudi female entrepreneurs was the lack of having special online trading techniques. Specifically, fourteen interviewees admitted about their lack of marketing experience and technical skills, which at some point prevent them from keeping their businesses afloat.

Less than a quarter of the interviewees reported that they were self-taught in their use of social networking technology platforms. Aware that mastery of these platforms could not be achieved overnight, interviewees described having to learn through trial and error.

Patience was another challenge identified by nine interviewees, in terms of the length of time it took to win the trust of customers and to receive orders. One interviewee noted:

At the beginning of the project, I felt there was no profit. There are no customers at all. There will always be losses. After a while, the situation has changed and it improved to better results as I began to sell products. (Interviewee no. 9).

The remote nature of their businesses required extra effort to explain products to customers, respond to enquiries, and gain trust.

5.7.1.5 Online Business-related Criminal Activities

In total, twenty-seven out of 40 interviewees stated that online business-related criminal activities were a problem when using social networking technology. Activities included inappropriate customer behaviour, fraud, deception and theft.

The most common types of inappropriate customer behaviour mentioned were bullying and harassment. Half of the interviewees stated that many people engage in this behaviour to demean the entrepreneur as a person and as a business owner. One interviewee stated that she faced problems with holding products for existing customers. This is because these customers know her and they want her to hold the product for a period of time until they are able to pay for it. She explains that her selling policy does not allow this and apologies to the customer. Another interviewee involved in the retail fashion trade also faced this problem when a customer did not collect an item. Those interviewees believed that those people were sent by their competitors to disrupt their business.

The interviewees specified above felt they were harassed by males because they were females. They indicated that they had encountered harassment from men on their social networking technology accounts. They stated that some men posted comments saying that, “we must only need to work as entrepreneurs because our husbands do not give us enough money”. The interviewees claimed that these comments were motivated by jealousy. Their response is to delete the comments and sometimes to block the offenders. An interviewee who sells cosmetics gave another example saying that:

I've been getting some annoyances from my male followers. The simplest and best solution for me was to close my account and not make it available to the public. I became more comfortable. Because some boys when they know that you are a girl, they begin to reflect and write things that are inappropriate. (Interviewee no. 28).

One interviewee however, mentioned that some of the demeaning comments came from her own relatives. Her relatives did not support her idea of starting a business, and some even purchased products from her competitors instead.

In terms of the problems caused by fraud, deception and theft, many of the examples given by seven interviewees related to orders placed, but the goods not being picked up and paid for. Other interviewees had not experienced these problems, but feared that they could occur if they were not careful.

5.7.1.6 Buying and Selling Regulations

According to sixteen of the interviewees, there are some rules and regulations related to trading that pose problems for using social networking technology for business. The most common problem raised was the assumption that there are no laws to protect customers' rights. They are concerned about this because interviewees are also customers as they buy supplies. Their concern was about the ability of some sellers to impose or set their own prices as well as terms and conditions through their social networking technology accounts. They believed it is unfair for each entrepreneur to set their own prices and make them higher than usual. For example, an interviewee indicated that some entrepreneurs deceive their customers and when a customer complains about their prices, they tell them to find other sellers who can sell them products at lower prices. Furthermore, those interviewees believed that customers' rights are being overridden because in some instances, customers complain about certain products or services, but nothing actually happens to rectify the situation. An interviewee cited an example of being cheated by an entrepreneur:

There was a woman who offered some kind of products and told the customers that if they want to order they have to transfer the amount of money to her bank account. Indeed, she was not honest and there are many of customers, including me, transferred the money to her but did not receive any products. In this case, we could not file a complaint against her because, those customers were fools in trusting her and had no other way than defaming her on Instagram to warn others to not fall into this trouble. (Interviewee no. 9).

Another problem faced by the interviewees is the lack of copyright law. Two interviewees, one a florist and the other one a cake maker, reported that competitors downloaded their product photos and used them as their own. They stated that this is not just a copyright issue but also a

matter of misleading customers. However, they were not able to do anything about it because they did not know where to lodge a claim and even if they did, nothing would be done to punish the offenders.

A few number of interviewees, 6 out of 40, expressed concern about future regulations in relation to entrepreneurial activities undertaken through social networking technologies. They are not sure about how these regulations will affect their online businesses. New regulations could introduce GST or taxes for online sales or licensing requirements for businesses using social networking technology platforms. They believed that, eventually these measures will be introduced. Potential problems are that regulations could be complex or expensive. An interviewee from the food catering industry shared her story of trying to obtain a permit to launch her online business. She had to apply online for a license and then obtain a number for an electronic trading record. After completing the online processes, she had to visit the Health Ministry centre to get a health card. Next, the Ministry of Labour came to her home and advised that she needed to have an emergency exit built. Thus, her application to register her electronic business failed.

Very few interviewees emphasised a concern related to trading rules and regulations when doing business via social networking technologies, in that customers can purchase anywhere online including directly from suppliers or overseas.

Three of the interviewees mentioned that customers who do not understand commercial law is another potential problem related to trading rules and regulations for doing business via social networking technology. Some clients argue that such rules and regulations cannot be applied to online trading. For example, one interviewee told of a client who claimed that she had a problem with the item she bought and wanted to return it outside the one-month replacement policy. The customer refused to accept the replacement policy, and said that the replacement period of one month after the date of purchase should not apply to online business.

An interviewee who offered multiple technological services with Snapchat design gave another example. She cited that some customers contact her and ask for a new design or change something with the current design. She said that they fail to understand the rules set by Snapchat and did not realise that if she made the changes, a new fee would be imposed to the seller:

I encounter with the customers is the request to modify the time and location for Snapchat design. Even though I assure the customer to check on the design before uploading it on the Snapchat because it is a fixed design and it does not allow me to modify it later. But after a while my customer returns and asks for an adjustment on the design, time and location stated there. They do not know that if I upgrade the design and modify it, the Snapchat management will ask me to pay a new fee for the design because it is considered a new design. (Interviewee no. 38)

Entrepreneurs operating through social networking platforms emphasised that their reputations, which are influenced by customers' comments and feedback, can be at risk because of new rules and policies.

5.7.1.7 The Need for Additional Resources to Manage Online Presence

A need for additional resources to manage online trading is one of the potential problems of using social networking technologies for entrepreneurial activities. Fifteen interviewees may have a tendency to rely on contractors to help them manage and maintain an online presence. Moreover, they may need to have personal contact with overseas and/or local vendors to help them source their supplies in local or overseas markets.

Less than a quarter of the interviewees have problems with managing their business on social networking platforms. They believe they need experts who can assist them. For example, a participant from the food catering sector mentioned that she has difficulties in calculating product costs and profit. She engaged an accountant to help. This interviewee was amazed by the accountant's expertise and she can now set appropriate prices for each product. In addition, some interviewees find difficulty delivering their products and needed to use delivery companies. As one interviewee stated:

We had to assign a man in order to be responsible for the delivery of orders and handling needed ingredients for our dishes. Here is the need for men to finish women's work and all that is because of the laws which imposed women not to drive. (Interviewee no. 4).

Seven of the interviewees had to use several online or social networking technology experts to place paid online advertisements to reach a targeted audience. An interviewee noted that she requires the assistance of skilled photographers who can take photos that highlight the beauty of her products. Even though some of the interviewees are highly educated, their level of

knowledge may be limited in some areas, or, their gender limits their ability (in Saudi society) to perform some roles. One interviewee stated:

We also need men to receiving our shipments from the shipping offices because some post offices do not allow women to receive the shipment as she is not official recipients of shipments. Honestly, it is out of our traditional culture that women go to a place where is full of men such as veg market, shipping offices etc. It is certainly that the presence of a woman will draw the attention of others and presents them to problems in terms of harassment and criticism. (Interviewee no. 3).

Those interviewees pointed out that they know where their strengths are, and have an open mind to admit that they need help on some matters, and the help may need to come from the male population, as shown in the above quote.

5.7.1.8 Concerns Regarding Personal Reputation

Nearly half of the interviewees were concerned how negative feedback and comments they receive regarding their services or products on their social networking technology accounts affects their business and personal reputations. For example, an interviewee from the food catering industry explained how reviews and comments have affected her reputation and caused a decline in her business.

One of the problems that comes through these platforms is the negative feedback from people, which undermines the reputation of the business. Sometimes I get complaints from customers about the food they dislike as some of them immediately go to my Instagram account and start complaining about the product and give nasty words. She said that the food is not really well prepared, it does not taste delicious, and it causes her a food poisoning. This has affected the reputation of my business badly as many of my followers have withdrawn from following up and the level of orders have decreased very much. It also cause a lack of confidence for some customers who are about to replace orders. (Interviewee no. 37).

A quarter of the interviewees stated that unfavourable comments and feedback will put a business in a bad light. They will negatively impact the reputation of the enterprise, and if not resolved appropriately, may even cause the closure of the business. However, for these Saudi Arabian women entrepreneurs, the impact does not end there. These interviewees said that negative comments impact how they are viewed as a person and as a family member. Therefore, they are wary of potential damage to their personal and family reputation. As they needed to

seek approval and support of their husbands and other family members before they could start their business, it is natural for them to be very cautious not to taint their husbands' and families' reputations because of their business's reputation.

On the other hand, six interviewees mentioned that doing business on social networking platforms brings competition and price comparison between them and other entrepreneurs, and this affects their business reputation. These interviewees stated that social networking technology helped to create competition but they believed that these platforms are becoming a risk to use for business because they provide users the opportunity to compare prices, and that might impact upon the success of the business. For example, an interviewee from the cosmetic retail trade reported that she, her sister and relatives sell similar products but their prices vary. She mentioned that because they use social networking technology for promoting products, people can compare prices and that causes problems. She and her sister agree on the price of the product, however, her relatives reduce their prices and attract customers. One interviewee stated that some customers use her social networking sites to post comments saying that they found the same product (and mention the name of the business) offered at a lower price or a better quality. She indicated that this would not only give her business a bad reputation, but at the same time it would promote the competitors of her business. This interviewee further explained that sometimes the competitors post their comments on her social networking site and promote their own products and services. She admitted that this situation makes her angry which prompts her to delete all comments that contain advertisements for her competitors. It may be unethical for competitors to indulge in such behaviour but for others it is just a marketing strategy that allows them to reach more customers.

5.7.1.9 Knowledge and Technical Issues

More than quarter of the interviewees mentioned their concerns regarding technical capabilities and connection issues when doing business using social networking technologies. They noted that some of the knowledge and technical issues can be either about their level of knowledge and experience in using these platforms or Internet capability.

Those interviewees, specified above, pointed out their concern on their level of understanding on the proper usage of the various social networking platforms to benefit their business. For example, some interviewees mentioned that they keep forgetting their pin codes or passwords

and they lose their accounts. Another example mentioned by one interviewee is related to her inability to use Google maps to provide her location to a customer on WhatsApp. Another interviewee cited that sometimes she finds it hard to get the buyer's name on WhatsApp. However, all these issues are seller-controlled, which means that the sellers themselves may be able to find solutions for each problem.

Internet-related capability is a different matter as it is outside the seller's control. A few interviewees mentioned that Internet connection speeds in some areas of Saudi Arabia is still a big problem. As one interviewee highlighted:

I have another problem related to our Internet speed. It is very slow in our country. When I want to use Instagram uploading images of my products, the process is completed very slowly. (Interviewee no. 34).

5.7.1.10 Privacy Issues

The least mentioned issue, but nonetheless a serious one, relates to privacy. Only eight interviewees were wary of providing their personal information online. They know that they are exposing themselves to strangers, yet, they if they put limitations on who can view them and their businesses they limit their ability to reach potential clients, and ultimately limit their income. As one interviewee explained:

There are many problems we face while using social networking sites for trading and the most important is privacy. It is associated to the personal issues as traders need to provide their personal information to the customers on these sites including the contact number, the name and the place where you are located. All these are sensitive information needs to be protected. You will say that I can set my privacy button to make it only available for friends. But that will affect my trading purposes as my account will be closed and not open for the public, which influence our followers and the number of customers. (Interviewee no.6).

Some of the interviewees have initiated some precautionary measures such as locking their accounts. Thus, a potential client must request access and the entrepreneur has the option to accept him/her as a follower.

The methods employed by some interviewees reflect the way they want to uphold their cultural values. By protecting their privacy, they are not only able to protect their identity, but are also able to avoid direct communication with potential male clients.

5.7.2 Greater Exposure of Online Business Attracts Risks

The second most mentioned issue for Saudi female entrepreneurs is the risks associated with online business conducted through social networking platforms. The most common risks mentioned were; risks associated with accepting orders, risk of criticism, lack of clear plans when establishing and managing businesses, safety risks, technical-related risks, and economic risks.

5.7.2.1 Concerns around Accepting Large Orders from Social Networking Technologies

Most of the interviewees, 30 out of 40 participants, stated that accepting large orders through social networking platforms is a serious risk. Many had experiences with customers who ordered a large quantity of products but did not come to collect them, or refused to accept a delivery.

Another risk is that entrepreneurs' use of social networking technologies for their business gives competitors a chance to copy their business ideas. Eleven interviewees realised that advertising and showing their products as well as their services can lead to their business being imitated. The fear of having someone steal and imitate their business idea encouraged some of the entrepreneurs to inform their followers that they are not allowed to transfer or otherwise copy the pictures from their accounts because they are the copyright of that entrepreneur. Because they would not allow other businesses to arrogate to themselves their creativity in production and claim it for themselves, they ask that their followers who would like to copy any picture from their account to ask their permission in advance. They explained that if they allow anyone to take pictures from their accounts then the probability of copying and imitating the business idea will be very real. For example, an interviewee from a stationery business indicated that when she started her business some time ago, there were very few online businesses operating in her area, but now the number of these accounts has sharply increased. She continued by saying that there are competitors who try to imitate her work.

Another interviewee from the food catering industry said that because of her fear of having her business ideas stolen she stopped using these platforms and limited her use of social networking technology, basing her advertising on just word of mouth. However, her sister alleviated her concern and advised her to advertise again on these platforms:

Using social networking technology for showing my ways of presenting dishes was a serious risk. Since I started displaying ads on Instagram and WhatsApp, there is a high risk of being distorted and imitated. Therefore, I stopped using these platforms for advertising and depended only on 'word of mouth' but my sister gave me a confidence and made me return back to use these platforms for advertising. She told me that even if you were imitated, they would not be able to control it on the same taste or shape like you do. (Interviewee no. 4).

5.7.2.2 Risk of Criticism

A number of interviewees, 16 out of 40 participants, pointed out that one of the risks they face when using social networking technology for their business is criticism for their use of such platforms. They stated that some of the negative comments are direct attacks on them personally, and not about their products or business. The most common sources of such criticism are family members and friends who do not approve of their having a business or those who are jealous of their ability to start and manage a business. One interviewee, who stated that negative comments came from jealous followers, indicated that these comments affect her ability to manage the business. Some interviewees mentioned that they would rather accept followers who are strangers to them. As one said:

The first problems you will encounter from using these platforms for business is criticism from relatives. Because they are jealousy and envy towards a successful or productive human being. ...The use of these applications as an easy way to reach their goal which is to sabotage you, and start to broadcast rumours about you and negative responses frustrating to your achievements. They think that this entrepreneur has arrived, succeeded and that she has been dazzled only by these platforms. They do not look at the real fatigue and effort this entrepreneur spent in order to succeed in her business. (Interviewee no. 37).

Those interviewees, specified above, received negative feedback solely about their products or about their way they posted details of the products. One interviewee explained how these negative comments influenced her determination negatively to continue her business using social networking sites. Another interviewee complained about the criticism received from some followers:

When I take pictures, especially clothes, I get scores of sharp criticisms and questions about the resolution of my pictures' colours. (Interviewee no. 12).

Thirteen interviewees commented that reading and responding to customers' criticisms was unproductive and time consuming. As one interviewee stated:

I feel it is a waste of the seller's time and energy. Thus, when I advertise for a product, I announce customers that I will only communicate with the person who really need it and I will not waste my time answering unnecessary questions. (Interviewee no. 3).

However, few of the interviewees, specified above, admitted that they sometimes spend a lot of time and energy responding publicly to negative comments in the hope that readers will understand the situation and therefore minimise any unfavourable impact on the business.

5.7.2.3 Lack of a Clear Plan when Establishing and Managing Businesses

Three quarter of the interviewees expressed the idea that having no or little clear plan for establishing home-based online business on social networking technology is a serious risk that needs to be avoided.

Fourteen interviewees faced the problem of balancing their work as a business owner and their role as a mother and housewife. The majority of these interviewees believed that they need to make sure that their husband, children and their home has been taken care of before they can work as the business owner/manager.

