

The Role of Omani Women's Associations in Preserving Women's Creative Industries

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Abstract

The government of the Sultanate of Oman has been keen to preserve the entity of Omani women and their families through stability and cohesion in the light of the changes in life, whether it was material stability or moral stability. Since the establishment of the first branch of the Omani Women's Association in 1972 AD to its wide spread to cover all regions of the Sultanate; these associations effectively contributed to the inclusion of Omani women socially, economically and culturally. In addition, the direct care of women by the government during the lifetime of the blessed Renaissance also contributed to empowering women in the three aspects and overcoming the basic challenges that were facing women during the early years of the blessed Renaissance. One of the most important goals of women's associations is the interest in small projects and the creative industries of Omani women, as the creative industries have an important and influential role in the economic development and raising the national and family income, as it opens new marketing horizons for the individual and helps them develop creative thoughts. The Sultanate of Oman is one of the countries that is rich in traditional industries which can be creative industries but due to the rapid technological progress, these traditional crafts have become neglected. Therefore, it has become necessary to seek new non-traditional solutions in order to preserve traditional crafts and industries that help craft women raise the level of skill, innovation and art, in order to preserve the crafts.

Keywords: Omani Women's Associations, Creative Industries, Omani Women

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Introduction

The women in the Sultanate of Oman are legally entitled for getting similar pay like the male employees. Along with that, the females are also entitled for similar treatment like the males. However, in actuality, the females often face various challenges in workplaces and they are often victims of gender discriminations and favouritism. The law enforcing agencies also do not provide enough importance to resolving gender discriminations in workplaces. For this reason, the financial status and the social status of majority of the women in the Sultanate of Oman are not well. However, the empowerment of the women is very much important for the economic and social development of the country. On the other hand, the economy of the sultanate of Oman is highly dependent on the mining industry and the sales of oil and gas.

Besides the mining industry, the agricultural industry has a large contribution to the economic growth of the country. However, other industries are often neglected in such a situation. Specially, the creative industries are often overlooked as they have very low contribution in the economic growth of the country. However, the government of Oman has realized that it is important for the country to enhance the growth of the creative industries like the art and craft industry, music industry, architecture, sculpture, pottery and so on. Considering all these facts, the government of Oman has become highly focused on the empowerment of the women and therefore, the government has taken initiatives for encouraging the women of the country to be engaged with various creative industries. The main objective of the study is to discuss about the creative industries and the association of women in the Sultanate of Oman.

Aim

The main aim of the research is to identify the creative industries in Oman and to investigate the role played by the women of the country in the development of these creative industries.

Objectives of the Research

- To identify the creative industries in the sultanate of Oman
- To analyze how women of Oman are associated with these creative industries
- To analyze the role played by the Oman women's association in associating the rural women to the creative industries of the country
- To analyze the role played by the women in the development and growth of the creative industries in the sultanate of Oman

Research Questions

1. What are the creative industries with which the women of Oman are associated with?
2. What is the role played by the women in the development and growth of the creative industries in the sultanate of Oman?

Literature Review

In this section of the article, various research articles, journals, books and information available in various websites have been reviewed in order to collect required information regarding the creative industries of the Sultanate of Oman and the role played by the women in the country in the development and the growth of the country. By reviewing the research literatures, information has also been gathered regarding the role of Oman Women's

Association regarding the empowerment of women in the country and the engaging the women with the creative industries. The information has been discussed and critically reviewed under various sections in order to answer the research questions.

Omani Women's Association In Oman

The government of Oman is highly focused on empowering the women of the country. The Omani women's association is an agency that is responsible for empowering the women of the sultanate of Oman. The Omani Women's Association is a social and cultural organization aimed at advancing Omani women in all social and cultural fronts. The Rural Women's Development Centre's are also under the supervision of The Omani Women's Associations. The Omani Women's association provides a variety of services to the women of the country (Weber, 2017). For example, the association can provide training services for getting placements in various companies associated with the creative industries. The association mainly helps the women of the country to become self dependent (Parmin and Savitri, 2020). Any women residing in the sultanate of Oman can request and avail the services of the association. There are various types of creative industries and the association mainly tries to engage the women of the country with the creative industries in order to make them financially self dependent.

