

Building A Creative Crafts Industrial Enterprises within a governmental paradigm: Omani Crafts Enterprise Model

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In the last two decades, Omani crafts enterprise represented by Public Authority for Crafts Industries (PACI) adapted a specific framework for to increase its efficiency with high consideration toward Oman's special social, cultural and economic circumstances. But in 2020 this authority vanished by governmental royal decree and more than 23000 of craftspeople find themselves belong to another organization (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises). This defiantly effected their career and small crafts enterprises, So, this research tries to investigate the possibility to modify the Oman Crafts Enterprise Framework (OCEF) to be fitted for the new authority of SMEs.

1- Introduction:

This research built to investigate Omani crafts enterprises' challenges by reviewing the Oman Crafts Enterprise Framework (OCEF), and then study the possibility to take advantage of the framework in crafts enterprises within the SMEs. And because of that the first stage of this research will be to present that framework as part of the literature review. Regarding the research methods and achieving the projects aims and objectives, this research was conducted by using phenomenological philosophy (paradigm), a qualitative inductive approach, and analyzing secondary data, as strategies for study the subject. In general, the implemented methodologies were entirely suitable for the research and offered a practical structure in order to accomplish the study's inclusive aims and objectives. The discussion and analysis stages were completed by using both the literature review and the field findings regarding the crafts challenges. At the end of the project, the Oman Crafts Enterprise Framework (OCEF) will be analyzed modified to be suitable to be used in different authority of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Oman.

2- Reviewing the Oman Crafts Enterprise Framework (OCEF):

In 2012 a special framework was built named the Oman Crafts Enterprise Framework (OCEF) to help PACI in Oman to develop crafts enterprises efficiency. The framework was built to contribute in several

ways. First, the framework by its comprehensive coverage of artistic, identity and consumption themes, presented a complete picture of the status of the Omani crafts industry, where all the main and sub-sections of the framework contents gathered all the puzzle pieces together for researchers, craftspeople, decision makers at PACI and all others who may benefit from crafts industries. In other words, the OCEF framework contributed to cover the gap of previous studies of Omani crafts, which were mostly descriptive in content and written by the PACI itself. Second, one of the most significant contributions emerged from that framework was that the framework was built as a result of investigating the fields existing challenges, which affected Omani crafts in a straight line. Therefore, in that project, the framework contributed to cover weaknesses of the crafts industries, where there is no study which has investigated Omani crafts challenges and analyzed them critically. Third, the created framework contributed in transferring the 'lofty cultural art and crafts contents' into practice, to guarantee the continuous existence of crafts' cultural influence as a main role of the craft industry in the society. In fact, that helped to cover the gap that was a challenge for crafts enterprises, and established a balance between crafts' cultural and artistic purposes and crafts functional purpose, where the balance between them can guarantee sustainability of the enterprise in the society. Fourth, before vanishing the PACI in 2020, the framework divisions (main and sub-sections) were constructed, to be used smoothly by the PACI (and similar enterprises) as whole, or partly, according to the benefit of craftspeople, decision makers, enterprise supervisors and crafts private sector. But now the researchers work to review it and make it fit for the new authority of the SMEs. In reality, this structured framework can become a tool in the hands of stakeholders, where the SMEs and crafts private sector lacks a completed comprehensive workable framework which is specifically designed for Omani cultural, social, and economical circumstances. Fifth, the framework contributed due to the fact that its contents were associated with authentic examples drawn from the field of Omani traditional crafts. Dissimilar to all other researches in Omani crafts, the developed framework connected with existing field examples to guarantee the validity and credibility of its contents. Sixth, regarding the artistic and aesthetic aspects in crafts enterprise, the developed framework contributed in different parts as follows:

- Presenting the pillars of the "craft enterprise designer", which was an attempt to face the identified weaknesses of the existing design

department in the PACI.