However, juggling between such responsibilities naturally affects business performance. For example, one interviewee admitted that sometimes she has to decline an order because the delivery time was when her husband was home. Another interviewee disclosed that she could only work on the business when her children were in school, or late at night while they were sleeping. Some entrepreneurs find it very hard to allocate time for their work:

I could barely able to allocate time, about a quarter of an hour, to list the requests and divide money between cost and profit. The kids are shouting at the door of the closed room and crying as they call me to open the door for them. I am trying to finish my work quickly and get out to them. (Interviewee no. 34).

The above interviewee has developed an efficient strategy to manage both her home and business. However, some of the participants mentioned that they are still struggling and are continuously trying to find ways to manage their family time and juggle their business responsibilities

Twelve respondents disclosed that when they started their business and decided to use various social networking technology platforms, they really had no clear plan as to how to do it or what revenue they could expect. They explained that they just relied on their hunches and hoped for good luck in running and managing their businesses. This is perhaps not unexpected, since it is part of Saudi Arabian culture, which women do not have to plan how to live their lives, as they can rely on their families or their husbands. In addition, some interviewees highlighted that they put their faith and belief in God. They explained that if it is God's will that their business will gain income, then it will happen, but if it is not God's will, then it will not happen and they will just need to find another business that will succeed. In fact, an interviewee mentioned that she started the business because of her faith and belief in God, as if it succeeded then she will continue, but if it does not, she will just close it. As she said:

I launched the business without doing any feasibility plan for it and did not even think about the problems or difficulties that will occur. I felt that I have nothing to do with profits, it is all come when God have it for you, in a specified place and date. (Women do not rely on planning but trust and believe that the livelihood and management all come from God). (Interviewee no. 14).

There are two factors here: cultural upbringing and the ease of starting a business through social networking technology platforms, and closing it if necessary.

The least important factor associated with a lack of clear planning according to the interviewees, is collaborating with a suitable person or party, that were raised by eight interviewees. Such collaborating can be with a family member, a friend or someone who has experience managing a business. There is a foreseen risk in this because of other interconnected factors. For example, one interviewee, a cake maker, had been offered a partnership in some shops. However, she declined because she was aware that she would not be able to commit the time required. She also declined offers from restaurants because when she calculated the potential income, it would not cover the production costs and time involved. Another interviewee was offered a partnership in some salons. She declined such offers because the rate she would receive was minimal and she felt that the salons would only use her name and take credit for her skills.

The interviewees, specified above, feel that it is still better to start, manage and sell their own products or services through social networking technologies alone than facing the risk of being

in partnership with another party. They believe that collaborating would increase the risk of not making money and lead to them not being recognised for their own skills and capabilities.

5.7.2.4 Safety Risks

Half of the interviewees mentioned safety risks associated with the exposure through online businesses activities. The safety issues are all related to divulging the entrepreneur's home address to their customers. Revealing the address may occur by meeting the customers at the entrepreneur's home through picking up an order or it may happen by simply disclosing the address through social networking technologies for the purpose of getting customers' attention and/or trust. Twelve interviewees find it a serious risk to meet customers at their house. Thus, they have set specific conditions to deal with these situations. One interviewee noted that she met customers at her house only if her husband or one of her brothers was available at the time. Moreover, some of these interviewees set the condition of meeting customers at their house only if the recipient is a female, because they would feel worried if the customer was a man.

Few interviewees, eight out of 40, are able to find ways to efficiently handle customers who want to pick up items from the seller's home, but some women entrepreneurs felt uncomfortable with it, especially those who have husbands who are also working and are not at home most of the time. This is the very reason that some of these women mentioned this as a potential risk because they know all too well how risky it is to divulge their home addresses to strangers, and at some point they will have to choose whether to decline the order to avoid giving out their home address.

In some cases, entrepreneurs contract a delivery service to take the items to their customers, or meet in a common and convenient place for to delivery their products. An interviewee said:

I do not want to cause problems at home meeting strangers. If the customer insists that she comes to pick up the request herself, we agree to meet at a place near the house, but I do not meet her at home. I tell her that you do not come to this place until you receive a call from me. To assure her that I am now in the place which we agree on previously in order to deliver the goods. I do these things to avoid problems and collisions that can happen between me and my family. (Interviewee no. 28).

5.7.2.5 Technical Related Risks

A quarter of the participants mentioned the risk of hackers and spyware to their business. Five of the interviewees described how their social networking technology platform was hacked and they lost all their files. They could not log on to her account as the hacker has changed the password. They further emphasised that the risk of hacking is not necessarily limited to one platform. Those interviewees were able to retrieve their social networking technology accounts after they had been hacked. One of the techniques to reduce the risk is to link social networking technology accounts to each other. An interviewee explained that she was able to get her Instagram account back after it has been hacked:

The thing helped me to recover my account, is that I have already linked Instagram account to Facebook. If you do not do, it is difficult to recover it and it is most likely to lose all images and files that you have already uploaded to your account. (Interviewee no. 21).

Some of the interviewees, specified above, were critical of the lack of control of Internet transactions. For example, an interviewee complained that since there is no official governmental entity to punish or stop hackers, then entrepreneurs must address this problem themselves.

Five interviewees mentioned the risk of spying. Three of the specified interviewees explained that these platforms make it easier for their competitors and their jealous relatives to track their achievements and sales. The other two interviewees highlighted that it is risky to promote their products through these platforms. They explained that there are some types of religious books that are not allowed to be sold in Saudi Arabia, but they provide them for those customers who want them. Thus, they have a serious concern that if they advertise these books on social networking platforms, they could be reported to the Ministry of Saudi Labour and Commerce As one interviewee stated:

I am afraid that there are secret people follow the types of books that I provide and there are books on the religious matters, I am afraid that these fall into their hands and cause me problems. (Interviewee no. 19).

5.7.2.6 Economic Risk

The least mentioned problems were regarding lower sales levels because of the economic situation in Saudi Arabia. Four interviewees stated that their profits were lower than usual.

One of these interviewees highlighted that social networking technologies does not have anything to do with the fluctuation of sales levels.

People in general paid attention to their spending, many of them stopped spending money on things they do not need, or they can be abandoned. Many of them are not as they were in the past, spending and buy products at the regular prices, but they are beginning to be more careful about the waste of money on something not required. All because of the miserable economic conditions at this time. (Interviewee no. 14).

5.7.3 Cultural Issues associated with The Use of Social Networking Technology for Business Activities

A potential problem that Saudi Arabian female interviewees might face when using social networking technology for business is the strictness of their culture. Cultural problems can be viewed in two ways: how the use of social networking technology for business may affect Saudi Arabian culture, and how Saudi Arabian culture may affect the continuity of use of social networking technology for business. All interviewees referred to these two aspects. They particularly talked about the limitations in having any business dealings with men through social networking technology platforms, and gender-biased cultural perception when communicating with men through these platforms.

5.7.3.1 Limitations in having any Business Dealings with Men on Social Networking Technology Platforms

It has been mentioned several times that Saudi Arabian women entrepreneurs have certain cultural limitations when doing business with the opposite sex. Therefore, more than half of the interviewees admitted that they have personally set their own limits when it comes to doing business with men through social networking technology platforms. For example, some of the interviewees stated that they use some social networking technology applications because they provide the option of not needing to ‘talk’ directly to men. The best example of this is a clothing

seller who mentioned that she only uses WhatsApp to communicate with male clients because it does not require actual ‘talking’ to them:

I communicate with men and receive their requests, but provided that this through messages on WhatsApp, if he contacted me, I do not answer his call and ask him to communicate through WhatsApp only. (Interviewee no. 32).

Setting limitations when doing business with men through various social networking technologies may affect business performance. Half of the interviewees would rather not use several social networking technology platforms because male clients could communicate directly. As one interviewee explained, her use of Facebook as an advertising channel is limited because it is open to the public and everyone can view videos that show her face and hands when she demonstrates her products. Thus, she does not use Facebook as a marketing tool because of her customs and traditions.

On the other hand, fourteen interviewees admitted that at first, they were very hesitant about dealing with male clients, but through time, they got used to it and were able to use technology to deal with males without necessarily talking to them. Some asked their husband or brother to communicate with male customers. They mentioned that this is a simple way to deal with the issue and has led to a high level of success in their business. As one interviewee explained, having her husband respond to male customers’ queries helped her to uphold her traditions and customs and at the same time continue her business:

Perhaps the society's view of the working woman is despicable if she is alone, but if she works with her brothers, her husband or even her children, their view would change. So that she is subordinated to the guardian who helps her achieves her affairs and knows where to go and with those who deal. (Interviewee no. 37).

Another case is that one interviewee explained that some male customers are aware of the necessity for women entrepreneurs to only deal with female customers, so they send their sisters or wives to communicate regarding their orders and/or delivery of their products:

Men customers are aware of this situation because it is necessary in our culture to communicate with a woman only. We do not accept to deal directly with men or do not hand the order directly to men, either the driver does so. Sometimes the client sends us his wife or his sister in order to receive the request otherwise

we pass this job to one of my brothers to give him the request. (Interviewee no. 4).

A small number of interviewees, five out of 40, commented that they have limitations set by their family members such as parents, siblings and relatives, friends or acquaintances, especially when it comes to doing business with men, even though social networking platforms. These interviewees stated that their families have bounded them by what society and culture dictate. Some have disclosed that because communication through social media platforms can be seen or viewed by anyone who 'follows' their social networking accounts, it is extremely hard to accidentally communicate with a male customer. These particular interviewees were worried that their family members, especially their husbands, would be angry with them if they disobey what their culture dictates.

Eight interviewees commented that the problem of doing business with men depends on the community that the entrepreneur is living in and on her husband's level of tolerance. If the husband is open minded, then he will allow his wife, the entrepreneur, to deal with men. Some of the interviewees, specified above, said that their husbands are fairly open-minded when it comes to dealing with male customers. For example, one interviewee gave an example wherein she mentioned that her husband told her that she can add anyone to the social media account, regardless of gender, and if a potential male customer inquired, then she should give her husband's number and her husband will be the one to directly communicate with that male customer.

On the other hand, some of the interviewees, specified above, revealed that their husbands are close-minded, as they get mad at them when they deal with a male client. Although these interviewees were aware of the cultural perception about male dominance, this has not stopped them from continuing their businesses. One interviewee explained her situation when her husband knew that she had talked to a male customer:

My husband got angry out of that incident and lost his temper because I dealt with a man directly. But I did not care about what happened and told my husband that I dealt with him within the boundary of work. When the dealing is with respect, it would not cause any harm. If I allow customs and traditions stop me, not to talk to men or deal with them, I will spend my entire life at home and not work, because not all women will have the opportunity to collect their orders. (Interviewee no. 33)

These women entrepreneurs are aware of the cultural perception being mostly dominated by men, but they have found some ways to encourage their husbands to let them start a business and earn for themselves.

5.7.3.2 Gender-biased Cultural Perception when Communicating with Men

All of the interviewees mentioned gender-bias as a cultural perception when communicating with men. To address such treatment, there are three major aspects to consider from the entrepreneurs' point of view. It is crucial to have a strict policy regarding the use of text messaging for communication, make wise decisions when choosing social networking platforms, and request respect from followers.

A large number of the interviewees, 23 out of 40 participants, stated that to prevent any cultural-related issues or concerns they only use text messaging to communicate with customers. Those interviewees explained that they do not answer calls from unknown people. They indicated that this has proved one of the most convenient and safest ways of dealing with customers because they do not need to worry about having to 'talk' directly to male customers.

Fourteen of the interviewees explained the importance of making wise decisions regarding the most suitable social networking platforms for business that can help to reduce cultural and gender-bias problems. These interviewees pointed out that Snapchat, Instagram and WhatsApp are the most used social networking platforms for businesses because communication with customers is normally done via texting. One interviewee claimed that entrepreneurs should use Instagram for communication. She justified this by saying that it has a text-messaging feature that allows the entrepreneur to communicate with both genders. She said that because of her and other entrepreneurs' mature age; they have the wisdom to know which social networking platforms will serve their business best.

However, there were concerns for the new and younger generations of women entrepreneurs. Some of the interviewees, specified above, stated that young female entrepreneurs should use these platforms wisely and distinguish between right and wrong communication when it comes to interacting with a male client, even if that interaction was within the scope of their businesses. One interviewee highlighted that it is not something to be ashamed of or a disgrace when these young entrepreneurs communicate with males on these platforms, but it is shameful to disobey

their cultural rules. If they do not manage it strictly, then there is a probability that these women might destroy their family reputation, which will influence their business reputation as well. Therefore, it is important for these young Saudi Arabian women entrepreneurs to make wise decisions on how to communicate with different genders through social networking platforms, taking into consideration their cultural norms and their business reputations.

Nine interviewees also mentioned that it is a major consideration when choosing which social networking technology to use, to have the ability to control who follows the account. Some of the interviewees put a disclaimer in their social networking accounts that they only allow female followers, that they will only respond to queries or comments from females, and that they hope that followers will obey strict guidelines when communicating directly with the seller. On the other hand, some interviewees admitted that they allow male followers and may respond to queries from them, however, such queries or comments must be business related and must be respectful. They require that comments do not have any sign of harassment or ridicule; otherwise, they will block followers from that application.

These gender-bias perceptions when communicating with men, even for business purposes may negatively affect the overall performance of the business, especially in terms of revenue. However, these Saudi Arabian women entrepreneurs stated that they still follow and give strict observance to cultural or traditional norms. Even though some may oppose the idea, they still follow because it is innate in their personality to follow their culture.

5.7.4 Section Summary

Several issues and concerns were raised in the use of social media platforms for business. These include:

- Technology related problems,
- Potential risks, and
- Cultural problems.

Technology related issues are largely associated with the appropriateness of using social networking technologies for the business. The underlying issues are in relation to direct communication, trust-related concerns of both the buyers and the sellers, personal

circumstances of the trader, lack of online trading techniques, online business-related crime activities, rules and regulations, the need for additional resources to manage an online presence, concerns regarding personal reputation, knowledge and technical related-issues, and privacy issues or concerns.

Potential risks include safety risks, technical-related risks and economic risks.

Cultural problems include limitations in dealing with men and gender-biased cultural perceptions when communicating with men. All these issues and concerns raised have the potential to affect the use of social networking technology and/or the success of the business itself.

5.8 Chapter Summary

Forty Saudi Arabian women entrepreneurs were interviewed for this study. Most of them were in the 25-34 and 35-44 age ranges. They all run their home-based online businesses through the use of social networking technologies. The top four business sectors were retail fashion, food catering, creative crafts and cosmetic retail. Most interviewees had between one to four years experience in establishing and/or managing a business. Those who had less experience adopted social networking technologies in the start-up phase of their business.

The most common social networking technologies platforms used for business were Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Facebook and Twitter. The younger generation (25-34 years old) were highly likely to use the newer platforms - Instagram, WhatsApp and Snapchat. Those aged 35-44 years were more to use older platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. These entrepreneurs used these platforms to promote their businesses, yet their uses differed depending on their purposes.

The research explored how these women use social networking technologies for their business activities. Discussions with the interviewees revealed two key innovative strategies were involved: building business brand strategies, and marketing and advertising strategies. In terms of brand strategies, participants integrated offline and online activities in order to grow and develop their businesses. They also used electronic word-of-mouth because it leads to higher perceived reliability and trustworthiness. Furthermore, they established business accounts on

different social networking technologies, and posted about different topics on different social networking sites. There are various types of social networking technologies, and entrepreneurs try to make use of these platforms in different ways. They followed this strategy to market themselves, verify their existence and to reach a large number of customers.

Most of the participants emphasised the opportunities that social networking technology tools brought in terms of having a dynamic and interconnected environment with customers, which evolved into online coordination and commerce. The entrepreneurs used these technology platforms to build their own communities and communicate with customers. They recognised that the adoption and use of social networking technologies enabled them to build trust, ensure accurate orders, and answer customers' inquiries, which ultimately lead them to focus on customers' needs and plan for their business growth and development. Social networking technologies played a significant role from the moment they were introduced and applied to businesses. Saudi women entrepreneurs used these technologies to experience a new level of interaction, which involves, but is not limited to, business networking. The participants used these platforms to communicate with agents and follow popular trends. Furthermore, entrepreneurs used social networking technologies to facilitate information exchange among users. They created personal information profiles and invited other users, either customers or vendors, to access their content.

The research investigated what motivated Saudi female entrepreneurs to adapt and use social networking technologies for their businesses. Interview data showed that the need for professional growth was the main motivation. The need for professional growth was brought by three major factors: unemployment, previous working conditions and micro-competition. The participants were highly motivated to use these technologies because they enable them to run remote and home-based online businesses and allowed them to deal with unemployment and financial problems. Utilising social networking technologies for business assisted the entrepreneurs to be self-employed, generate their own income, and create a better working environment by having more freedom in terms of work supervision and length of working hours. The technologies allowed them to take advantage of their previous experience of buying and selling online.