When a large number of women become financially self dependent, the economic growth of the country can be enhanced. Therefore, the association will help the country to enhance the growth of the economy and to improve the quality of lives of the women in the society. In these days, the association has become highly focused on helping the rural women in the sultanate of Oman in their career development. The women in various disadvantaged areas and remote villages get enough support from the association for starting small businesses or getting replacements in small and medium sized firms (Adams, 2022). Along with that, there are a large number of women in the sultanate of Oman who fail to get employment due to the lack of professional skills and competencies. For this reason, the association also has tried to provide training to many women so that they can get employment in various companies and can become financially self dependent. Along with that, the association also provides various other types of services to the women like legal services to the women who are victim of rape, domestic violence and other issues. Along with that, the association also provides health care services, mental health services and education services to the children of the women who are victim of various types of social injustices, domestic violence or other issues.

The mental health services and other types of support services are also provided to the women who are either physically or mentally disabled. The old women who are the victim of financial abuse and neglect also get community support services from the Oman Women's Association. In these days, the association has become highly focused on engaging the women of the Sultanate of the Oman with various types of creative industries in the country so that the skills and competencies of the women are enhanced and they also get enough chances of becoming financially self dependent (Cerde-Suarez, 2021). Besides this objective, the association also wants to engage a large number of women with the creative industries in order to enhance the growth of these creative industries. Considering all these facts, it can be said that the Oman Women's Association is performing a nice work for the empowerment of the women of the Sultanate of Oman and the growth of the creative industries in Oman.

Creative Industries In Oman

There are various types of creative industries associated with women in the Sultanate of Oman. The most common creative industries in Oman are music industry, dance, art, craft, film, various types of performing arts, visual arts, architecture, painting and so on. Women in the Sultanate of Oman can be associated with any types of creative industries. Previously, these types of creative industries were not provided enough importance in the country and therefore, many talented people have not received the value of their talents in the country. However, in these days, the Government of Oman has become highly focused on the development of these creative industries in order to enrich the culture and the cultural heritage of Oman. For this reason, the government of Oman is also encouraging people for engaging with these industries (Dana et al. 2022). The government of Oman also provides enough support to the people, especially the women, who are associated with these creative industries. For example, the government of the Sultanate of Oman has introduced a new project called creative industries plan for boosting competitiveness. The main objective of the project is to encourage people to get engaged with these creative industries so that the economic growth of the country can be enhanced.

On the other hand, the government has taken initiatives for the development of the creative industries in order to reduce the unemployment rate in the Sultanate of Oman. The economic growth of the Oman is highly dependent on agriculture and the mining industry and therefore, the creative industries have often been neglected (Almamari, 2020). However, the Omani government has realized that the development of these industries is also important for enhancing the economic growth of the country. The development of these creative industries can also help improve the quality of lives of people who are associated with these industries (Al-Abri, 2021). Therefore, the government of the country has provided enough importance to the development of these creative industries. It has been revealed in studies that the development of all these creative industries will help increase the competitiveness of the economy of Oman in the world economy. The government of Oman has also taken initiatives for mapping out the present conditions and the ups and downs faced by the art-related creative industries so that the government can take necessary steps for the development of these art-related creative industries. It has also been revealed in studies that the development of creative industries in Oman is also interrelated with the development of tourism business in the country.

A large number of tourists also visit the country just because of the attraction of its music, handcraft, sculpture, architecture and traditional creative industries. According to the ministry of culture of Oman, the traditional handcraft industries like the earthen pot making industry, leather, textiles and other industries are considered the revered treasures of the country that need to be preserved and popularized in order to preserve the heritage and culture of the country. Because of this culture, a large number of tourists visit the country (Chatty and Rabo, 2020). Considering these facts, it can be said that the development of these creative industries not only enhances the economic growth of the country but the development of these creative industries can also help improve the quality of lives and the financial status of a large number of people in the country. Therefore, the government of Oman and various other NGOs has become highly concerned about the development of the creative industries of the country by engaging a large number of people with these creative industries. Along with that the governmental and non-governmental organizations are also trying to provide enough support to the businesses that belong to the creative industries so that the creative industries get enough opportunities of growth.

Creative Handicraft Industries Associated With Rural Omani Women

Though there are various types of creative industries in Oman like music, dance, film industry and others but the rural women are mainly associated with creative industries like art, craft, earthen pot making, painting and other industries. It has also been revealed in studies that there are many rural entrepreneurs who are the owners of small firms related to the creative industries like art, craft and others and there are many other rural women who work under them. However, it has also been revealed in the studies that the rural women associated with the creative industries and even the rural women entrepreneurs face various challenges related to the growth and advancement of their business (Ghouse et al. 2019). For example, the rural women often do not get enough chances of exposure and therefore, they often cannot get the success that they deserve. As a result of it, many of the rural women also stop their work and many cases the small rural firms associated with the creative industries also collapse because of the lack of exposure, the lack of infrastructure and the lack of funds and resources.