- The matter of design was associated with the “crafts materials” issue, where the framework contributed to clarifying challenges regarding materials and the framework presented precise suggestions regarding both “materials’ expression and personalities” on one hand and the “imported materials matter” on the other. Dissimilar to other researches about Omani crafts, that project covered the expressive qualities materials of used in the crafts industry where all the PACI studies and publications focused on ‘material availability’ only.
- Regarding the dichotomy of “handmade vs. machine made” crafts, the framework tried to make a balance between the positives and negatives of both strategies. Because the PACI identified a handmade crafts production line and a machine-made production line, this research helped the authority to build its future plans according to the provided analysis for both strategies, where no study before provided a comprehensive analysis to be used by the authority.
- Also, the framework contributed in investigating the roles and characteristics of the “crafts enterprise supervisor”, where the discussion of this issue led to identifying the enterprise characteristics through examining the types of supervisors on one hand, and criticizing the roles of supervisors in the PACI, especially their types of activities, skills and their abilities to solve problems on the other hand.
- The framework similarly contributed in clarifying the importance of “professionalism and specialization” in craft enterprise, by filling some skill and technical gaps that were recognized in the workshops of the PACI crafts centers. So, the final results regarding “specialization” concentrated in elevating the craftsmen’s status, improving craftsmen’s precision, and craftsmen’s communication with society.
- Final results regarding professionalism led to suggesting improving craftsmen’s skills, reducing the use of machines, involvement of craftsmen in the design stages, reducing the imitating of traditional crafts, improving materials knowledge and ultimately inviting in artists’ basic skills.

Seventh, the developed framework gave high recognition to the cultural

and identity aspects regarding Omani's case in particular, where the contributions in this part were as a result of investigating the challenges that were established in the literature review for the project, regarding the shaping of identity through crafts, gender change in the field of crafts, areas and regions influences on this industry, and the impact of ethnic groups'. Distinctively, the framework contributed in the identity and cultural aspects of crafts as follows:

- The framework contributed in investigating the role of crafts in shaping identity, where the framework investigated the role of tangible materials more than intangible materials, the role of traditional crafts more than developed crafts, taking advantage of craftsmen as traditions makers, and using crafts' values as strengths to elevate crafts appreciation so that can contribute to shaping identity in the society. Because most previous researches gave attention to the role of identity in crafts industries, this research tried to fill the gap of crafts' role to shape identity in the society locally in Omani crafts industries (Almamari, 2020).
- The researcher tried to investigate women's domination of crafts, so the framework contributed by suggesting taking advantage of the impact of technologies, women accepting low incomes, female creativity in crafted accessories, female patients in the making process, and women being careful in following the supervisors' instructions in the crafts centers. Dissimilar to other researches and publications which focused only in describing statistics and documents about women's domination of crafts enterprises, this research went further to investigate taking advantage of gender changes in the field of crafts industries. Kath Woodward stressed (2003) the ideas of "origins" and "roots" of humans, where she considered that people's past and motherlands' memories are a "key component of identity" and if we recognize them, it will be easy to give them "some sense of place" and make them feel their identity in their material life (p.154-157).
- The framework also contributed through investigating identity and geographical impacts on crafts industries and the final results can be summarized as supporting rural areas crafts, giving more recognition to individual/independent craftsmen, and taking advantage of 'Artisans' Clusters' as a worldwide strategy. The positive consequence of Omani's geographical landscapes and its diversity is that it gave Omani craftsmen plenty of materials

options, and some limitations for suitable methods of production (Richardson and Dorr ,2003).

- Regarding the cultural and identity aspects, the framework suggested to take advantage of the diversity of ethnic groups. Richardson and Dorr confirmed that “craftsmanship has continued to maintain the citadel towns as strongholds of traditional artistry” (ibid, p.131). This part of Richardson and Dorr’s study confirmed that crafts contributed in shaping society’s identity. This issue’s discussion led to focusing on supporting unusual ethnic groups’ crafts, taking advantage of inherited narratives of local ethnic groups, converting unorganized ethnic crafts into ethnic crafts production lines, and as a final point, making a balance between ethnic crafts and individual crafts styles. Ignorance of ethnic groups diversity was a recognizable gap in Omani crafts industries, so this research tried to guide the authority to give this aspect part of its attention in the field.