Significant advantages of the use of social media platforms emerged during the interviews. Perceived usefulness for home-based online businesses was at the top of the list. These platforms gave them the opportunities to reach a large number of customers, develop their businesses, work from home, increase their incomes, provide services to their communities and understand their customer's needs. In addition, social networking technologies can be used as effective advertising channels. It should be noted that most entrepreneurs have switched from traditional advertising to social networking technology advertising because online advertising is seen as faster, easier, and more attractive to potential customers. Furthermore, interviewees considered social networking technologies a good avenue for showcasing, learning and obtaining new skills. These technologies enabled them to gain practical skills when it comes to dealing with customers, problem solving and decision-making and enabled them to improve their marketing skills. Participants believed that the use of these technologies for home-based online business enables them to save on advertising costs needed for printed advertisements, and on the costs involved in opening a shop. In addition, the technology allows an easy transition to another field of business.

The second advantage of the use of social networking technologies for business is the ease of use. The technologies are convenient to use for marketing purposes and easy to manage and manipulate. The convenience of use lies on the ability to open, subscribe to or have an account with different social networking sites using the same user details and highlighting the same products and/or services. These platforms were seen as easier to use for managing business activities compared to administering business websites or running a physical shop. The convenience factor also extends to the entrepreneurs' ability to be self-employed while continuing to be responsible for their homes and families.

It was claimed by a few participants that the use of social networking technologies benefits them in providing security when it comes to product supply. These technologies allowed them to avoid loss and other risks related to business performance. These platforms gave entrepreneurs a better opportunity to be exposed to a wider market, and at the same time allowed them to analyse and/or test the market before supplying the products. This advantage is especially useful for entrepreneurs who source their products from overseas. In addition, entrepreneurs were able to analyse the prices of competing products or services in the market.

Although the entrepreneurs have gained many benefits from the use of social networking technologies, they have also encountered many issues related to managing their businesses through these platforms. Some of these issues relate to technology, online business risks and culture.

It was evident from the interview data that technology related problems were the main concerns. The rapid development of various platforms made it difficult to keep up with new features. Participants also needed additional resources and expertise to help manage their online presence.

The interviewees also faced difficulties using social networking technologies for business because of the lack of direct face-to-face communication. Customer trust issues surfaced in a variety of ways.

Business risks that were encountered included the risks associated with accepting orders, risk of criticism due to the use of these platforms for business, lack of a clear plan when establishing and managing businesses on these platforms, safety risks, technical-related risks, and economic risks. The most common risk was accepting large orders. Other risks of using social networking technologies for business include hackers, spying and criticism.

Cultural issues regarding the use of social networking technologies for business were seen as the least important issues, but are still crucial. All participants mentioned the use of these technologies in the context of cultural limitations in having business dealings with men, and gender-biased cultural perception when communicating with men through these platforms. Some interviewees set personal conditions and limitations to deal with these cultural issues.

6. Chapter Six: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This study of how Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs use social networking technologies in their home-based businesses has revealed a number of interesting findings. The study revealed the most common motivations underlying social networking technology use by these entrepreneurs, with special emphasis placed on the important issues they face when using such technologies. The results help in developing a theoretical framework that allow the researcher to answer the research questions which are discussed in this chapter. In addition, links are made to previous studies where the current findings are either supportive or contradictive to what has been previously reported.

6.2 Theoretical Framework

Some researchers refer entrepreneurship to an action (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006), while other researchers observe action in entrepreneurship as an individual behaviour (Bird & Schjoedt, 2009). Thus, *entrepreneurial behaviour theory* is a useful perspective underlie this study. The advances of social networking technologies has led to changes in how entrepreneurs carry out their day-to-day activities. Although there have been previous review papers on social media, they are not directly linked to entrepreneurship as they tend to be generic (e.g. Kapoor, Tamilmani, Rana, Patil, Dwivedi & Nerur, 2017) or specific to a domain including marketing (e.g. Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi & Algharabat, 2017) and innovation (e.g. Bhimani, Mention & Barlatier, 2019). Therefore, there are different but associated theories underpin this research combined from entrepreneurial behaviour and social commerce theory. The developed framework is presented in

Figure 6-1

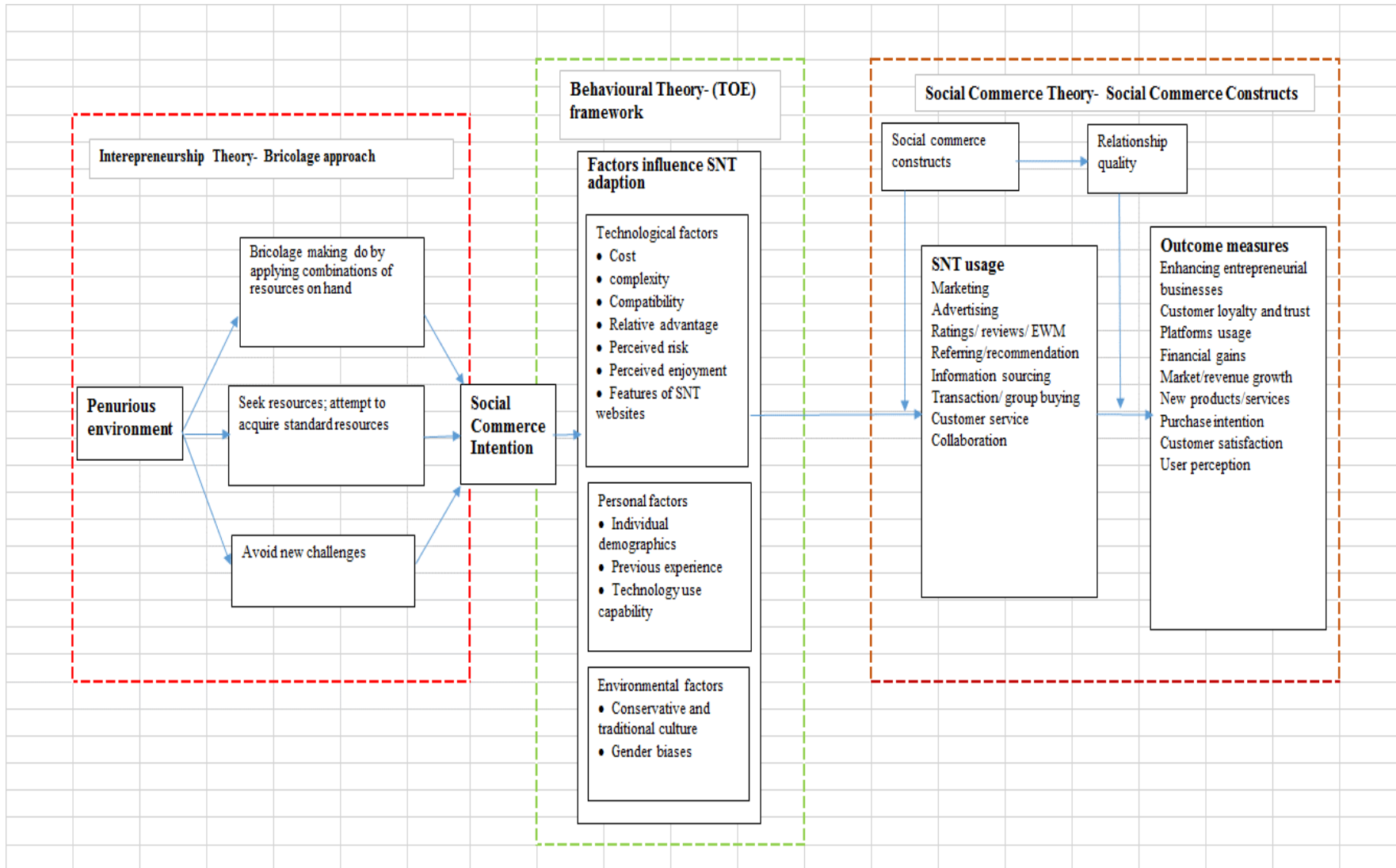


Figure 6-1: Developed Theoretical Framework

6.2.1 Entrepreneurial behaviour theory

In entrepreneurship, the traditional model, known as causation (by Sarasvathy, 2001) broadly draws on economic thinking to describe an individual action searching for entrepreneurial areas where the demand for products and services exceed supply to discover an entrepreneurial opportunity and ultimately evaluate whether it is worth exploiting (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). After exploiting of the entrepreneurial opportunity, entrepreneurs start to seek for available resources to establish an entity that will develop and deliver a product or service, and by doing so, create returns from the online stores. Owing to the increase interest in entrepreneurship as a discipline of research, a number of new theoretical perspectives have emerged in order to explain the action underlie entrepreneurial behaviour (Fisher, 2012). These alternative theoretical perspectives, including effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2008) and entrepreneurial bricolage (Baker & Nelson, 2005). Each of which suggests that under certain conditions, entrepreneurs adopt different route to identify and discover opportunities. Some of these routes are highlighted in Fisher (2012, p. 1020) stating that entrepreneurs (1) focus primarily on the resources they have on hand and ignore market needs in uncovering an opportunity; (2) ignore long-run returns and focus primarily on what they are willing to lose in making decisions about whether to pursue an opportunity; (3) refuse to enact the resource limitations dictated by the environment; and (4) eschew long-range goals and plans. These routes are applied on the Saudi female entrepreneurs.

The participants of this study started their entrepreneurship in dynamic, nonlinear, and from ecological environments where the future is unknowable and, therefore, not measurable. Most of the entrepreneurial opportunities were created by an entrepreneur through a process of enactment applying combinations of available resources, and this refers to theory of entrepreneurial bricolage. Baker and Nelson (2005, p. 33) defined bricolage as “making do by applying combinations of resources at hand to new problems and opportunities”. The theoretical perspective was originally introduced by Levi-Strauss (1966) in order to distinguish between the actions of an engineer and the actions of a “bricoleur” or handyman. He explained that the engineer would focus on gathering tools and materials for an intended design but the bricoleur would instead choose to make do with whatever material is at hand. Overall, the outcomes and/or results in each case is similar, though, the mechanism used to achieve that state is quite different for the engineer and the bricoleur (Levi-Strauss, 1966). Bricolage has been applied in

different domains explaining the formative processes in teaching (Hatton, 1989), lawmaking (Hull, 1991), and institution building (Lanzara, 1998). Moreover, it has been used in the entrepreneurship literature to conceptually explain market creation (Baker & Nelson, 2005) and growth (Baker, Miner & Eesley, 2003). Furthermore, bricolage has been applied in the innovation literature to describe how robust designs can be created in uncertain environments (Garud & Karnoe, 2003).

The foundations of a theory of entrepreneurial bricolage has highly represented on the Saudi women entrepreneurs. Because of women unique role and cultural restrictedness, entrepreneurs are confronted with penurious environments, where new challenges presented without providing new resources. Therefore, women entrepreneurs started to seek alternative options to reach the market. For example, they begin to seek resources, including social networking technologies and homes, and use them for business in which they were not originally designed. This can be considered to be "creative reinvention" (Rice & Rogers, 1980). In addition, Saudi women entrepreneurs started to enact bricolage by creating something from nothing by making do and applying combinations of the resources at hand to new problems and opportunities (Baker & Nelson, 2005). Entrepreneurs who follow the process of entrepreneurial bricolage have to form their labor inputs involving customers, suppliers, and stakeholders. Moreover, they have to develop their skills inputs permitting and encouraging the use of amateur and self-taught skills. Furthermore, they have to interpret their environment and enhance the ability of their enterprises to survive; for example, providing products or services that would otherwise be unavailable.

Using social media for entrepreneurship is a relatively new and fragmented phenomenon, however, there is increasing interest for further research to identify critical theories used in the domain. A large number of studies have developed an integrative framework from the Behavioural Theory called *Technology-organisation-environment* to identify the factors that drive social media adoption and use by entrepreneurs. This framework has been applied to this study because it led to significant impact with improved entrepreneurial performance and innovation enhancement being the essential outcomes.

Technology-organisation-environment framework

The technology-organisation-environment (TOE) framework was originally proposed by Tornatzky and Fleischer (1990). This conceptual theoretical framework provides insight into social commerce adoption by investigating how factors within the technology-organisation-environment (T-O-E) framework explain entrepreneurs' adoption of social networking technologies for their home-based online businesses. Three key factors that influence the process of social networking technology adoption were identified and categorised into groups and those are: (1) Technological factors which includes existing and available technologies on hands; (2) Individual factors which involves several descriptive measures such as business size, nature of the business, and the amount of slack resources available internally; and (3) Environmental factors which refers to the macro arena in which entrepreneurs conduct business and is comprised of industries, competitors, access to resources supplied by others and dealings with government (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990, p.152-154).

Technological factors

The technological context refers to all of the technologies that are already in use by entrepreneurs as well as those that are available in the marketplace/cyberspace but not currently in use. The literature of information technology including technology-organisation-environment (TOE) (Baker, 2012), Technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis, 1986), and Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) (Rogers, 2003) suggest that technological factors such as effort expectancy (i.e., perceived ease of use/complexity), facilitating conditions (i.e., compatibility), performance expectancy (i.e., perceived usefulness/relative advantage), and perceived enjoyment increase social media adoption and use while perceived risk hinders it. In addition, Taiminen and Karjaluoto (2015) reported a negative impact of social media perceived usefulness and that is caused by entrepreneurs' lack of knowledge of using the platforms. Moreover, cost has been highlighted to be crucial factor for social media adoption because it is free-cost and that is consistent with IS research (Tornatzky & Klein, 1982).

In the context of this study, technology aligns more to social networking technologies; that is, Saudi women entrepreneurs' agility shaped by available resources to exploit the opportunity of entrepreneurship as proposed innovation. There are three types of innovations that exists outside the firm were identified; incremental, synthetic, and discontinuous changes (Tushman & Nadler, 1986). Innovations with incremental change introduce new features or new versions of existing technologies but it represent the least amount of risk and change for the adopting

organization. The second type of innovations with synthetic change represent a middle point of moderate change, where existing ideas or technologies are combined in a novel manner. Saudi female entrepreneurs have used social networking technologies for businesses, though they have not been emerged for this purposes. Thus, existing technologies are combined in a novel way to innovate. Ultimately, innovation with a discontinuous change represents significant departures from current technology or processes. Examples include the shift to cloud computing that began in the early 2000s.

According to Baker (2012) Industries that are characterized with incremental and synthetic changes allow a measured pace of adoption, whereas industries that are characterized with discontinuous change require firms to make a quick adoption decision to maintain and enhance competitive advantages. Overall, entrepreneurs must carefully consider the type of changes that will be created when adopting a new innovation. As illustrated above that while some innovations will have a dramatic impact on the entrepreneurial industry in which it competes, others will have a relatively small impact.

Organisational and individual factors

A number of previous studies have shown that personal and individual factors are well-studied in social media and entrepreneurship literature (Olanrewaju, Hossain, Whiteside & Mercieca, 2020; Al-Somali, Gholami & Clegg, 2010). Researchers reported positive relationships between organisational attributes including business size, business age, business complexity, business innovativeness and the business industry and the decision to adopt social networking technologies. Organisational size influences the adoption and use of technologies as some studies (e.g. Yoa et al., 2003; Fallon & Moran, 2000) report significant links between the size the business, in terms of employees' number, and the extent of Internet adoption. In addition, Levy and Powell (2002) stated that larger businesses are more likely to adopt electronic commerce compared to smaller ones. However, some researchers (e.g. Baker, 2012) argued that a conclusive link between firms' size and innovation does not exist because it is seen as a generic measure and researchers have to use more specific measures of organisational factors such as the availability of specific resources (Austin et a., 2003).

Entrepreneurs are convinced that online business initiative requires a fundamental review of business strategies that ties social commerce initiatives to corporate strategy and consequently

other business resources in order to create distinctive capability for entrepreneurial activities (Al-Somali et al., 2010). Dutot and Bergeron (2016) emphasised three types of strategic orientation that influence social media adoption and use which include; entrepreneurial, customer and technological orientation.

