

Empowering Housewives with Digital Entrepreneurship: Opportunities and Challenges

Nur Syahirah Mohammad Nasir^{a,b}, Farah Roslan^{a,b}, Kauthar Razali^a, Nurshuhada Mohamed^a

^aFaculty of General Studies and Advanced Education Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniZA), 21300 Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia, ^bIslamic Social Finance, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniZA), 21300 Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia
Corresponding author: syahirahnasir@unisza.edu.my

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Abstract

This study examines how digital entrepreneurship can empower housewives, who often face limitations due to traditional gender roles and domestic responsibilities. The aim is to explore how engaging in online businesses can provide housewives with economic independence and personal empowerment, while also identifying the challenges they encounter, such as limited digital skills and access to technology. Using a qualitative approach through library research, the study reviews literature on gender roles, entrepreneurship, and the balance between home duties and business activities. The findings show that while digital entrepreneurship offers flexibility and opportunities for housewives to contribute economically, societal expectations and technological barriers remain significant obstacles. The study highlights the need for digital literacy programs and supportive policies to help housewives fully benefit from digital entrepreneurship. These insights provide a useful basis for future research and policy-making to promote greater gender equality in the digital economy.

Keywords: Housewives, Digital Entrepreneurship, Online Businesses

Introduction

In recent years, digital entrepreneurship has emerged as a transformative force in the global economy, offering unprecedented opportunities for various demographics to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Housewives represent a significant yet often overlooked segment of potential entrepreneurs among these groups. Traditionally confined to domestic roles that have been undervalued economically, housewives have historically faced significant barriers to participating in the workforce, including rigid gender roles, lack of access to capital, and limited social networks (Oakley, 1974; Folbre, 1991). However, the advent of digital technologies has begun challenging these barriers, providing housewives with new avenues for economic participation through online businesses and digital platforms.

Digital entrepreneurship enables housewives to leverage their existing skills, such as cooking, crafting, or caregiving, and transform them into marketable products and services that can be offered online (Carrigan & Szmigin, 2004). This shift not only allows housewives to contribute to household income but also enhances their social status and personal empowerment, as they become recognized as economic contributors within their communities (Walker et al. 2008). Despite these opportunities, housewives engaging in digital entrepreneurship still face numerous challenges, including digital literacy gaps, access to technology, and the ongoing tension between domestic responsibilities and entrepreneurial pursuits (Ahl & Nelson, 2015; Wang, 2020).

This paper aims to explore the potential of digital entrepreneurship as a means of empowering housewives, while also critically examining the challenges that they encounter in this process. By analyzing both the opportunities and obstacles associated with housewives engaging in digital business, this study seeks to provide insights into how digital entrepreneurship can be a viable pathway to economic independence and social empowerment for housewives.

Despite the increasing accessibility of digital platforms and the growing trend of entrepreneurship, housewives remain an underrepresented group in digital business ventures. Traditional gender roles often confine housewives to domestic responsibilities, limiting their participation in the workforce and hindering their economic independence (Sultana & Thompson, 2020). Although digital entrepreneurship offers a flexible and potentially lucrative avenue for housewives to engage in economic activities from home, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the challenges and opportunities specific to this demographic. Furthermore, existing studies have not adequately explored the socio-economic impact of digital entrepreneurship on housewives' lives and their households (Nichter & Goldmark, 2009; Madichie & Gbadamosi, 2017). This study aims to address this gap by examining the potential of digital businesses to empower housewives and identify the barriers they face in entering and thriving in the digital marketplace.

Literature Review

The Traditional Roles of Housewives

The role of housewives has traditionally been associated with domestic responsibilities, including child-rearing, household management, and caregiving, which are often undervalued and considered non-economic contributions. These roles are deeply rooted in societal norms and cultural expectations that define women's primary responsibility as being confined to the home (Oakley, 1974; Mussida & Patimo, 2021). Historically, the work performed by housewives has been seen as an extension of their gendered role rather than recognized as labor that contributes to the economy (Folbre, 1991). Although these roles have evolved, especially with increasing educational and employment opportunities for women, the expectation that women should prioritize domestic duties persists in many cultures, limiting their economic participation and perpetuating gender inequality (Chafetz, 1990).

Recent studies have further emphasized the economic value of unpaid domestic labor, which remains systematically overlooked in global economic frameworks. In particular, feminist economists have highlighted the importance of re-evaluating domestic labor as a form of productive work that significantly contributes to the social reproduction of the workforce

(Benería et al. 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has further illuminated the critical role housewives and women, in general, play in managing households, homeschooling, and caregiving during crises, which, despite its magnitude, remains unaccounted for in formal economic measurements (Power, 2022).