In many cases, the small rural firms associated with the creative industries also collapse due to the lack of funds and the lack of support from the government of Oman. For this reason, the government of Oman has decided to provide enough support to the rural women of the country who lives in mountain areas and remote village but still aspire to go beyond the traditional family role and want to become successful in life (Topimin et al. 2018). The Oman Women Association is responsible for providing the rural women the required support for their career development. The association provides various types of services to the rural women like financial support, training services and workshops, consultation services for running small businesses effectively or raw materials and capital for running the business effectively. The handicraft base creative industries are achieving noticeable growth in the villages of the Sultanate of Oman.

Mainly the industries like pottery, sewing, crafting and painting and other industries are growing gradually in the rural areas of the sultanate of Oman. The pottery industry is mainly associated with various types of works like making earthen pots, flower vase, utensils and idols and many other things. A large number of women are also associated with sewing and making design on clothes and some small textile businesses (Ismail, 2019). The popularity of crafting and glass painting is high enough among the rural women of the sultanate of Oman. Developing nice designs and paintings on flower vase, developing paper made flowers, toys and other things, wooden works on toys and embroidery works are the common crafting works with which the women of Oman are associated with. There are many women entrepreneurs who also are the owner and directors of small businesses that are related to these creative industries like art and craft. Apart from Oman women's Association, there are many other non-governmental organizations who are making efforts for supporting the creative industries and the firms associated with these creative industries and the women who are engaged with these creative industries in the sultanate of Oman.

The Role Offered By Women's Associations To Preserve These Creative Industries

A large number of women from both the rural and urban areas are associated closely with the creative industries of the country. However, in this study, we are mainly focusing on the role of the rural women who are associated with the creative industries in the sultanate of Oman. The rural women also play a major role in the development and growth of the creative industries of the country. There are thousands of women in the rural areas of Oman like Lima

Village, Kumzar Village, Wakan village and others and these women are directly associated with various small and medium sized firms that belong to the creative industries of the country. It has been revealed in studies that almost 22% of the total population of Oman lives in the villages or the rural areas of the sultanate of Oman. Almost 12.5% of the population living in the rural areas of Oman is women and almost 6% of the women are associated with various types of creative industries (Almamari, 2020). The women in the urban areas are associated with various types of creative industries like music industry, film industry, TV, painting, sculpture, art and craft, textile and others.

However, the women living in the rural areas are mainly associated with small and medium sized creative industries like pottery, art and craft and sewing and various other types of creative industries. The women associated with art and craft industry are highly skilled and they mainly perform works like developing earthen pots, utensils, making designs and paintings on earthen or metal pots, developing paper made toys, flowers and accessories, bags and many other products and so on. By being associated with these creative industries, the women actually play a major role in the development and growth of these industries and thus they also contribute to the economic growth of the country. On the other hand, when these women are associated with the creative industries and earn money and become financially independent, the quality of lives of the women and the family members can also be improved (Hammami et al. 2021). Thus, when thousands of rural and urban women are associated with the creative industries and they perform their works effectively and earn enough money, the overall quality of lives of the people of the country will also improve and the economic growth of the country. Considering this fact, it can be said that the women of the Sultanate of Oman who are associated directly or indirectly with various creative industries actually play a major role in the economic and social development of the country.

On the other hand, the creative industries like the pottery, art, craft, sewing and textile designing are the signifiers of the cultural heritage of the Sultanate of Oman and thousands of tourists visit the country because of the attractions of the cultural heritage and buy those products. Along with that, it is also important to preserve the cultural heritage, the rural creative industries of the country. From this perspective also, it can be said that the women who are associated with the creative industries and play a major role in the development and growth of the creative industries, also have a major contribution to preserving the cultural heritage of the country through their works (Ghouse et al. 2019). On the other hand, the empowerment of the women is also important for the overall development of the nation. From the above discussions, it can be said that the development of the women is important for the social and economic development. Along with that, empowerment of women of the rural areas is also important for the cultural development country. The empowerment of women in the rural and the urban areas are also important for achieving the sustainable development goals. For this reason, the empowerment of the women in various areas of the country is important for the overall development of the country.