The entrepreneurial orientation of the firm would obtain, process and disseminate information about new innovations and be able to utilize available resources for technology adoption and use (Fosso-Wamba & Carter, 2014; Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides, 2011). Customer orientation has been defined as entrepreneurs' sufficient understanding of their target buyers to be able to create and develop enduring customer value for them (Ha, Kankanhalli, Kishan & Huang, 2016). Laforet (2009) stated the critical role of customer endorsement and promotion information for social media marketing. Moreover, customer engagement, that is associated with understanding customer needs, providing superior service and having long-term vision, has also been stated to be a critical driver to social media adoption (Harrigan & Miles, 2014; Shih et al., 2014). Wu, Mahajan and Balasubramanian (2003) argued that a business with a high degree of customer orientation is regularly exchanging information with its customers, consequently requiring them to implement new innovation in their business by facilitating online order taking as well as integrating online 'store' with other business systems, e.g., order processing, accounts and/or marketing. Regarding the technological orientation, it has been referred to the long-range of the firm to acquire new technologies which affect the development of new ideas, new processes and new product or service (Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014). Social media adoption and use is basically related to advance technologies that involves investing in technological infrastructure, human resources as well as attention to acquiring technological applications to meet existing and new customer expectation (Ahani, Rahim, & Nilashi, 2017).

For the individual factors, entrepreneurs' personality has been studied with conscientiousness, openness and extraversion. It has been reported to be the most vital attribute for driving social media adoption and use (Mandal, McQueen, Dillon & Rastrick, 2017). Obschonka, Fisch, and Boyd (2017) investigated the effect different personality (e.g., super manager vs. super entrepreneur) using social media. Tata, Martinez, Garcia, Oesch, and Brusoni (2017) explored how super entrepreneurs can foster innovation by creating an entrepreneurial context that accepts change to achieve further mission and vision of a firm. Moreover, entrepreneurs behaviour and communication processes on social media including perceived time affordability

(Fischer & Reuber, 2011), knowledge, resource availability, and motivation (Bakri, 2017; Bernhard & Grundén, 2016; Michaelidou et al., 2011) are classified to be key individual characteristics influencing entrepreneurs' adoption and use of social media. Last is the entrepreneurs' demographic attributes such as age, gender and experience have been studied to be crucial factors for social media use but they did not report significant effect (Fosso-Wamba & Carter, 2014).

Environmental factors

Environmental factors on social media adoption and use by entrepreneurs are scarce (Olanrewaju, 2020). However, previous studies highlighted some of the external pressure that mainly include customer pressure (e.g. Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014), competitive pressure (e.g. Ahani et al., 2017; Sasatanun & Charoensukmongkol, 2016), suppliers pressure (e.g. Al-Somali et al., 2010) and legal procedures (Jambulingamis, Sumathi, & Rajagopal, 2015; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2016) as essential attributes for social media adoption and use.

A number of studies (e.g. Harrison et al., 1997; Mehrtens et al., 2001) found that customer pressure has a significant impact on small and medium enterprises' decision to adopt Internet technologies. Competitive pressure has forced many entrepreneurs to adopt and use social media for entrepreneurial activities because entrepreneurs are facing significant competition tend to attribute more value to technology innovation (Zhu et al., 2004; Lin & Lin, 2008). In terms of suppliers pressure, it has been found that a powerful supplier may pursue technological strategies to encourage its suppliers and/or partners to use and adopt new technologies (Simatupang et al., 2002). legal procedures refer to government policy (Zhu and Kraemer, 2005). Jambulingamis, Sumathi and Rajagopal (2015) found that entrepreneurs operating in an environment, where government policies are restrictive, have low technologies adoption. Thus it has been suggested that countries adopting new technology must have appropriate government policies and regulations including intellectual property, consumer protection laws, dispute resolution law and compliance (Schaupp & Bélanger, 2016).

As it illustrated above that interactivity of social media platform is crucial to its adoption and use as it is vital to building client relationships (Shih et al., 2014); therefore, the researcher needed to apply social commerce construct theory in order to be able to better explain and understand customer relationships.

6.2.2 Social Commerce Theory

Areas of social networking technologies usage

Entrepreneurs use social media platforms for various purposes (expecting different outcomes). Areas of social media usage have been identified and it includes marketing, advertising and information search. Previous studies categorised the distinct usage such as enhancing organizational internal cohesiveness (Toombs & Harlow, 2014), hiring prospective employees (Kaur, Sharma, Kaur, & Sharma, 2015) and learning (Vivakaran & Maraimalai, 2016) but these perspectives will not be discussed as it was not raised in this study.

The earliest studies on social media and entrepreneurship have focused on the role of social networking technologies platforms and entrepreneurial marketing (e.g. Bulearca & Bulearca, 2010; Hensel & Deis, 2010; Jones, 2010). This topic was well studied which has led to the publication of review papers specifically on social media marketing (e.g. Alalwan et al., 2017; Misirlis & Vlachopoulou, 2018). Social networking technologies is altering the marketing landscape by allowing entrepreneurs to advertise their products on different number of social media platforms (Cant, 2016) achieving a cost-free advantage over traditional advertising and marketing processes (Brink, 2017; Michaelidou et al., 2011).

Advertising on social networking technologies has been documented to entail several activities such as customer relationship management (Guha et al., 2018; Harrigan & Miles, 2014), brand management (Ahmad, Ahmad, & Bakar, 2018; Ananda, Hernández-García, & Lamberti, 2017) and product visibility which in turn drives sales (Dutot & Bergeron, 2016; Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Managing customer relationships on social media platforms is done through posting messages such as customer endorsements, promotion information, and business activities (Shih et al., 2014) that, as a result, trigger a consumer engagement process via sharing, commenting, and liking (Kudeshia, Sikdar, & Mittal, 2016). From there, the significant of social commerce construct is appeared.

The researcher implemented the social commerce construct theory because it explains how the service quality of social networking technologies contribute to customer satisfaction and usage intention leading to social commerce intention.

Social Commerce Construct

The dimensions of social commerce construct include ratings, reviews, forums, communities, recommendations and referrals (Hajli, 2013). These constructs can support consumers purchasing decisions by providing textual information about a product on social networking technologies platforms that were created by online sellers (Amblee & Bui, 2011). Entrepreneurs can take part in customers' social interaction. They create their own online communities on a platform in order to provide customer reviews and rate the products based on a previous customer's experience (Wang & Hajli, 2015). They follow this technique because, for prospective consumers, reviews provided by previous customers have auxiliary value (Heinonen, 2011; Keller, 2009). This information exchange and experiences through this communication channel, thus, assist the consumer in his buying decision (Han & Windsor, 2011; Islam et al., 2017). Therefore, it is believed that ratings and reviews are associated with social communication as one of the dimensions of social commerce construct.

Referring and recommendations in online communities involves electronic word of mouth which is an essential tool of social commerce, and it can be significant for businesses (Kozinets et al., 2010). Electronic word of mouth is created when a customer create support for other prospective consumers by recommending a product (Piller & Walcher, 2006). Therefore, web applications and social networking technologies are influenced by social interaction because consumers can quickly and broadly share their experiences, knowledge and information; can participate in forums and communities; and can leave their recommendations on record for other customers (Hajli, 2013).

Different social networking technologies platforms, developed by online sellers to share information and participate in group discussion, have become an important information source for many customers (Wang & Hajli, 2015). Entrepreneurs, through the help of Web 2.0 applications, social networking technologies and online communities, support customers sharing of information and knowledge about the product and result in group buying (Lu et al., 2010). In addition, social networking technologies platforms has modified the way entrepreneur seek, search and gather information (Smith et al., 2017). Such platforms have offer collaboration between entrepreneurs. It enabled entrepreneurs to support their information needs due to factors such as lack of funds to hire an expert, presence of people willing to help, fear of competitors, and ease of access to weak ties (Kuhn et al., 2016; Quinton & Wilson,

2016). On social networking technologies platforms, collaboration is sought by entrepreneurs regarding how to run their businesses (Fernandes, Belo, & Castela, 2016). Recent studies highlighted the crucial roles played by social media in fulfilling entrepreneur's collaboration regarding information needs (Drummond, McGrath, & O'Toole, 2018; Gümüs & Kütahyalı, 2017). This includes the ability to exchange tacit and non-tacit knowledge (Wang, Mack, & Maciejewski, 2017) which can be helpful for early-stage entrepreneurs (Motoyama, Goetz, & Han, 2018).

Outcomes of social networking technologies use

Entrepreneurs use and adopt social networking technologies for their businesses because they are expecting several benefits and outcomes (Olanrewaju et al., 2020). Perceived benefits of social media usage have been examined in several studies (e.g. Quinton & Wilson, 2016; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014), whereas the expected outcomes or impact of social media use have been discussed widely in other studies (e.g. Alarcón-del-Amo et al., 2018; Nambisan & Zahra, 2016; Hitchen et al., 2017; Scuotto, Del Giudice, Peruta, & Tarba, 2017). In this study the benefits and outcomes from the use of social media for business can be categorised into four groups: enhancing entrepreneurial business, increasing customer loyalty and trust, generating financial source, and driving market growth. These outcomes are all impact by the relationship quality approach.

Relationship quality

The relationship quality concept is associate to the theory of relationship marketing (Crosby et al., 1990; Dwyer et al., 1987). It aims to transform unresponsive consumers into loyal consumers and reinforce the relationship between seller and buyer (Berry & Parasuraman, 2004). It is believed that the tightness and the strength of a relationship perform an essential role in compelling customer loyalty and trust; and this is referred to as relationship quality (Palmatier et al., 2006). The three main dimensions of relationship quality are; relationship commitment, relationship satisfaction and trust (Wulf et al., 2001). Previous studies showed empirically that these three facets of the relationship quality had a significant influence on the social media use outcomes (De Cannière et al., 2009).

The goal of maintaining a relationship with an entrepreneur is called commitment (Wulf et al., 2001). Therefore, commitment is an essential element for maintaining a long-term relationship (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). Consequently, this indicator of relationship quality demonstrates the significance of the relationship with business (Sheikh et al., 2019). Moreover, satisfaction refers to the general emotional assessment of the performance of a service or product provided by the customer (Gustafsson et al., 2005). Relationship satisfaction is being an effective state of people after a thorough evaluation of the relationship and it is classified as being another significant construct of relationship quality (Wulf et al., 2001). This indicator is entirely dependent on the service quality of the seller as it creates a connection with consumers (Hajli, 2014). In addition, trust refers to a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in the word of mouth that has confidence (Moorman et al., 1993). Ventre and Kolbe (2020) and Al-Tit et al. (2020) stated that trust is a crucial factor in social commerce adoption. In all social and economics businesses, particularly in a virtual setting, trust (e.g., competence, credibility, and benevolence) is an essential factor in building intention to use social networking technologies (Qin, 2017). A faith that the other party in a deal is honest and trustworthy refers to credibility-based trust, which usually relies on reputation information and is impersonal, whereas repeated customer–seller relationships refer to benevolence-based trust (Ba & Pavlou, 2002). A large number of studies examined the relationship between social commerce intention, customer satisfaction, and social networking technologies usage intentions (Hajli, 2014; Kim & Park, 2013; Ng, 2013; Pookulangara & Koesler, 2011; Um, 2018). Their findings reported that relational quality (e.g., satisfaction and trust) have a noteworthy positive impact on social commerce intention.

Relationship quality enhances entrepreneur businesses process. Social networking technologies popularity and familiarity among users have result in social interactions among consumers and encourage them to get involved in online activities and social commerce. Consequently, electronic word-of-mouth and trust are involved in social commerce (Kim & Park, 2013) which derive to familiarity and closeness stimulates purchase intention (Ng, 2013). Furthermore, relationship quality (e.g., trust, customer satisfaction, and commitment), and website quality (service and system quality) have a considerable positive impact on social commerce intention (Liang et al., 2011).

6.3 Demographic Information

All the 40 participants have operated online businesses at home through social networking technologies, selling or providing different types of products and services. Many of the participants were relatively inexperienced at starting and managing a home-based business (less than four years in business), though they did adopt social networking technologies at an early stage. Four participants, who started their businesses 10-15 years ago, adopted social networking technologies at a much later stage. This finding is supported by Veldeman, Van Praet and Mechant (2017) and Bughin, Chui and Manyika (2013) showing an inverse relationship between years of adapting social networking technologies to the number of years being in business. A similar pattern of results was obtained by Carter (2019) and Holmes (2015) who believe that small businesses are more inclined to adopt social networking technologies because of its usefulness.

The findings clearly showed that, in terms of social media use, the participants are all typical young adults. The data obtained are broadly consistent with the major trends showing a direct relationship between an individual's age and their use of various social media applications. Younger participants were highly likely to use newer social networking platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp and Snapchat, while older participants tend to use longer-established social networking technology platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. This finding is supported by Wamba and Carter (2013) who found that an owner's age has a significant impact on social networking technology adoption in small and medium enterprises.

The importance on different ages using such technologies for their business activities reflects a comfort with the use of, and preference for different platforms of social networking technologies, as their use becomes more necessary for entrepreneurial activities, rather than just for personal entertainment (Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development, 2008; Almousa, 2011; Zafar et al., 2012). Previous studies on age-related differences in technology usage appear to validate the view that age is an important predictor of technology use in general, and of the World Wide Web and social networking technologies in particular (Czaja et al., 2006; Olson, O'Brien, Rogers, & Charness, 2011; Van Volkom, Stapley, & Amaturio, 2014).

This study revealed that age plays a significant role in participation in social networking sites. For example, older users tend to express less interest in using newer social networking technologies platforms (e.g., Instagram, WhatsApp and Snapchat), and use fewer of those technologies compared to younger users. This view is in line with Olson et al., (2011) studies' results as it indicated that younger entrepreneurs have more experience with various types of social networking technologies, whereas older entrepreneurs have a different usage rate. With further analysis, researchers (e.g., Czaja et al., 2006; Van Derkaay & Young, 2012) found that older users usually have negative perceptions and less experience with these technologies than younger users due to various frustrations they face when using technology for social networking.

Despite frustrations, older users were still open to technology use (Van Volkom et al., 2014). The results of this research are thus compatible with Rosenthal (2008) who found that older users always find ways to combat the obstacles they face when using technology. They frequently seek help from others, whether it is family, friends, or professionals to cope with these challenges. This view was supported by Nef, Ganea, Müri, and Mosimann (2013) findings which indicate that older entrepreneurs ask one of their family or a professional to help them learn how to use technology and become comfortable with it. Moreover, Van Derkaay and Young (2012) stated that older entrepreneurs use social networking technology platforms to indicate their desire to keep up-to-date with new technological advances for entrepreneurial activities.

6.4 Use of Social Networking Technologies for Business Activities

This research shows that social networking technologies have contributed greatly to managing a business from home, especially for Saudi women entrepreneurs. Participants explained that social networking technologies allow them to conduct their businesses offline and online, and that this helps them grow their businesses and gain more customers. This finding aligns with Di Domenico et al., (2014) who observed that the advent of new technology coupled with the advancement in communication has led to new business and marketing activities. Furthermore, Zhang et al., (2013) stated that the use of Internet-based media applications allow people to market, sell, compare, curate, buy and share products or services, whether through online or offline marketplaces, and/or communities.

A finding that is supported by Anastasiei and Dospinescu (2019), Chu and Kim (2011) and Cheung and Thadani (2012) stating that most of the entrepreneurs use social networking technologies to gain exposure and build their business brands through word-of-mouth. It is evident that social networking technology provides platforms based on user interaction, plays an increasingly important role in sharing electronic word-of-mouth (Luo & Zhong, 2015) and eventually builds brand awareness, finds new customers and increases purchase attention (Bolotaeva & Cata, 2010; Farzin & Fattahi, 2018; Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2010).

Most, if not all, of the participants closely monitored the use of social networking technology in order to market, brand or sell a product. A similar finding was reached by Shabbir, Ghazi and Mehmood (2017), Glucksman (2017), Dutot and Bergeron (2016) and Delerue and Cronje (2015) in that small and big businesses, seasoned and newbie marketers, and old or new business consultants use social networking technology as sales and marketing tools for the branding and marketing of their company's products or services. According to Zhang and Wang (2012) this has become more widespread since the use of social networking technologies came into prominence. It has become easier and sometimes even cheaper to market new products and promote discounts to a targeted audience (Shabbir et al., 2017; Alayis, Abdelwahed, & Atteya, 2018; Kärkkäinen, Jussila, & Väisänen, 2010). It has seemingly become common for entrepreneurs to target international markets because there are no geographical boundaries when it comes to marketing through social networking platforms (Di Domenico et al., 2014). As a result of this phenomenon, geographical locations and boundaries are now looked at as possibly the source of a product or service, but are not a hindrance to doing business (Zhang & Wang, 2012). For example, a customer can buy any product from a store that is thousands of miles away with just one or two clicks (Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013).