Moreover, as more women enter the workforce, dual-burden syndrome where women balance both employment and household duties has been identified as a major source of stress, reinforcing traditional gendered expectations while contributing to persistent inequalities in the labor market (Lyonette & Crompton, 2023). This unpaid work not only affects women's ability to engage in the labor force fully but also leads to economic disparities, such as lower lifetime earnings and reduced pension contributions (Maddox-Daines, 2022). The role of housewives, therefore, must be redefined and acknowledged within modern economic systems to reduce gender inequality and empower women to participate more fully in the economy (Craig & Mullan, 2023)

Digital Entrepreneurship

Digital entrepreneurship refers to creating and managing businesses in the digital space, utilizing online platforms, social media, and other internet-based technologies. This form of entrepreneurship has grown rapidly in recent years, driven by the proliferation of digital technologies and the increasing accessibility of the internet (Davidson and Vaast, 2010). Digital entrepreneurship offers unique opportunities, particularly for marginalized groups, by reducing barriers to entry such as capital requirements and physical location (Nambisan, 2017). Digital entrepreneurship provides a flexible and scalable means for women, including housewives, to engage in economic activities while managing domestic responsibilities (Sahaym et al. 2019). Recent studies have emphasized the role of digital platforms in fostering entrepreneurial activities among women, noting that these platforms not only provide business opportunities but also foster networks and social capital essential for long-term sustainability (Elam et al. 2023; Leung, 2022; Ughetto et al. 2020). However, challenges such as digital literacy, access to technology, and societal norms still pose significant barriers to fully realizing the potential of digital entrepreneurship among housewives (Wang, 2020). Moreover, despite increased accessibility, the digital divide persists, particularly in terms of gender and rural-urban disparities, which limit the ability of many women to fully benefit from digital entrepreneurship (Khan et al. 2023; Van Laer et al. 2024).

The Intersection of Domestic Roles and Digital Business

The intersection of domestic roles and digital business presents both opportunities and challenges for housewives who seek to engage in entrepreneurial activities. On one hand, the digital business allows housewives to leverage their domestic skills and knowledge—such as cooking, crafting, or childcare—into marketable products and services online (Carrigan & Szmigin, 2004). This can lead to enhanced economic empowerment and social recognition (Walker et al. 2008). On the other hand, the dual burden of managing a digital business alongside traditional domestic responsibilities can lead to time constraints, stress, and potential conflicts within the household (Ahl & Nelson, 2015). Moreover, the societal expectations that prioritize domestic duties over entrepreneurial endeavors can limit the time and energy housewives can dedicate to their digital businesses, thus affecting their success and sustainability (Welter, 2011).

Methodology

This study uses a library research approach to achieve its objectives. This method is a systematic procedure for obtaining data to create a project or an academic article, often by analyzing secondary data sources such as books, journal articles, reports, and other archival materials (Bryman, 2016). According to Saunders et al. (2019), secondary data can be categorized into three types: surveys, multiple sources, and documentary data. Each type offers distinct benefits for academic research. However, while secondary data is invaluable for generating insights, it has several limitations. Since secondary data was initially collected for other purposes, it can sometimes be outdated, incomplete, or biased, leading to potential issues in the validity and reliability of the research (Johnston, 2017). In addition, qualitative secondary data might be difficult to interpret due to a lack of contextual information about the original study environment or the intentions of the informants (Heaton, 2020).

Despite these limitations, secondary data remains an attractive option for researchers due to its cost-effectiveness and ease of access. By using pre-existing datasets or documentary evidence, researchers can save time and resources, which would otherwise be spent on primary data collection (Johnston, 2017). Moreover, secondary data analysis allows for a broader scope of study, offering insights across various datasets and helping to identify patterns that might not be observable with primary research alone (Smith, 2020). Furthermore, well-structured secondary data can offer historical perspectives, allowing researchers to study trends over time (Vartanian, 2019). Therefore, although the method has drawbacks, it provides an essential foundation for many academic endeavors when used carefully and with proper critical evaluation.

Result and Discussion*Empowerment through Digital Entrepreneurship*

Digital entrepreneurship offers a transformative potential for housewives, enabling them to gain economic independence and social empowerment. By engaging in online businesses, housewives can contribute financially to their households without compromising their domestic responsibilities. This dual role not only enhances their self-esteem but also shifts societal perceptions of their capabilities beyond traditional domestic roles (Sultana & Thompson, 2020). The flexibility offered by digital platforms allows housewives to balance their entrepreneurial activities with their household duties, thus providing a pathway to economic empowerment that was previously unavailable to them in the traditional labor market (Nambisan, 2017).