Finally, the framework contributed in crafts marketing and consumption to complete all the pictures pieces, and those contributions were as follows:

- The framework contributed in identifying/suggesting some actions to face the imported crafts from outside of the country as a vital issue in Omani crafts industries, and the final results were that the PACI has to give attention to the Omanization plan, understanding shipping and facing it, concentrating on high quality crafts and using intellectual property laws. According to the article “Indian handicrafts exports to Oman touch \$13.42 million”, published in 2008, the Indian Textile minister declared that, the most exported Indian handicrafts were textiles, home furnishings, rugs and gift items (PACI, 2008). As a matter of fact, this research contribution regarding this part was to cover the gap of very limited published research, particularly on Omani local crafts, so the researcher concentrated on investigating the actions that can help the Omani case according to Omani crafts industries circumstances (Almamari, 2017).
- Identifying the primary intellectual property tools to be used specifically within Omani’s case, and also taking advantage of other secondary tools. Even though the WIPO published considerable studies about crafts protection tools, this research went further to cover this gap locally by investigating the WIPO tools to identify

the best of them for Omani crafts case. Difficulty arises, however, when an attempt is made to implement the strategy of registering crafts items (memberships). Many crafts workshops owners, established illegal workshops, without registering them in the PACI and the ministry of commerce (PACI, 2015).

- The framework contributed in investigating the role of the PACI policy of giving a monthly income for craftspeople and its consequences, and the role of the Omani Craftsman House (OCH) in effecting crafts people's marketing skills (Almamari, 2020) so the research provided the authority with a complete evaluation for its strategies where all its previous publications regarding the Omani Craftsman House (OCH) were only statistical and descriptive documents. Although there are five branches of the *Omani Craftsman House* (official retailers of the PACI and its associated enterprises to market their traditional crafted products) (PACI, 2014).
- Regarding access to crafts information, the framework suggested developing the supervisor role as the only connecting person between the enterprise (PACI in this case) and craftspeople in all crafts centers. Also, the framework concentrated on criticizing the PACI website as another connecting tool between society and the PACI.
- Lastly, towards improving crafts demands in at least the local society, the framework supported the making of luxurious crafts by craftspeople in the centers on one hand, and taking advantage of crafts special values to guarantee people demanding these types of material culture forms on the other hand. This research tried to fill the gap to face the shortage of studies in the PACI regarding local people's consumption of produced crafts. In fact, consumption is a large subject, so the researcher concentrated on investigating the motivation for crafts demand regarding this subject.

Rather than the main contribution to knowledge as shown previously, the present study, however, made several noteworthy sub-contributions regarding the research objectives:

- 1- The research coverage of crafts and material culture theories, terms and definitions, crafts movements, Omani crafts (PACI) in-depth investigation and Omani crafts challenges contributed to the Omani crafts area of study, by presenting a full literature review covering all artistic, identity and consumption aspects.

- 2- The examined challenges were classified in categories to make it easier to be used by researchers, craftspeople, and decision makers as a whole or as elements.
- 3- Because this research relies on using collected data from the field and comparing this with other crafts development strategies, worldwide experiences and enterprises' frameworks, the research's validity and credibility were totally accounted for as a result of using raw materials (data) collected from crafts centers of the PACI and their associated craftspeople.