Some interviewees said that they link their personal (where non-business information is shared) and business social networking accounts. They stated that they display their daily life beside their products promotion because they are afraid that consumers would lose interest if they only see advertisements. This view is in contrast to that of Sutevski (2019) who states that linking personal and business social media accounts is inadvisable. He explained that establishing a separate Facebook business page is beneficial as it gives access to Facebook advertisements, separates an owner's personal life from the business and provides access to Facebook Analytics. It is strongly been recommended that businesses separate their personal social media accounts

in order to keep their business account in good standing. Such a separation provides the freedom to post, advertise, and focus content around the business, industry, and customers (Jenkins, 2017; Young, 2017). However, it has been argued that having separate Facebook accounts for life and business may cause problems, as consumers may be put off by too many advertisements. A study by Standberry (2019) shows that 46% of social media users will unfollow a brand for posting too many promotional messages. Therefore, he recommends keeping promotional messages to about one third of businesses brand's total social media posts. Another third should be articles on relevant topics and the last third should be posts that either encourage engagement or solidify the business brand as an information source. This strategy is referred to the "social media rule of thirds" (Kayla, 2019 para. 20).

There is a growing body of literature on the use of social networking technologies for business and its role in building and maintaining a network with other users - including friends/relatives and potential customers (Tempest, 2018; Bolotaeva & Cata, 2010; Lim, 2017; Indrupati & Henari, 2012; Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011). The findings of the current study largely support this view. Almost half of the Saudi women entrepreneurs interviewed revealed that they used social networking technologies to build upon common interests and get involved with customers. This result aligns with the findings of Chung, Marcketti, and Fiore (2014) which showed that social networking technology created opportunities for entrepreneurs, enabling them to connect with clients and other businesses beyond the home. Social networking technologies play a pivotal role in opening communication lines to and from the customers and in building long-term relationships that help to attract and retain customers (Lim, 2017).

Entrepreneurs were able to communicate with customers and respond to posted questions, thus satisfying their needs. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) many entrepreneurs, both established and start-up ventures, maximise their use of social networking technologies. By using these tools they can quickly build a network of supporters which is vital for business growth. "Social networking technologies are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends [potential customers] and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 63), which eventually allows for straightforward communication between businesses and consumers (Harris & Rae, 2009).

It was surprising that many of the Saudi women entrepreneurs interviewed use social networking technologies as a main source of developing entrepreneurial activities by following popular fashion models to see which products they use, which helps them keep up with world-wide trends. However, little can be found in the literature about how fashion models has an impact on forming and keeping the standardization of an entrepreneurs' business. Nonetheless, Shabbir et al. (2017) argued that when people see someone awarded for behaviour such as popular models, they tend to behave the same way, as people are more likely to imitate those whom they identify with.

Participants also mentioned that they use social networking technologies to generate content such as personal contact details and information about products and services. This finding is largely supported by Alboqami, et al., (2015) and Pavicic, Alfirevic, and Znidar (2011) who concluded that social networking technologies offer faster knowledge transfer and increased customer knowledge. There are an increasing number of entrepreneurs benefiting from generating content through social networking technologies, as this enables users and/or potential customers to get information about the brand, provides instructions about the main features and gives insights on how to properly use the product. (Indrupati & Henari, 2012; Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

According to Sánchez-Casado, Cegarra-Navarro, and Tomaseti-Solano (2015) the most obvious benefit of the use of social networking technologies for businesses is that entrepreneurs can generate higher levels of customer knowledge about the brand which, in turn, improves customer-based brand equity. These findings are supported by this study because they allow managers to focus more on what information they can or should provide when they use such technological tools to augment brand knowledge and brand equity, as well as create and manage intellectual capital (Shabbir et al., 2017). To put it simply, because of social networking technology, transferring information to a targeted group of consumers has become quicker and more effective. Pavicic et al. (2011) pointed out that brand knowledge is deemed effective when it is stored in consumers' memory for longer. In this study entrepreneurs noted that they use those platforms to display product information. Most of the participants created their own commercial online marketing groups and started to generate information about the products and services they offer, which is a strategic method for business development and growth.

6.5 The Motivations and underlying Reasons for Using Social Networking Technology for Business Activities

One of the research objectives was to determine why Saudi women entrepreneurs used social networking technology for their home-based businesses. More than half of the participants (24 out of 40) stated that their main motivations for using social networking technology for business included their need for professional growth, a desire for personal development and an interest in assisting their community.

Unemployment and limited working options are a problem for Saudi women, resulting in a lack of financial and job security (Organisation for Economic & Development, 2014). Entrepreneurs who suffer from a lack of employment opportunities look for alternative sources of income, but any opportunities must be practical and accessible (Walker & Webster, 2004). Thus, many Saudi women entrepreneurs consider starting a small business from their home and using social networking technology for their business activities. In Saudi Arabia, some ambitious women have undertaken business activities not only to supplement their household income, but to extend business opportunities for Saudi women in general. One study has shown that the motivation for Saudi women to set up their business was largely related to the desire to provide more opportunities for other women to enter the entrepreneurial sector (Shmailan, 2014). Opportunists are taking advantage of social media platforms and bringing new ideas to the area of career advancement (Fischer & Reuber, 2011) and employment opportunities (Walker & Webster, 2004).

Saudi women entrepreneurs use these platforms to create jobs for themselves at home. This view is consistent with the findings of Thompson et al. (2009), and Assi and Marcati (2020) which suggest that owning a home-based online business has reduced unemployment issues for Saudi women. When entrepreneurs establish their businesses from home and use social networking technology they are able to have flexible working options through being self-employed (Wynarczyk & Graham, 2013) and can create their own jobs at home as full time business entrepreneurs (Henderson, 2018; Still & Walker, 2006; Welsh et al., 2013). Mason et al. (2011) argued that home-based businesses not only create jobs for their owners, but they also can create job opportunities for other women in similar situations. He explained that the women employed do not necessarily work in the business owner's home; they can work from

their own homes. This finding emphasises the benefits that users can receive from these platforms, and reflects a larger generational shift for Saudi women who use the Internet, social networking technology and smartphones to create their workplace (Kuhl, 2016; Holmes, 2018).

The results of this research regarding the convenience of using social networking technologies were broadly consistent with the major trends highlighted in a number of studies such as Mann et al., 2000; Mathew, 2010; and Wynarczyk and Graham, 2013. These researchers also found that social networking technology enables entrepreneurs to have freedom, flexibility and independence from their previous traditional workplaces. These were the obvious motivating factors for most of the women in this study, and supports the findings of Gelderen et al. (2008) who concluded that home-based internet business owners have a desire to minimise their obligations as employers of others. Participants expressed that they wanted autonomy and freedom to be able to make their own decisions related to working hours and locations. According to Di Domenico et al. (2014), establishing a home-based business on the Internet is more than a convenient physical space for entrepreneurs, as they have freedom of their work, which allows them to be self-controlled and move spatially, temporally as well as mentally without restrictions and being in a specific location (Mann et al., 2000). Similarly, some authors found that entrepreneurs' desire to be their own boss was the motivation for establishing home-based businesses on social networking technologies (Walker & Webster, 2004; Wynarczyk & Graham, 2013).

Saudi entrepreneurs in this study were motivated to use social networking technology for their business because of the ability to work flexible hours. Gelderen et al. (2008) also found that home-based online business operators saw the Internet as providing possibilities for leveraging their labour; thus, they can work less as it gives them more control over their work time. Many other researchers described the flexibility of work as being a primary motivator for entrepreneurs owning home-based online businesses, which allowed them to operate anywhere and anytime (Di Domenico et al., 2014; Wynarczyk & Graham, 2013). Mann et al. (2000) agreed that home-based businesses afforded freedom and flexibility to entrepreneurs. However, there were conflicting perspectives about the meaning of having freedom and flexibility with home-based work. While some authors alluded to working hours as entrepreneurs can work when it suits them (Mason et al., 2011), for others, it was more to do with autonomy which

takes them away from employment obligations as they can decide for themselves what they do, how they do it, and when they do it (Gelderen et al., 2008).

Social networking technologies were the main source of developing entrepreneurial intention besides entrepreneurs' reinforcements support including their family and friends. Participants in this study indicated that the main factor that determined the creation or prevention of entrepreneurial intention is the support of family and friends. Studies have affirmed that perceived social support from friends and family is one of the factors that motivated entrepreneurs to become interested in entrepreneurial activities (Baughn, Cao, Le, Lim, & Neupert, 2006; Costa, Soares, & Bonfim, 2009; Greve & Salaff, 2003; Thomas & Wee-Liang, 2001). Moreover, a study concluded that families and peer groups on social networking technology play an important role in the business creation process and growth (Anderson, Jack, & Drakopoulou Dodd, 2005). Participants in this study mentioned that their entrepreneurship activities established through social networking technologies deserve greater recognition. For example, an entrepreneur stated that her family helped her to spread her Instagram business account to other friends and family members in order to be more recognised and be able to build her social network. Zafar et al., (2012) reported that entrepreneurs' families contribute a lot with gaining social and moral support that serve as their reinforcements and helped them to reach their desire for personal development to run their own businesses through social networking technology; and this was reflected in this study.

Interviewees had a strong positive internal desire to start an online business to advance their personal marketing talents, minimise boredom and/or achieve their ambitions. In addition, they were very motivated to use social networking technology for their businesses because it helped them find the things they were good at. This view is consistent with Bolotaeva and Cata's (2010) findings which indicated that if entrepreneurs used social networking sites correctly, they would benefit greatly because it will help them to find their talent and the things they were good at. Moreover, similar outcomes were found by Mason et al., (2011) and Walker and Webster (2004) as they stated that entrepreneurs who own home-based online businesses are likely to involve lifestyle and/or dedicated hobbies and financial gain is of minor concern to them. Gelderen et al. (2008, p. 171) defined lifestyle motives as "the wish to integrate the business with other interests such as the family, community, other work arrangements, and leisure pursuits".

One of the motivations for participants in this study was to occupy their free time and eliminate boredom. As noted earlier, part of the Saudi Arabian culture is that women must stay at home, take care of their family and perform household tasks. Consequently, these women sometimes feel bored and look for something to alleviate their boredom. However, they need make sure that any form of activity would not negatively affect their family. Thus, Saudi women entrepreneurs find that establishing home-based businesses using social networking technology is one solution. The results of this research confirm that using social networking technology for a home-based business is a good choice for Saudi women entrepreneurs, as it addresses their boredom issues and helps them achieve their ambitions, which leads to meeting their need for personal development. A study by Kim, Shim, and Ahn (2011) supported this finding.

Findings of this study revealed that some interviewees have strong desire to serve their community. Understanding their customers' needs was the motivation to start a home-based business based using social networking technology. Thus, social networking technologies allowed those interviewees to provide something that did not previously exist in their communities. The Organisation for Economic and Development (2014) shows that in the Middle East, women's participation in the workforce has risen significantly, especially in business services industries. This reflects the increase in the number of Saudi women entrepreneurs who run home-based businesses through social networking technologies to meet the needs of local and regional communities (Wynarczyk & Graham, 2013). For example, some women in this study explained that they started their businesses because they have had social issues or personal problems buying their clothes from a male seller. Despite the fact there is much literature regarding the motivation for using social networking technology for entrepreneurial activities, little research appears to validate such a view. It might be difficult to explain and find support for such results within the Saudi context because of the slow progress of online entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia compared to that of developed and developing countries (AlGhamdi, Drew, & Alhussain, 2012).

Various factors motivate an individual to start their own business from home and use social networking technology as a marketing aid. Entrepreneurial motivations are classified as necessity-motives and opportunity-motives (McMullen, Bagby, & Palich, 2008; Reynolds, Bygrave, & Autio, 2003). Among these different motivations, two broad categories of being either "pulled" or "pushed" have been used extensively in the literature regarding home-based

businesses (Clark & Drinkwater, 2000; Lougui & Brostrom, 2016; McMullen et al., 2008; Millán, Congregado, & Román, 2010).

According to Walker and Webster (2004, p. 405) “A pull motivation is associated with the individual having a reasonably strong positive internal desire to start a business venture”. On the other hand, “push motivation is associated with a possible equally strong desire, but based on external negative reasons” (Walker & Webster, 2004, p. 405). Some literature provided examples of pull motivations that lead many entrepreneurs to start their home-based businesses. These motivations include: the need for personal development, wanting to be their own boss, achievement, desire to make money, wanting a flexible lifestyle, and to use previous experience and knowledge (Cromie, 1987; Volery, Doss, Mazzarol, & Thein, 1997). On the other side, studies highlight some examples of the push motivations that persuade women entrepreneurs to start their own home-based businesses (Clark & Drinkwater, 2000; McMullen et al., 2008; Millán et al., 2010). Such negative push motivations include being unemployed, dissatisfied with previous occupation, lack of control of working hours, low-paid occupations and experiencing difficulties with work and family life-balance (Islam, 2012; Simon & Way, 2015). Indeed, Kirkwood (2009) argued that entrepreneurs who were push motivated probably had the need to run from unwanted reality, whereas entrepreneurs who were pulled motivated might have the desire to be successful.

Data obtained from the current study shows that Saudi women entrepreneurs have promoted themselves to step out of their comfortable environment in order to become whoever they want to be. Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Kirkwood, 2009; Tlaiss, 2015a), most of the interviewees indicated that a combination of pull and push motivators drove the formation of their home-based businesses, rather than a single dominant motivation. For example, most participants in this study were striving to achieve their goals of creating job opportunities themselves, to use their personal knowledge and previous experience, gain higher social status and be easily recognised in society. These are positive “pull” motivations and inspire women entrepreneurs to attain successful results (Grybniak, 2017).

The opposite is “push motivation” and was the impetus behind many participants’ need to start their home-based business, i.e. negative motivations that make women entrepreneurs act out of fear trying to avoid undesirable circumstances (Islam, 2012). For instance, “family unfriendly”

work practices, and the expectation to work long and unsociable hours were negative motivations that pushed some Saudi women entrepreneurs to consider self-employment (Walker & Webster, 2004). Data from this research extends those studies of entrepreneurial motivation by demonstrating that serving a community is a pull motivation. Nansen, Arnold, Gibbs, and Davis (2010) and Wynarczyk and Graham (2013) highlighted that the ‘always open’ nature of online businesses allows entrepreneurs to attend to the business ‘after hours’ and serve ‘special-interest’ niche markets in accord with the notions of attractiveness which reflects (pull motivation) (Daniel et al., 2014).

6.6 The Perceived Advantages of Using Social Networking Technologies for Business Activities

Even though social networking technology platforms have only been around for a few years, businesses are taking notice of their phenomenal growth and are developing new strategies to take advantage of them (Venkatraman, 2010). Early studies revealed the various advantages of using social networking technologies for home-based online business activities (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012; Di Domenico et al., 2014; Harris & Rae, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Wynarczyk & Graham, 2013), which support most of the findings of this study.

A large number, 30 out of 40 of the participants stated that social networking technologies are useful for their businesses because they help create opportunities. Similarly, Shane and Venkataraman (2000) discussed how entrepreneurs gained actual opportunities from a new technology. Yet, Gelderen et al. (2008) argued that gaining opportunities from technology depends on an entrepreneurs’ prior knowledge obtained from particular life experiences, educational background and information sources that an he/she has been exposed to. Consequently, each entrepreneur can discover different opportunities from their use of social networking technology and have different beliefs about the value of these discoveries (Eckhardt & Shane, 2003). It is believed that “novel information in combination with prior knowledge gives rise to the recognition of opportunities, and because each person’s information and evaluation-set is different, variety will occur” (Gelderen et al., 2008, p. 164). This was clear from the Saudi women entrepreneurs who discovered opportunities when using social networking technology for their home-based business, such as reaching large numbers of customers (Gelderen et al., 2008) and achieving their goals for business development and

growth. This result concurs with a previous study where social networking technology platforms enabled businesses to have access to thousands of customers to inform them about their offers, services and products (Indrupati & Henari, 2012). These authors concluded that social networking technology allows entrepreneurs to reach global markets with new customers other than their family and friends (Di Domenico et al., 2014). Indeed, reaching customers through social networking technology platforms leads to business development and growth (Gharabegian, 2018).

With the passage of time, there is no doubt that social networking technology is improving and making individuals lives easier (Shabbir et al., 2017). It offers opportunities to those entrepreneurs who were not able to access formal workplaces due to reasons such as childcare and family responsibility. Most women in Middle Eastern countries are engaged in household activities that consume most of their time and they are not much involved in external activities that require travel and participation in physical markets. As a result, women engaged in entrepreneurial activities have faced challenges such as demands on their time due to family commitments (Mathew, 2010). This reflects the finding of Oakley (2007) study stating that women entrepreneurs gained benefits from the use of social networking technology for home-based business, as it makes it easier for them to manage family responsibilities and run their businesses while remaining at home. Previous studies noted that entrepreneurs had emphasised how managing a business using social networking technology is a means of combining work with family interests (Khan, 2017; Di Domenico et al., 2014; Welter, 2011; AlMunajjed, 2019).