Moreover, the ability to work from home through digital entrepreneurship can alleviate the time and spatial constraints that often hinder housewives from participating in the workforce. The accessibility of digital tools and the lower cost of entry into online businesses compared to traditional brick-and-mortar enterprises also play a crucial role in making entrepreneurship more feasible for housewives (Sahaym et al. 2019). This empowerment is not only economic but also social, as it enables housewives to engage in networks and communities that can offer support, resources, and opportunities for further growth and development (Bennet and Richardson, 2005).

Opportunities in Digital Entrepreneurship

The digital economy provides several unique opportunities for housewives to leverage their skills and interests into profitable ventures. For instance, housewives can transform hobbies such as cooking, crafting, or fashion into online businesses, selling products through platforms like Etsy, Amazon, or social media (Carrigan & Szmigin, 2004). Additionally, the rise of social media influencers and content creators has opened up new avenues for housewives to monetize their expertise in areas like parenting, home décor, or wellness, further diversifying the opportunities available within digital entrepreneurship (Wang, 2020).

Digital entrepreneurship allows housewives to expand their customer base beyond local communities, allowing access to global markets and increasing potential revenue streams. This global reach offers the possibility of scaling their businesses more rapidly than through traditional means (Davidson & Vaast, 2010). Additionally, the flexibility of digital platforms enables quick adaptation to market demands, allowing entrepreneurs to modify business models and strategies based on customer feedback and market trends (Nambisan, 2017). This approach helps women entrepreneurs, especially housewives, overcome socio-cultural barriers and enhance their participation in the workforce, contributing to economic growth and more inclusive development models (Alhajri & Aloud, 2023). Furthermore, digital technologies provide housewives with access to previously inaccessible resources, including digital marketplaces and new business models, which facilitate entrepreneurial success and economic empowerment (Dana et al. 2024).

Challenges in Digital Entrepreneurship

Despite the numerous opportunities, housewives face significant challenges in digital entrepreneurship. One of the primary challenges is the digital divide, where access to technology and the internet is not uniform across different socio-economic groups (Wang, 2020). Housewives in rural or low-income areas may lack reliable internet access, devices, or the digital literacy needed to effectively manage online businesses (Ahl & Nelson, 2015). This can limit their ability to fully participate in the digital economy and create a barrier to entry for those who might otherwise benefit from these opportunities.

Additionally, the dual burden of managing a household and a business can be overwhelming for housewives, leading to stress, burnout, and potentially hindering the growth of their businesses (Welter, 2011). The societal expectations that prioritize domestic responsibilities over entrepreneurial activities can further exacerbate this challenge, as housewives may struggle to find the time and energy needed to develop and sustain their businesses (Walker, Wang, & Redmond, 2008). Furthermore, the lack of access to financial resources, such as loans or venture capital, can limit the ability of housewives to invest in and scale their businesses (Madichie & Gbadamosi, 2017).

Lastly, housewives may also face skepticism and bias from both within their communities and the broader market. The perception that housewives are less serious or capable entrepreneurs due to their domestic roles can hinder their ability to build a customer base or secure partnerships, further limiting their business success (Nichter and Goldmark, 2009). Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions, including providing access to digital literacy training, financial resources, and support networks that can help housewives

overcome these barriers and fully realize their entrepreneurial potential (Sultana & Thompson, 2020).

Conclusion

As a conclusion, it is showing that digital entrepreneurship offers a powerful avenue for housewives to break free from traditional domestic roles and engage in meaningful economic activities. Through online platforms, housewives can utilize their skills to establish businesses, contributing both to household income and personal empowerment. However, their path is hindered by significant challenges such as digital literacy gaps, limited access to technology, and the ongoing balancing act between business and domestic responsibilities. Societal norms that prioritize domestic duties further exacerbate these challenges, limiting the full potential of housewives in the digital business realm.

To address these barriers, future research should focus on developing digital literacy programs tailored to housewives, improving access to technology, and creating supportive policies that encourage their participation in digital entrepreneurship. Additionally, longitudinal studies and detailed case analyses could provide valuable insights into the socio-economic impact of digital businesses on housewives, helping to identify best practices and inform strategies for success. By tackling these issues, future work can help create an environment where housewives can thrive as digital entrepreneurs, achieving greater economic independence and social recognition.

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