3- Selecting Priorities to Rebuild the SMEs' New Framework:

It becomes very important for both craftspeople and policies makers at SMEs to understand that their role to manage crafts industries in Oman is very challengeable role. By using its special governmental generous funds, the PACI was an authority which worked specifically to improve crafts centers in the last two decades. But in the case of the SMEs, crafts become part of its multiple responsibilities, and the policies makers in this authority gives a very limited attention to developing crafts industries as a result of that. According to the **OCEF** framework, several aspects must be excluded from the responsibilities of the SMEs. So, in the end the new framework will as following:

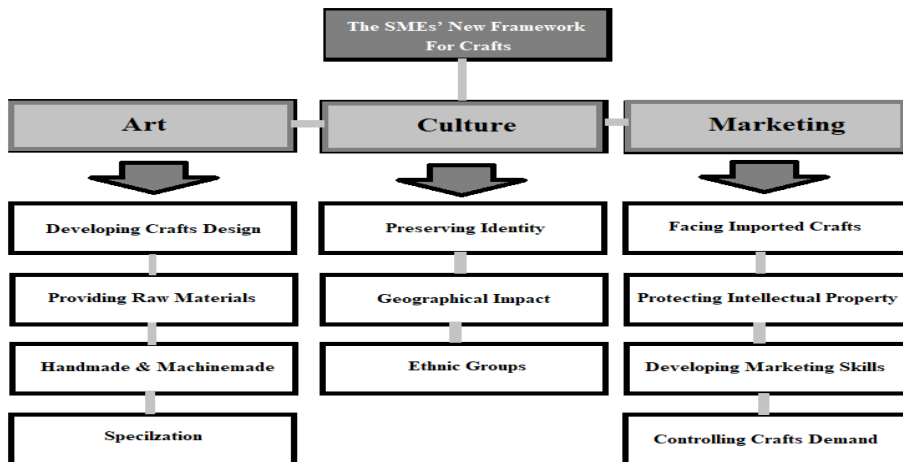


Figure 1: The SMEs New Framework for Crafts

4- Conclusion and Recommendation:

Further work needs to be done by the SMEs to take advantage of

the research findings, results and aforementioned final contributions. As this research was built to develop the enterprise's framework, the main recommendation is converting the developed framework into practice within the governmental and private crafts enterprises. It is also important to take advantage of the discussions around the crafts enterprises challenges according to the specific investigated issues. Further studies are also recommended in order to seek perfection in the field, at least locally in Oman. So, it is recommended that further research be undertaken in several areas. More broadly, research is needed to explore innovative ways to give traditional crafts some of the strengths of developed crafts', so the craftsman or enterprise can guarantee their demand by society's consumers. Also, it would be interesting to assess the effects of machine domination in traditional crafts enterprises, towards establishing a criterion to identify traditional crafts classifications according to the dilemma of handmade or machine-made crafts. Furthermore, creating documentation for Omani crafts' special characteristics (e.g. textures, inherited features and colors) is a high priority, to be used as primary materials in the hands of craftspeople, designers and crafts enterprises supervisors.

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هيكله المؤسسات الابداعية الحرفية في ظل المنظومة الحكومية: المؤسسة الحرفية العمانية أنموذجاً

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في خلال العقدين الماضيين تمت رعاية المؤسسات الحرفية العمانية بواسطة الهيئة العامة للصناعات الحرفية، والتي تبنت هيكله خاصة بها لضمان فعالية عمل الحرفيين ومؤسساتهم الخاصة. وقد هدفت تلك الهيئة الى ضمان المحافظة على الجوانب الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والثقافية للصناعات الحرفية، مما خلق بيئة حكومية خاصة رعت القطاع الحرفي في تلك المرحلة. إلا أنه في عام ٢٠٢٠ تم إلغاء هذه الهيئة ضمن مجموعة من المراسيم السلطانية التطويرية في السلطنة، وهو امر ادى الى أحالة ٢٣ ألف حرفي الى مؤسسة أخرى للعناية بهم. من خلال هذا البحث يدفع الباحثين بفكرة إنشاء هيكله خاصة بالمؤسسة الحرفية العمانية ومن خلالها يسهم ذلك التصور الهيكلي في صمود هذا القطاع في الظروف التغييرية المماثلة مستقبلاً. وعليه سيقترح هذا البحث هيكلأ ثقافياً وتجارياً فاعلاً يدعم انشاء مؤسسات حرفية صغيرة من خلال تحقيق المبادئ التي يوصي بها الهيكل المقترح.