A study by Kuhl (2016) and Mason et al. (2011) found about the ability to run a home-based business combined with work and family is presented as being a significant advantage for young mothers or ‘mompreneurs’ (D’Andria & Gabarret, 2014) and this was reflected in this study which focuses on female entrepreneurship combined with child-rearing. Moreover, this concept ties in well with previous studies that show that running a home-based business through social networking technology is a particularly attractive option for women seeking balance between juggling a business and raising children (Costin, 2012; Jean & Forbes, 2012; Khalil, 2015; Richomme - Huet & Vial, 2014; Rogers, 2012). This trend is growing because the business enables entrepreneurs to keep up their professional, intellectual, or artistic interests while overcomes the classical entrepreneur’s obstacle of having family responsibilities (Mason et al., 2011).

A finding of this study is that a source of income was a reason for interviewees using social networking technology and this finding is supported by Almalki, FitzGerald, and Clark (2011) and Mutuku (2017). They found that entrepreneurs use social networking technology more for business because it helps them gain and increase their level of income. In fact, the Saudi women home-based business owners indicated that they were heavily dependent on their husbands' incomes before starting their businesses. However, when they started their home-based online businesses they were able to have their own sources of income, which meant that they could provide a better standard of living for themselves and for their families and this result is consistent with Le Renard (2008). In addition, Gelderen et al., (2008) stated that a sense of financial security was available for those entrepreneurs when they met their desire to build internet businesses that would provide them with financial independence in the future

The current study found that social networking technology was a good avenue to showcase, learn and obtain new skills which were related to entrepreneurs' personal and marketing skills when dealing with customers. According to Van Volkom et al. (2014), adopting social networking technology for small businesses has increased entrepreneurs' skill levels. Saudi women entrepreneurs reported that using social networking technology platforms for their business had positively improved their personal and marketing/sales skills. They become keen to deal directly with their customers and become patient enough to tolerate the chaos that customers can cause. In line with the findings of previous studies, the use of social networking technology enables entrepreneurs to gain the necessary and practical skills to manage customers and to look after the operation of their businesses (Still & Walker, 2006).

Saving money is one of the main benefits of the use of social networking technology for home-based online businesses. A finding that is supported by Shabbir et al. (2017) indicating that there is a new trend of using social networking technology, especially Facebook, among home-based women entrepreneurs to save costs as well as time when promoting their products. Moreover, similar observation was reported by Gelderen et al., (2008) noting that social networking technology platforms have a positive impact on women home-based entrepreneurs as they require minimum capital to start-up and even provide free advertising and marketing. Daniel et al. (2014, p. 804) explained the greater success through having low start-up costs, for most entrepreneurs, is "partly due to use of the home and their ease of experimentation in the

online environment, where ideas can be tried online, feedback can be received and modifications can be done quickly at a relatively low cost”.

A finding from this study is that Saudi women entrepreneurs receive advantages from the use of social networking technology as cost saving when it comes to changing their business types. This finding is consistent with Harris and Rae (2009) who concluded that adopters of social networking technology for entrepreneurial activities are not afraid to take risks and try out new ideas related to changing the main types of their businesses. This is the case for Saudi women entrepreneurs who decide to change their businesses' streamline and include other types of products when they experience low sales levels of the products they have already provided. Similar outcomes were found by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) noting that when entrepreneurs decided to change their type of business that is run through social networking technologies will not cost them anything, instead, it will make them grow their business by having a variety of products.

Saudi female entrepreneurs have greatly benefited from the use of social networking technology for home-based businesses because the technology is easy to use to market and advertise products, communicate with customers and vendors and manage a home-based online business. This aligns with Tritama and Tarigan's (2016) findings, which stated that most entrepreneurs who run a small business are aware of the value obtained from the use of social networking technology to market and promote products. Several studies investigated the potential of social media's use for marketing from the standpoint of business-to-customers (Alayis, Abdelwahed, & Atteya, 2018; Kärkkäinen, Jussila, & Väisänen, 2010). They found that the strategies of small businesses are to adopt multiple micro blogging activities as a key marketing tool for branding and marketing their products (Kakish & Al-Haddad, 2018).

However, some of the participants indicated that it is difficult to keep all their social networking technology platforms active and keep them aligned. The implications of this issue were discussed by Shabbir et al. (2017). They emphasised that there is a lack of consensus on how to implement different activities when the platforms and the technology are so dynamic. He also mentioned the lack of clear guidelines for entrepreneurs to help them use these platforms for their home-based online businesses.

A number of studies indicated that entrepreneurs benefit from the use of social networking technology as it enables them to communicate with their customers and social networking platforms allow users to make more appropriate use of direct connection with customers (Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Riemer & Richter, 2010) and consequently entrepreneurs will be able to know their clients' interests and concerns (Greenfield, 2009). This view was reflected in the study as Saudi women entrepreneurs decided to rely on various social networking technology applications in order to create sustained engagement with their customers (Harris & Rae, 2009). This view is supported by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who advise that entrepreneurs should choose a variety of social networking platforms because each of them usually attracts a certain group of people and they have to be active wherever their customers are. This appears to be the biggest benefit obtained from the use of social networking technology for business. Thus, educational researches have provided ample support for the assertion that social networking technology platforms pave the way for entrepreneurs to communicate easily with their customers and vendors (Berthon et al., 2012; Kazienko et al., 2013; Shabbir et al., 2017; Weber, 2009). Furthermore, they emphasised the role of social networking technology in building entrepreneurial small communities allowing for smooth interaction with their consumers and partners (Shabbir et al., 2017).

In this study, the participants had an issue when it comes to communicating with male customers and/or suppliers because they do not feel comfortable with direct interaction. Hence, they benefit from being able to control the way they communicate with male suppliers and customers. They highlighted that communication through these platforms is mostly by text, which is a very convenient way for a female entrepreneur to communicate with male customers, while still respecting cultural norms. This point will be further discussed in section 6.7.

Alayis et al. (2018) claim that social networking technology is a good medium to test the market and this was reflecting in the study. A few of the interviewees have benefited from their use of these platforms for their home-based businesses because it allows them to test their products in new markets. Moreover, this finding is supported by Nasir et al., (2017) suggesting that social networking technologies give Saudi women entrepreneurs some form of security before supplying products to target clients. These interviewees are following the strategy of "drop shipping" which can be the best strategy for home-based online businesses (Moulton, 2017). Using this process, the entrepreneurs may not have the actual items in stock, and they will only

be shipped once an order is placed (Worldwide Brands, 2019; Zimmer, 2018). This is particularly important for those who import products from overseas.

By first presenting the items on these platforms, entrepreneurs can assess whether their target market will buy the products or not (Chen, Chen, Parlar, & Xiao, 2011). For instance, on Instagram the participants regularly posted pictures of the products and/or services they normally provide for their customers on order. Then they would decide whether to offer a product or not based on the number of “likes” for that product. This would give them a good indication as to whether to include the products in their stocks. Consequently, this strategy enables Saudi entrepreneurs to minimise deception and reduces the risk of bogus buyers. Antonio (2010) defined a bogus buyer as being the person who will reserve or order products but do not proceed with the purchase. Some of the interviewees have experienced these problems. For example, a customer had ordered a cake, and when the seller had finished baking the cake, the potential customer either does not reply anymore or says that she has not ordered this and had to cancel it. Thus, it is crucial for Saudi women entrepreneurs to set their own conditions, for example “serious buyers only” as well as other rules suggested by Guillermo (2013).

A number of current research seemed to validate the view that social networking technology is beneficial in providing a means for market analysis (Alayis et al., 2018; Daniel et al., 2014). Entrepreneurs highlighted that they can compare their products’ prices and qualities with those of competitors. Also, social networking technology enables entrepreneurs to have control of an unpredictable future (Chandler, Detienne, McKelvie, & Mumford, 2011). According to Daniel et al. (2014) entrepreneurs demonstrate this by learning and copying from others, as they regularly look at other businesses’ sites and gain ideas that could help to improve their own. For instance, several Saudi women entrepreneurs asserted that they often check their competitors’ sites to analyse competing products or services in the market especially in relation to price and quality. This is in line with Alayis et al. (2018, p. 5) findings, which indicated that “social networking technology are useful channels for entrepreneurs to learn about... their field and about their competitors as well as to discover and exploit opportunities”.

6.7 Issues Raised when Using Social Networking Technologies for Business Activities

Although entrepreneurs make profitable use of social networking technology applications, there seems to be serious problems associated with technology use, risks involved with the use, and the impact of traditional cultural limitations for women.

6.7.1 Technology Related Problems

The most common technical issue that Saudi women encountered when using social networking technology for home-based business was the appropriateness of those applications for business activities. Most of the interviewees mentioned that the development and new emerging social networking platforms has caused them to lose concentration while using them. This finding is aligned with Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 65) who stated that “using different contact channels can be a worthwhile and profitable strategy. But...nothing is more confusing than contradicting messages across different channels”. The interviewees faced some difficulties in keeping all entrepreneurial activities aligned on all applications. This suggests that they should use only one or two platforms in order to avoid confusion.

Some Saudi women entrepreneurs believed that not all social networking technology platforms are appropriate for business applications, as each platform has been developed for a specific purpose. For example, Facebook and Twitter are more suitable for politics and formal use and not suitable for trading and commercial activities, though they have developed their features and icons to enable users to use them for business pursuits. This view is reflected by some authors who consider that there are various types of applications that need to be distinguished further, but there is no systematic way in which different social networking technology platforms can be categorised for business use, especially with the new sites appearing and emerging in cyberspace every day (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Furthermore, Saudi women entrepreneurs stated that frequent updates of existing platforms and the development of new platforms over a short period has influenced users to leave the older platforms and move to newer ones. This means that the platforms that may be up-to-date now could disappear from the virtual landscape in the future. Jacobs (2018) explains that social networking technology is

a very active and a dynamic fast-moving domain and entrepreneurs need to use the applications that their potential customers use.

In contrast, some interviewees admitted that they were not able to keep up with new features of existing applications, or new platforms because of the time involved to learn how to use them. This is in line with Shabbir et al. (2017) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) who argued that new social networking technologies appear on the horizon every day and entrepreneurs cannot use all of them, especially there has not been a clear guideline for businesses as to how to utilise them. Nonetheless, it is believed that being active is the most important requirement of having a successful home-based online business based on social networking technology (Wicks, 2015; McCorvey, 2010; McLeod, 2018).

Even though social networking technology enhances communication between entrepreneurs and their customers, it lacks direct and verbal communication between the customers and vendors. Some of the interviewees confirmed that the absence of direct communication on these platforms makes them worry and causes various issues related to the ability to see tangible products and accurately match products to customers. In previous research, there were no findings consistent with this view. Nonetheless, Saudi women entrepreneurs linked mistakes to the nature of home-based online businesses. They admitted that it is a time-consuming process, with the potential for mixing up customer orders. Each time an entrepreneur prepares to deliver an order she has to go back to the conversations which took place on one of the social networking technologies to check the customer's requests and make sure that everything is correct. Although this technique helps entrepreneurs to avoid making mistakes, it requires them to spend more time and effort to complete the transaction. This might refer to the lack of "locus control" (Bhaskar & Garimella, 2017) that is required for home-based online entrepreneurs and might negatively affect an entrepreneur's decision to start and continue their business (Alayis et al., 2018).

Participants in this study described the difficulty of gaining their customers' trust. Some linked the trust concerns to the lack of honesty and credibility of both the seller and the customers, while others attributed it to the anonymity of the entrepreneurs and their customers. They believed that selling on social networking sites reduces confidence and trust between both parties, because each of them was afraid of falling into trouble. For example, the buyer has a

fear of paying money for unreceived products whereas the entrepreneur has the fear of sending products that have not been paid for. This result is consistent with AlGhamdi et al. (2012) who found that customers have a fear of not receiving their purchased products, which makes them prefer to not purchase from online retailers. Therefore, trust on social media sites is found to be one of the important factors that affects customers' decisions to purchase online (Al-Maghrabi & Dennis, 2011a) and influences individual entrepreneurs' intentions to adopt social networking sites as a business tool for entrepreneurial activities (Alayis et al., 2018).

The results of the current study lead to a conclusion that most of the Saudi women entrepreneurs do not have strategies to build their customers' trust. Furthermore, the strategy followed to build customers' trust was inappropriate, as they thought that sending the products immediately to customers after they received the money would help them to build trust, but according to previous research this strategy does not work as they might experience trouble with dishonest customers (Surangi, 2016). A number of studies suggested that a good strategy to help entrepreneurs build trust with their consumers is to build and strengthen relationships with them through online communities (Harris & Rae, 2009; Kananukul, Jung, & Watchravesringkan, 2015). Lim (2017) and Bolotaeva and Cata (2010) found that sustained engagement with the customer on social networking technology platforms is the core element of online marketing strategy, which demonstrates trust in building brand awareness and customer relationships.

Saudi women entrepreneurs highlighted that as long as those parties, the entrepreneurs and customers, play their roles behind mobile phone screens, they will definitely have trust issues, a finding that is consistent with Harris and Rae (2009) stating that buying-selling process that is completed behind the screen and none know the other will cause trust problems. According to Gotter (2018) if the customers do not know anything about the seller, the brand and the quality of the products, they would probably search for reviews from previous customers looking for any proof that the business is trustworthy. He recommended some principles to overcome the gap in trust and to instil confidence in potential customers. One way to overcome customer scepticism is to share the human side of the business. For example, entrepreneurs need to consider introducing themselves - the person behind the screen - to their customers, especially if it would add credibility to the brand in the case that the entrepreneur sells products that she makes herself (Cohen, 2017). This building trust strategy is in contrast to the results obtained in this study as most of Saudi women entrepreneurs have concerns about giving their

personal information through social media platforms because of fears for their privacy, thinking that they might be exposing themselves to strangers, even to people from overseas. This view were reported by researchers such as Dwivedi (2017) and Schubert (2019).

Some of the participants disclosed that their lack of education, knowledge and skills needed to operate a business is an ongoing concern. This is a finding that is supported by Mathew (2010) who concluded that the low level of education and training had a major impact on Middle East women interested in running entrepreneurial activities. He explained that the lack of education available to females in Saudi Arabia would definitely create challenges for women entrepreneurs at a later stage. Furthermore, studies by Welsh et al., (2013) and Yousuf Danish and Lawton Smith (2012) indicated that Middle Eastern women entrepreneurs had little business background, which generates a low level of earnings back into the business and this finding is reflected in this study. The Saudi women entrepreneurs self-assessed their marketing/sales skills, management skills and planning skills to be low. They admitted that they lack the experience and required skills, as well as knowledge for their business to stay afloat. Previous studies are of the view that entrepreneurs need to acquire certain skills, especially business and relationship skills to be successful, and to be able to manage their entrepreneurial activities (Ibrahim & Lucky, 2014; Lazear, 2004; Michelacci, 2003). This is consistent with Andersson et al., (2007) who found that business experience and exposure to vital skills are significant challenges that would influence entrepreneurs when managing their own businesses. Nonetheless, Lazear (2004, p. 208) has recognised that entrepreneurs need not be expert in any single skills, but rather what he refers to as being “jacks-of-all-trades” and this was more discussed in Wagner (2003). By this, he means that entrepreneurs should have a wide variety of skills (multi-skilled) to put a business together. Troemel and Strait (2013, p. 348) supported this view as they showed how “Advanced Education: Specialized education and international exposure have helped female entrepreneurs to develop the critical financial, technical and communication skills; which are necessary to establish successful small businesses”.

A few of the participants raised other concerns regarding their technical capabilities in regard to their level of knowledge (or lack of it) and experience in using these platforms. These results were not surprising as Daniel et al. (2014) found that most entrepreneurs had little pre-existing knowledge or skills when using social networking technology. However, previous studies concluded that such platforms required little prior knowledge or experience, but age differences

could influence entrepreneurs' skill levels when using social networking technology, as younger entrepreneurs are more likely to possess technology related skills (Czaja et al., 2006; Shedletsky, 2006; White et al., 2002). However, this view is inconsistent with the study of Van Derkaay and Young (2012) who indicated that older entrepreneurs attempt to improve their skills due to the ever-changing world, thus they always have the desire to stay up-to-date with new technological advances. Due to having a lack of education and training, many of the interviewees need additional resources to manage their online businesses on social networking platforms. Many Saudi women entrepreneurs who lack knowledge in using social networking technologies for entrepreneurial activities have had to ask experts for help to manage and maintain their businesses on these platforms. This view is in agreement with Mathew (2010) who explained that because of a lack of knowledge and education, the business activity they start has less chance of survival, and this can influence entrepreneurs to seek help from people who have expertise in such entrepreneurial activities.