However, it has also been revealed in the studies that though Oman Women's Association and many other NGOs are trying to engage a large number of women with the creative industries and these organizations provide training services and financial support to the women for performing their works effectively being a part of the creative industries, it cannot be denied that the women still face various issues because of gender discrimination in the society and in the workplaces. The women in the Sultanate of Oman do not often get enough opportunities of growth and their skills and competencies are often overlooked and not valued just because they are women. For example, the women employees in many small

firms are not provided managerial positions and other higher positions even though they have the required skills and this issues are faced by women just because of gender discrimination (Hansrod, 2019). The same issues are often experienced by the women who are associated with the creative industries. The women entrepreneurs who are associated with the creative industries often do not get enough opportunities of exposures and therefore, the growth of the creative industries and the empowerment of the women are often affected badly. Though the women artists have the required skills for performing works related to art and craft, many firms in the sultanate of Oman hesitate to hire women workers because of a prejudice that women are less competent than the men workers. These types of issues are major barriers to the development of the creative industries and the empowerment of women in the country. Considering these facts, it can be said that initiatives need to be taken in order to avoid these types of issues in the workplaces.

Outcome and Some Recommendations

Various research literatures have been reviewed in the study in order to analyze the role of the women and the Oman women's Association in the development and growth of the creative industries of the country. The findings have also been discussed under various section of the study. The main outcomes of the research have been discussed in this section. By reviewing the research literatures about the creative industries of the Sultanate of Oman, it can be identified that the main creative industries in the country are music, film industry, art and craft, drawings, paintings, sculpture, street art, pottery, sewing, textile and others (Dana et al. 2022). The economy of the country is highly dependent on the oil and gas industry and the agriculture and therefore, the creative industries are often neglected.

However, the government of Oman has decided to preserve the creative industries. Though there are various creative industries, in the rural areas, the industries like pottery, art and craft and sewing are very much famous. A large number of women are associated with these creative industries in order to become financially self dependent. The Oman women's Association and various other NGOs are also taking initiatives for engaging a large number of women with the creative industries so that the women become financially self dependent and can develop their own career. These organizations provide enough support to the women for getting placements in the firms that belong to the creative industries (Ismail, 2019). As a result of it, thousands of women are being engaged with the creative industries like the art, craft, pottery, music, paintings, drawing and others. These women are becoming financially self dependent and therefore, their quality of lives and the quality of lives of the family members of the women associated with these industries are also improved.

Along with that, as a large number of women are being connected with these creative industries, the creative industries in both the rural and the urban areas, are achieving rapid growth which is also beneficial for the economic and social development of the country. However, it has also been revealed in the study that though a large number of women in the Sultanate of Oman are being associated with the creative industries and they are achieving their career goals, the women also face various challenges in their works just because of gender discrimination (Hammami et al. 2020). Considering this fact, it can be said that it is the responsibility of the government of Oman and the Oman Women's Association to investigate the issues related to gender discrimination and favoritism that the women of the country face in various organizations. In case, these issues are resolved, it might become easier to empower majority of the women in the country and to enhance the growth of various types of creative industries in both the urban areas and the rural areas of the country.

Though there are laws in the country for preventing such discriminating behavior in the workplaces, the law enforcing authorities of the country do not provide enough importance to investigating the issues and therefore, the laws are not applied properly for resolving the issues like gender discrimination. Considering these facts, it can be said that it is also the responsibility of the law enforcing authorities of the country to investigate these types of issues and to take necessary actions in order to resolve such issues so that both men and women get equal opportunities of growth and advancement in the workplaces.

Conclusion

The study discusses about the creative industries in the Sultanate of Oman and the role played by the women in the country for the development of these creative industries. Along with that, the study also discusses about the role played by Oman women Association in engaging the rural women with the creative industries of the country. From the above discussions, it can be concluded that the main creative industries with which the rural women of the country are associated are art, craft, and paintings, sewing and drawing. The Oman Women's Association provides financial support and training services to a large number of women so that they can engage with these creative industries. As a result of it, a large number of women in these days have become associated with these creative industries and they also play a major role in the development and growth of the creative industries. However, in many cases, the women do not get enough chances of growth and advancements in their workplaces because of the gender discrimination issues in the workplaces of Oman. For this reason, it has been recommended that the law enforcing authorities of the country need to take necessary steps for resolving these types of issues.

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