Half of the Saudi women entrepreneurs detailed online business-related crime activities as a concern, including fraud, deception and theft. They gave many examples of fraud and deception that they had experienced themselves. These issues have been identified in the literature as being major challenges to using social networking technology for entrepreneurial activities (Henry Millard, 2006). According to Beranek and Knizek (2013) the amount of fraud in online business activities is high, and in order to prevent discovery, fraudsters exhibit normal trading behaviour and give no indication of their dishonesty. Thus, it is difficult for customers to detect fraud in online transactions as dishonest traders deceive customers. In addition, participants also mentioned issues related to customer behaviour, such as bullying and harassment.

Some participants described issues such as holding products for customers who they know, such as their friends and family members. They complained that these customers sometimes take advantage of their relationship and ask them to book or reserve the products they want for a period of time until they are able to pay for them. This is consistent with a previous study conducted by Reynolds (2015) who found that booking/making reservations in online business can bring about certain risks, particularly when known customers do not pay for the goods supplied, and when other customers refuse to receive the products because they are not needed anymore.

Others were concerned about their business and personal reputation and worry about the negative feedback and comments they receive regarding their services or products on their social networking technology accounts. The study results provide evidence to support Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) regarding the use of social networking technology for online business where it might not be a situation where entrepreneurs can act comfortably. This is due to the ability of consumers to speak freely with each other, whereas businesses have increasingly less control over the information available about them in cyberspace (Raman, 2015). “Historically, companies were able to control the information available about them through strategically placed press announcements and good public relations managers. Today, however, firms have been increasingly relegated to the sidelines as mere observers, having neither the knowledge nor the chance—or, sometimes, even the right—to alter publicly posted comments provided by their customers” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60).

6.7.2 Greater Exposure Attracts Risks

Accepting large numbers of orders through social networking technology was seen by the interviewees as a risky activity. This concern was raised because of the lack of trust between the seller and the buyer. There were no guarantees that the entrepreneur would process a large number of orders and there was always the possibility that customers would not pay.

Participants were aware of the risk that their business ideas could be copied. This risk was also discussed by Daniel et al. (2014) who concluded that an online environment makes the ability to copy others’ business ideas highly feasible. Due to the widely and readily business information available on the web, competitors can easily adopt ideas as their own quickly, and at low cost. Some Saudi women entrepreneurs noted that they also suffered from this ease of imitation when they provided information about their services, products and prices, as competitors were quick to steal the ideas and perhaps implement them better.

Another risk that the interviewees mentioned was the lack of having a clear plan when establishing and managing a business on social networking platforms. This issue has been discussed in the context of home-based online business (Chen et al., 2011; Shabbir et al., 2017). Furthermore, Daniel et al. (2014) found that entrepreneurs do not seek to predict their business future as the source of revenue generation was highly emergent and contingent rather than planned. Much of the literature suggests that entrepreneurs should be decisive about the number

and type of risks they were prepared to accept when starting their online business without setting a clear objective for their business (Gillin, 2009; Tuten, 2008). Although previous studies emphasised the need for explicit business plans to ensure their returns and acceptable risk levels, Saudi women entrepreneurs did not develop such plans, largely because they were pursuing experimental approaches, and if not successful they would not lose anything as they could change their business focus with little loss. Also, some authors suggest that entrepreneurs who do not set a clear strategic plan for their business might have high levels of self-efficacy (Arora, Haynie, & Laurence, 2013; Tumasjan & Braun, 2012), while for others it is a self-critical statement about their own capabilities to set plans, due to their limited IT experience and business knowledge in marketing and planning (Daniel et al., 2014).

6.7.3 Cultural Issues associated with Women's Use of Social Networking Technology for Businesses Activities

The strict Saudi Arabian culture makes a challenge for Saudi women entrepreneurs to conduct business activities using social networking technologies. A high number of interviewees mentioned the limitations in having business dealings with men through social networking technologies due to Islamic and cultural roles. Some of them had personally set their own limits when it came to dealing with men. For example, some would not personally communicate with male customers but asked their husbands and/or brothers to communicate with them on their behalf. This finding is aligned with Tlaiss (2015b, p. 859) who found that “Islamic work values and ethics are embedded in the entrepreneurial activities of these Arab women and ...the agency of the Muslim Arab women allowed them to construct and navigate their entrepreneurial careers away from the traditional, doctrinaire interpretations of Islam”.

Following such techniques when communicating with male clients allows those entrepreneurs to conform to their society's traditions and customs while continuing to conduct their businesses. It is clear that these entrepreneurs were very cautious about dealing with men, mainly because their husbands' level of tolerance was narrow and also because they wanted to follow their society's values, which hold that husbands are, and should be, more dominant in planning and controlling business activities. A finding that is supported by Syed and Van Buren (2014) who stated that gender relations in Islam is a real challenge that lies in how narrow and patriarchal interpretations and practices of religion could be reformed to bring about gender equality, which

affect businesses operating by women within Islamic societies. However, despite the fact that Saudi women entrepreneurs faced some restrictive cultural rules and traditions, they were able to find ways to encourage their husbands to let them start their businesses on social networking platforms. According to Welsh et al. (2013) although strictness in the traditional male-dominated countries still persists, women were able to participate in some business activities.

The study participants stated that they face gender-biased treatment, such as discrimination and harassment, when communicating with men regarding their businesses. In order to avoid such problems, they use some strategies such as only using text messaging for communication, and requesting followers' respect. If they encounter comments with harassment or ridicule, they will immediately block that account and put a disclaimer in their social networking accounts that they only allow female followers, or that they will only respond to queries or comments from females. This result ties well with previous studies that found that the entrepreneur can derive a "substantial benefit" from social networking platforms where the harassment occurred (Stead, 2017; Gelms, 2012). Thus, technology is an effective tool for communication between genders (Van Volkom et al., 2014). In the case of Saudi Arabian women entrepreneurs, culture plays an important and vital role in communicating with male customers. Social networking technologies mainly use text communication, which means that the business owner can avoid talking with someone face-to-face.

Male dominance is a strong part of Saudi Arabian culture. Men are the ones who make decisions and it is expected that men will financially provide for the needs of the family (Shalhoub, 2019). There may have been some relaxation of cultural rules and traditions, but the participants have still followed what their husbands and society dictate. Stanger et al., (2017) found that the Saudi Arabian culture of setting limitations when doing business with men through social networking technology can negatively affect the success of the business. Although these interviewees were aware of the cultural perception about male dominance, this has not stopped them from continuing their business activities by using social networking technology to reach their markets.

6.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the adoption of social networking technologies for home-based businesses by female entrepreneurs in the Saudi Arabian context. A number of interesting findings regarding how these entrepreneurs use social networking technologies has been outlined in the context of existing knowledge and previous studies. This research shows that social networking technologies can enable Saudi Arabian women entrepreneurs to establish home-based online business and achieve benefits that would not be available in a physical businesses.

7. Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Overview

This study has analysed how and why Saudi women entrepreneurs use social networking technology for home-based online business. Insights were gained into the motivations for using these technologies and the key business benefits; also, critical issues facing the participants who used social networking technology for their business activities were revealed. The research adopted a qualitative case study approach in the form of interviews with 40 participants.

This chapter summarises the major findings of the research and outlines how they contribute to knowledge about technology which enables Saudi women entrepreneurs to run and enhance their home-based online businesses, despite the problems they face in their society of culture, age and male gender dominance. Next, the study implications are discussed, and study limitations identified. Finally, suggestions and directions for future research are provided.

7.2 Key Findings

The theory developed in this study explains market creation by Saudi female entrepreneurs and their gradual growth. The entrepreneurial behaviour theory helped in understanding entrepreneurs who are creating something from nothing by making do with what is at hand to solve problems and uncover opportunities. It reflects how Saudi female entrepreneurs used the available resources, home and social networking technologies, to enter the market and create job opportunities. On the other hand, the social commerce theory, integrated in this study, reflects the situation of entrepreneurs who establish their business in highly uncertain and dynamic environments such as social media, and target customers through as whoever buys a product or service. It explains how the service quality of social networking technologies contribute to customer satisfaction and usage intention leading to social commerce intention.

The results of interviews with 40 Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs show that as owners of home-based businesses they use different social networking platforms for various business purposes. Most of the participants use social networking technology to advertise and publicise their products. They also use the platforms to form online communities and encourage reviews, suggestions and opinions from their followers/potential customers, which eventually assist

these entrepreneurs to improve their products and develop their businesses. The results helped answer the research question: “How do Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs use social networking technology to promote their home-based businesses?”.

The study reveals why Saudi women entrepreneurs use social networking technology for their businesses. One of the most striking motivations was that of personal growth, in that they want to generate their own income. Thus, they decided to become self-employed and conduct entrepreneurial activities using social networking technology. The motivations were of different types, either “push” or “pull”. The Discussion chapter outlined of the differences between pull-motivated and push-motivated entrepreneurial activities, and it concluded that most of the interviewees were pushed into self-employment because they felt compelled to start their own businesses, as all other options for work were either non-existent or unsatisfactory. Therefore, their decisions to become involved in technology based entrepreneurial activity were because of an absence of attractive alternatives. They took advantage of the availability of these platforms to run their businesses at a minimum or no cost, which proved to be opportunity-motivated entrepreneurial activities. The results help understand and answer the second research question: “What are the motivations underlying social networking technologies used by Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs?”

This research has highlighted the advantages that Saudi women entrepreneurs obtained from their use of social networking technology for business activities. The most noted advantage was the opportunity to create jobs for themselves and for other women who cannot work outside the home. They also gained the advantage of reaching a large number of customers of ages and from different areas. This was a significant benefit. Those results indicated that social networking technology has become an effective tool for Saudi women entrepreneurs to develop their business.

Although most of the interviewees gained advantages from the use of social networking technology for their businesses, they also faced challenges when carrying out entrepreneurial activities through these platforms. For example, they found it difficult to decide on the most appropriate social networking technology application to use for their businesses. In addition, the absence of direct communication and trust, lack of online marketing and management skills and the threat of online business-related crimes were major obstacles to women business owners

succeeding in their entrepreneurship journey. Additionally, Saudi women entrepreneurs in this study identified their families, childcare responsibilities, and domestic work as obstacles affecting their entrepreneurship performance and growth. The results revealed how social networking technology impacts the way in which home-based online business operators have to balance their family responsibilities with their creative enterprise activities.

Cultural barriers and policy restrictions are serious challenges that impede the growth of home-based businesses run by Saudi women. For example, using social networking technology to show personal contact information puts the women at risk of criticism, including harassment and negative comments. Therefore, entrepreneurs prefer to restrict access to their business pages and remain relatively anonymous during the buying and selling process. This approach reflects a low level of change in Saudi society and the fact that women have started to create job opportunities for themselves and others through entrepreneurship. The findings of this study showed that Saudi society is traditionally conservative regarding women communicating with strangers and/or male customers. However, Saudi women entrepreneurs can change this situation and interact with male customers, create, share and transform knowledge via social networking technology, allowing them to overcome that particular cultural issue. The results highlighted that Saudi woman entrepreneurs can improve their businesses dramatically if they proactively embraced changes to their world and used social networking technology as an opportunity rather than as a threat to be avoided at all costs.

The combination of entrepreneurship and the use of social networking technology has enabled women to overcome the cultural issues that impeded their participation in business activities in Middle East regions, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Such technology has proven to be the most powerful tool for development (El-Swais, 2015). It is believed that by utilising the technology and resources for increasing knowledge of business formation, Saudi women have created their own labour force and elevated their status beyond traditional roles (Troemel & Strait, 2013).

Thus, Saudi female entrepreneurs used their knowledge and the available resources, including home and the Internet, to setup their home-based online businesses (Shmailan, 2014). Entrepreneurship was a good career choice for Saudi women and there are significant perceptions regarding the status and technology/media awareness for women entrepreneurs (Bosma & Levie, 2009; Minniti, 2010). They were more empowered with entrepreneurship

opportunity, utilising the home and social networking technologies as a tool, to largely participate in the labour market and contribute to their country's economy (Arab News, 2017; Khan, 2013; Jeddah Economic Gateway, 2016) and come over many of the restrictions, such as strict gender rules, that still remains in the Kingdom (Hubbard & Alsultan, 2017).

7.3 Contribution

This research attempted to:

- (1) Present the process of how Saudi Arabian women entrepreneurs utilise social networking technology platforms to enhance entrepreneurial activities;
- (2) Investigate the reasons and/or the motivations why Saudi Arabian women entrepreneurs use social networking technology for home-based online business; and
- (3) Identify the opportunities and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs when using social networking technology for their home-based business.

This study provides several new additions to the literature available on entrepreneurial and home-based businesses established through social networking technology. It provides an in-depth analysis of the business benefits sought by the Saudi women entrepreneurs when using social networking technology to manage business activities. It shows that the traditional and cultural protocols that constrain the mobility of women in Saudi Arabia provide the ideal basis for the concept of home-based businesses to be eagerly embraced. It identifies the changes in the lives of Saudi women entrepreneurs in terms of earnings and generating incomes from being self-employed through working from home.

Few studies have focussed on Arab women who own and operate home-based businesses, but some examples are (Ahmad & Mohan Agrawal, 2012; Yousuf Danish & Lawton Smith, 2012; and Zamberi Ahmad, 2011). This study adds additional insights because of the particular questions it addresses from an Arab world perspective. Ultimately, this study contributes to extant literature and provides insights into an area of entrepreneurship that, because of the impact of technological changes, is sharply increasing in Saudi Arabia and provides opportunities for many Saudi women.

7.4 Study Implications

Based upon empirical interpretations, the researcher has revised the concept of social networking technology and integrated it with the emerging idea of ‘entrepreneurship’ to bring both concepts into the present context of the online home-based business entrepreneurs who are the focus of this study. Through this study, researchers can understand the nature of the specific situation of Saudi women entrepreneurs and how they feel about their enterprises. Practitioners can benefit from the real stories that were provided by individual women describing their entrepreneurial experiences. Moreover, agencies can benefit from the experience that Saudi female entrepreneurs gained from their use of social networking technologies for business and implement it to the government policies that wanted to be achieved by 2030.

7.4.1 Policy Implications

The policy implication of this research is to provide guidance and advice on how the Saudi government could enable women to participate in the private sector and boost this sector’s contribution to the economy, as a vision of 2030.

New policy interventions should focus on improving access to the entrepreneurial sectors for these women who would profit from participating in the workforce. Government agencies should make it easier for Saudi women to break the circle of economic deprivation and poverty.

In order to enhance home-based online businesses through social networking technologies, the focus should be put on strengthening the social networks of these women and diversifying their entrepreneurial activities. These can enable Saudi female entrepreneurs to develop, improve and enhance communication infrastructure, access to remote areas and enable wider business networks.

Since 2015, the Saudi government has taken the decision for women to participate in the countries' economy. After promulgating some policies and changes, the government waited for a limited period to understand how the policy had been taken up by its citizens. It has definitely had mass benefits on the betterment of nation, as it showed in this study. Thus; it is suggested that the government take further action to implement some policy to support women. these actions can be included in providing entrepreneurial workshops to increase women's capacity for management techniques, communication skills, and learning possibilities.

The policy of enabling women to take part in the private sector has benefits the nation. Increasing women participation in the entrepreneurial sectors would reduce the unemployment issue which is one of the countries' target. A significant finding of this study was that the use of social networking technologies enables women not only to create jobs for themselves but for others as well. So the issue of unemployment of women in Saudi Arabia would be reduced as women find the way to use social networking technologies and build their own career and this contribute to achieving the government vision of 2030.

Entrepreneurs seek alternative ways to develop their businesses and achieve success. They need financial support to operate. Self-funding alone, however, is not a panacea. Furthermore, entrepreneurs, who adopt social networking technologies for their entrepreneurial activities, are in need to have strategic planning, professional development, commitment, outreach, and other non-financial resources, such as time in order to be successful. Thus, a key role for the Saudi government is the provision of both financial and non-financial resources.

7.4.2 Implications for Researchers

The study presents original research on the new phenomenon of using social networking technology for home based businesses operated by female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia. It also presents an explanation of this new trend in the Saudi Arabian context and explains the concept of women undertaking entrepreneurial activities as an alternative to paid employment.

This research illustrates the work/life trends of women in Saudi Arabia and how social networking technology has made working from home more feasible, and thus, more common. Researchers can benefit by understanding the implications of creating a business at home, using social networking technology, in a Middle Eastern context.

Some of the findings explained how social networking technologies are used as an online community for customer communications. This is useful for researchers who study how social networking sites create opportunities to establish home-based online business and contact and gain customers across different regions. The findings also contribute to the literature on social services and social networking technology on the Internet, and can support interdisciplinary research on online communities that assist users with social network analysis.

7.4.3 Implications for Practitioners

The research outlined the motivations of Saudi women to run a home-based business by using social networking technology for entrepreneurial activities. The study has implications for business development agencies as it helps them to formulate effective policies and appropriate strategies that will enable and support Saudi women.

This study provides women entrepreneurs with guidance on how to use social networking technology to create opportunities for home-based businesses. It explains how social networking technologies can result in a shift of business activity, power and value, and how customer reviews can build brand awareness.

The findings assist Saudi women entrepreneurs to be aware of the obstacles faced when running home-based online businesses and help them to understand strategies that home-based business owners follow to develop activity and sales.

7.4.4 Theoretical Implications

It provides insights into the salient social commerce adoption issues by focusing on Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs.

The integrated framework for social networking technologies and entrepreneurship, developed in this study, synthesizes the factors, uses, and outcomes or impacts of social media for entrepreneurial online businesses; providing the whole picture of entrepreneurs in one frame. In doing this, an understanding of Saudi female entrepreneur perception of social media use for entrepreneurial activities was derived.

In addition, the proposed framework can be used to explore social networking technologies use within other business contexts to further understand the effect of social media adoption and use on different types of individual behaviour.

In regards to the emerging entrepreneurs, the framework is consistent of essential factors that influence both the usage and outcomes of social networking technologies adoption; thus, it

suggests that entrepreneurs can manipulate these factors to drive better impacts and improve their performance.

Moreover, the overuse of fundamental adoption and usage theories have led to the call by recent studies for the use of emergent/new perspectives to explore technology usage to develop a holistic understanding of social media drivers.

7.5 Limitations of the Study

The study focuses only on Saudi Arabian women who operate home-based businesses and does not include other Middle Eastern regions. Therefore, further studies of women entrepreneurs located in Gulf countries need to be investigated.

Furthermore, the participants in this study were mainly located in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia. However, claims to the validity of its findings were supported by their consistency with evidence from other recent studies that were conducted in other parts of the country; for example, Noura Alturki and Braswell (2010), Sadi and Al-Ghazali (2010), Kelley et al. (2011), and Ahmad and Mohan Agrawal (2012).

7.6 Directions for Future Research

The study findings showed that women entrepreneurs compete with each other in order to present the best services to their communities. This situation persuades them to become more innovative in producing products; however, it might also be a factor forcing entrepreneurs to not establish businesses that use social networking technology. Thus, there is a need for research to investigate whether social competitiveness is conducive to entrepreneurship and running businesses. Moreover, further work is needed to conduct more direct systematic investigation of opportunities for entrepreneurship created and strengthened because of the use of social networking technology.

Simon and Way (2015) noted that home is a gendered context for entrepreneurship. While this study focuses only on women entrepreneurs, further research should be conducted, by those who are attracted to study gendered paths in entrepreneurship, to investigate entrepreneurial

start-ups of home-based businesses by women compared to home-based businesses started by men.

The results of this research indicate that women entrepreneurs receive support from family and friends that helps them to develop and expand their businesses. Although this was indirectly addressed in the study, it could be a further area of future investigation. Researchers could focus on how family considerations and power relations within society affect business start-up and growth.

One of the study findings reported that entrepreneurs use social networking technology to build their customer community. A future study is needed to focus on how entrepreneurs, either women or men, develop and maintain their relationships with customers through these online communities, as there is a need to learn about the strategies they follow to build and use their networks to enhance their entrepreneurial activities.

Cultural strictness for women conducting business activities on social networking platforms, especially dealing with men, was a particular obstacle for most of the women who participated in this study. However, despite this cultural barrier, women have initiated changes in their society and continued their journey in conducting business activities on these platforms. Thus, future research could be undertaken to investigate the impact of changes in lifestyle, culture and male attitudes to Saudi women entrepreneurs. It would be interesting to explore whether the technology and the change in women's status have, over time, encouraged more women to take the opportunity of conducting entrepreneurial activities in Saudi Arabia.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant's information

Code number	Type of products/ service involved	Age range	Number of years/months in business	Number of years/ months in using social networking technologies	The most popular Social media applications used	Level of degree	Subject
1	Cooking	25-43 years	1 year	5 months	Instagram & Snapchat	Bachelor	Geography
2	Coal set/ vas	35-44 years	3 years	1 year	Instagram	High School	Science
3	Makeup & bed sheets	25-43 years	4 years	Since starting the business	Instagram & Snapchat	Diploma	Disability
4	Cooking & home accessories	25-34 years	1 year	Since starting the business	Instagram, Snapchat & WhatsApp	Diploma	Computer Science
5	Clothing	25-43 years	6 years	Since starting the business	Instagram, Snapchat & WhatsApp	High School	Science
6	Clothing	35-44 years	6 years	Since starting the business	Instagram, Twitter & WhatsApp	Diploma	Computer Science

7	Painted Golden accessories	45-54 years	5 years	Since starting the business	WhatsAPP	Less than high school	
8	Décor designer	35-44 years	1 year	6 months	Instagram, Facebook & Twitter	Bachelor	Interior Design Engineering
9	Makeup	less than 25	3 years	Since starting the business	WhatsApp, Instagram & Snapchat	High School	Literacy
10	Prefum & wood stands	less than 25	1 year	5 months	Snapchat, Instagram, & WhatsApp	Less than high school	
11	clothings/ watches	45-54 years	10 years	6 years	Instagram, Snapchat & WhatsApp	Less than high school	
12	Clothing, bags, accessories & make up	35-44 years	8 years	3 years	Instagram & WhatsApp	High School	Literacy
13	Cooking	35-44 years	6 years	3 years	WhatsApp	Less than high school	
14	Makeup	25-43 years	1 year	Since starting the business	WhatsApp & Snapchat	Less than high school	
15	Planets	35-44 years	1 year	6 months	Snapchat, Instagram & WhatsApp	High School	Science

16	Makeup	35-44 years	1 year	Since starting the business	Facebook, Instagram & Snapchat	Less than high school	
17	Traditional cloths & branded bags & shoes	25-43 years	15 years	8 years	Instagram, WhatsApp & Snapchat	High school	Literacy
18	Hinnah	25-43 years	15 years	6 years	Snapchat, Instagram & WhatsApp	Less than high school	
19	Islamic & story books	less than 25	8 months	Since starting the business	Instagram & WhatsApp	High school	Science
20	Cooking	35-44 years	5 years	Since starting the business	Instagram & Snapchat	High school	Literacy
21	Cooking	35-44 years	5 years	Since starting the business	Instagram	Bachelor	Chemistry
22	Traditional craft	25-43 years	1 year	Since starting the business	Instagram	Less than high school	
23	Cooking	25-43 years	7 years	6 years	Facebook, Instagram & WhatsApp	Bachelor	Technical and Vocational Training Corporation
24	Gift crafting	less than 25	1 year	Since starting the business	Instagram & Snapchat	Diploma	Accounting

25	Furniture	less than 25	4 years	Since starting the business	Instagram, Snapchat & WhatsApp	Bachelor	Biology
26	Turkish clothing & bags & wallets	35-44 years	6 months	Since starting the business	Instagram & Snapchat	High School	Science
27	Stationaries products	35-44 years	2 years	1 year	Facebook & Instagram	Bachelor	Sychology and sociaty college
28	Makeup & watches	less than 25	7 years	Since starting the business	Instagram & Twitter	High School	Science
29	Cooking	35-44 years	6 years	Since starting the business	Facebook & Instagram	Bachelor	Biology
30	Photographing	25-43 years	5 months	Since starting the business	Instagram & WhatsApp	Bachelor	Information Technologies
31	Cooking	35-44 yeas	5 years	Since starting the business	Instagram & WhatsApp	High school	Science
32	Clothing	25-43 years	1 year	2 months	Instagram & WhatsApp	High school	Science
33	Cooking	25-43 years	4 years	Since starting the business	Instagram & WhatsApp	High school	Science

34	Beauty creams	45-54 years	4 years	Since starting the business	Instagram & WhatsApp	Bachelor	Home economy
35	Branded bags & shoes	25-43 years	2 years	Since starting the business	Instagram, WhatsApp & Snapchat	Bachelor	Doctor
36	Cooking	25-43 years	4 years	Since starting the business	Instagram, WhatsApp & Snapchat	Diploma	Hospitality Management
37	Weeding craft & decorations	35-44 years	1 year	Since starting the business	Instagram	Less than high school	
38	Electronic filtering designer	25-43 years	8 months	Since starting the business	Instagram & Snapchat	Bachelor	
39	Clothing	35-44 years	10 years	6 years	WhatsApp	High school	Science
40	Makeup & perfumes	less than 25	6 months	Since starting the business	Instagram & WhatsApp	Bachelor	Nursing

Appendix B: The basic interview questions asked during pilot interviews

I am going to ask you few questions about your use of social networking sites and how you integrate it in your business.

1. First of all, can you tell me about your business?
2. Can you describe for me how you adopted social media into your process?
3. Can you give me an example of the motivations that make you set up a home- based online business on social media?
4. Can you give me an example of any risk you take in mind when you set your business up on social media?
5. Can you give me an example of the issues that you encounter when using social media for business?
6. Can you describe a time when you had to make an important decision with limited facts about product delivery and quality
 - Have you faced any obstacles?
 - How did you deal with it?
 - What was the final outcomes?
 - What did you learn from the situation?
 - What feedback did you get from others?

That is the end of the interview, do you have any other experience of business on social media that you would like to share?

Appendix C: Developed interview questions to specifically related to a Saudi context

1. Is it possible to tell me about your business or project?
2. Is it possible to explain to me how did you integrate the idea of using social networking technologies on your trading operations?
 - Which social media sites do you use for business?
 - How many years have you been using it?
 - How do you stay current in your field on new or evolving technologies?
3. Can you give me an example of the motivations that make you set up a home- based online business on social media?
4. Can you tell me how technology help you to organise the time that you spend between family priorities and tasks of your business?
5. Can you give me an example of the expected problems in the field of online commerce and what are the solutions proposed to avoid such problems?
6. Can you describe a time when you had to make an important decision with limited facts about product delivery and quality
7. Can you tell me how do you deal with customer complains, in terms of gaining their satisfactions?
8. Can you give me an example of any risk you take in mind when you set your business up on social media?
9. Can you tell me about the reasons of running an online home-based business on social media?
10. Can you give me an example of the issues that you encounter when using social media for business

Appendix D: Demographic information

1. Please, highlight which age group you are?
 - Less than 25 years
 - 25-34 years
 - 35-44 years
 - 45-54 years
 - 55 years and above
2. Please, highlight what is the highest level of education you have achieved?
 - No formal education
 - High school
 - Undergraduate Diploma
 - Bachelor Degree
 - Postgraduate Diploma
 - Master Degree
 - Higher than Master's Degree
3. Please, write what is your field of study?

Appendix E: Coding process

Example of coding

The following is a short transcript extract that was obtained from an interview. This extract presents the process of data coding.

Open Coding

In this stage, we first identify incidents, which are highlighted and numbered below.

Arafat: Is it possible to explain to me how do you find the idea of using social networking sites on your trading operations

Zainab AlBaqqaal

The idea of using social networking sites for business came when **I saw many women traders are using these sites to sell imported products** (1). Before I start the business I bought some products from a trader in Instagram. **When my husband saw that, he told me “all this exists in the Web sites and you can order these things by your own, without a referral to the women traders”** (2).

Ordering by yourself allows you to **avoid the greedy women traders and paying the extra money that is existed from using an intermediary who asks for a large amount of money as a customer commission** (3). Since that time, I worked in e-commerce industry by offering products and more economical goods for those who need it.

However, **being an intermediary is not an easy job** (4). **It required a long time to learn the skills for the job and the sense of trust with foreign sellers** (5). Actually, before I start my business, **I had taken certain steps where I began to order some staff for my children from the global commercial sites in order to assess the credibility, high-quality and the time required for the delivery of products** (6). **When I was satisfied with the product, I was impressed dealing with these sellers** (7). Consequently, **I was confident to start my project on trading imported products from international commercial sites** (8).

The most popular way of using social media is that traders introduce the product image in Instagram account (9). **They provide as much information as they can about this product** (10). **Traders tell their customers that this product will arrive after a certain period of time, for example, two weeks later after their request** (11). **So if they want to order this product, they have to contact her on WhatsApp** (12). **In this case many traders provide their mobile number on Instagram for WhatsApp communication** (13).

At the beginning of my project the turnout was very large and my Instagram account was largely recognized among my family and friends and their relatives as well. Although **I kept telling regularly about my Instagram and the idea of my business of importing international**

products (14), the demand of it has declined because the availability of Arabic commercial websites (15).

Actually, **my family, friends and colleagues had a big role in supporting and publishing my business as they helped me with distributing good words of mouth regarding my products (16). I also accept many 'friend requests' through Instagram account (17).** Moreover, **I had exchanged my account address with other traders who have a huge number of followers in order to announce their followers about my account (18).** Hence, I got a quite big number of customers and followers.

The highlighted and numbered incidents are then given appropriate descriptive names which shown in the table

Numbers	Name of incidents
1	Following other people
2	Husband's advice
3	Avoid using an intermediary
4	Not easy job
5	Learn the skills and build trust
6	Learn skills and build trust
7	Satisfied with the bought products
8	Confident to deal with them
9	Post product's images
10	Provide product's information
11	Inform customers about the arrival duration
12	Must contact through WhatsApp
13	Provide traders contact information

14	Announcing about their business
15	Availability of Arabic commercial sites
16	Distributing good word of mouth
17	Accept many “friends’ requests”
18	Exchange business accounts

Next step in open coding is to group related incidents into concepts which are introduced below. The original incidents are presented in brackets.

- a. Following other people (1)
- b. Family support (2, 16)
- c. Avoid paying customer commission (3)
- d. Not easy job (4)
- e. Problem awareness (5, 6)
- f. Consequence of building trust (7, 8)
- g. Multiple purposes of use (9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14)
- h. Availability of Alternative sites (15)
- i. Increase number of followers/ customers (17, 18)

The last stage is to form more abstract categories of related concepts which are introduced below. The number (in brackets) are the original incidents that are included with them.

- a. Following other people (1)
- b. family support (2,16, 17, 18)
- c. Avoid paying customer commission (3)
- d. problem awareness (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 15)

e. Multiple purposes of use (9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14)

Axial Coding

In this step, the categories and their properties are related to each other in order to identify relationships and to associate them to the research questions of this study. This only involves renaming or classifying of categories which then is termed as phenomena. The categories contained within each are listed in brackets.

The identified phenomena are:

- Motivations to start business on social networking sites (Following other people, family support, avoiding paying customer commission)
- How Saudi women entrepreneurs use social networking sites for business (Multiple purposes of use)
- Issues facing Saudi women entrepreneurs when using social networking sites for business (problem awareness)

Linking these to the research questions we obtained:

Q1. How do Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs currently use social networking technologies?

Associated phenomenon: multiple purposes of use

Q2. What are the motivations underlying social networking technologies use by Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs?

Associated phenomenon: Motivations to start business on social networking sites

Q3. What are the most important issues facing Saudi Arabian female entrepreneurs in their business use of social networking technologies?

Associated phenomenon: issues facing Saudi women entrepreneurs when using social networking sites for business.

Selective Coding

This is the last stage of coding process in which we develop stories from the phenomena previously identified. Selective coding is best reached when considerable data exists and so, for that reason, the story shown below is particularly limited; it is based only on the short extract of one interview. In order to complete the selective coding, we are required to provide all the “core” categories that were previously identified (as phenomena) during the axial coding and

write a few sentences for each “core” category to formulate the stories. The descriptive sentences derived from the “core” categories are introduced below:

Q1. The most popular way of using social media is that traders introduce the product image in Instagram account

They provide as much information as they can about this product.

... If they want to order this product, they have to contact her on WhatsApp. In this case many traders provide their mobile number on Instagram for WhatsApp communication.

... I kept telling regularly about my Instagram and the idea of my business of importing international products...

Q2. The idea of using social networking sites for business came when I saw many women traders are using these sites to sell imported products

When my husband saw that, he told me “all this exists in the Web sites and you can order these things by your own, without a referral to the women traders”

Q3. However, being an intermediary is not an easy job. It required a long time to learn the skills for the job and the sense of trust with foreign sellers.

... I had taken certain steps where I began to order some staff for my children from the global commercial sites in order to assess the credibility, high-quality and the time required for the delivery of products.

... The demand of it has declined because the availability of Arabic commercial websites.