

Exploring Factors Affecting Retail Business Success And Failure In Irbid: Societal, Market, Supplier, Operational, Demographic

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Abstract:

This qualitative study investigates the factors influencing the success and failure of retail micro-enterprises in Irbid, Jordan, through the lenses of Resource-Based Theory (RBT) and Open Innovation Theory (OIT). It focuses on five key areas: societal influences, market adaptability, supplier relationships, operational strategies, and demographic dynamics. The study employs an interpretive approach, grounded in the philosophical foundations of relativist ontology and constructivist epistemology, to capture the intricate and nuanced perspectives of micro-entrepreneurs in Irbid. In-depth semi-structured interviews with 18 entrepreneurs, selected through purposive sampling, provided rich, detailed insights into their experiences and perceptions. The data were analyzed using NVivo 14 software, facilitating thematic analysis and identifying underlying patterns and themes relevant to the research questions. The findings reveal the critical impact of societal norms and gender dynamics, the importance of strategic internal resource management, and the necessity of adaptable market strategies. Robust supplier relationships and effective operational strategies were identified as key to enhancing business resilience, while demographic factors such as age, gender, and education significantly influenced business outcomes. Despite limitations, such as potential biases in self-reported data and the context-specific nature of the findings, the study contributes to existing knowledge by highlighting the need for targeted support programs and strategic collaborations. Recommendations for future research include adopting interdisciplinary approaches to further explore the determinants of micro-enterprise success and failure in diverse contexts. The study's methodology allowed for a comprehensive qualitative analysis, offering valuable insights for policymakers, business support organizations, and entrepreneurs, ultimately contributing to the broader economic development of the region.

Keywords: Retail Businesses ,Success and Failure ,Societal Influences , Market Adaptability ,Resource-Based Theory.

INTRODUCTION

In Jordan, the economic trajectory is profoundly linked with the performance and sustainability of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which encompass traditional, digital, and hybrid startups. This sector, comprising nearly 189,000 MSMEs, represents a significant portion of registered businesses and is pivotal for Jordan's economic stability and growth (Jordanian Economic & Social Council, 2022). MSMEs are not only crucial contributors to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but also play a vital role in economic expansion and the provision of essential services, particularly in underserved urban areas. Despite their critical role, Jordan's MSME sector grapples with numerous challenges. High unemployment rates, inflationary pressures, and rising national debt are compounded by regional crises, such as the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts. These crises have led to economic disruptions including an influx of refugees and strained commercial routes, which exacerbate the difficulties faced by micro-enterprises and startups (Bawaneh & Al-Abbadi, 2017). The high failure rates among startups—90% failure rate and 70% failure rate between the second and fifth years as highlighted by Thaher et al. (2021) and Howarth (2023)—further underscore the severity of these challenges. Assaad, Krafft, and Sieverding (2021) note that 42% of entrepreneurial ventures initiated by young Jordanians fail, and the Small Business Administration (SBA, 2022) reports that one-third of new small businesses close by the end of their second year, with half ceasing operations before their fifth year. These statistics indicate an urgent need for comprehensive strategies to mitigate the complexities associated with entrepreneurship. Within this context, the retail sector in Jordan emerges as a crucial area of focus. Retail micro-enterprises, which leverage both traditional and digital platforms, are instrumental in driving innovation and sustaining business operations. The evolution of Jordan's retail landscape since the 1980s, fueled by governmental initiatives aimed at fostering small business growth, is significant. Presently, approximately 150,338 microenterprises operate in Jordan, contributing 89.7% to the national GDP and employing around 600,000 individuals (Economic & Social Council of Jordan, 2022). These enterprises are especially vital during economic downturns, supported by governmental programs like the Five-Year Economic Development Plan and institutions such as the Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation (Almahrouq & Magableh, 2006; Saymeh & Sabha, 2014). Despite these supportive measures, challenges persist, including legal, cultural, and political constraints that disproportionately affect female entrepreneurs (Mehtap et al., 2014 & 2017). However, Jordan has demonstrated progress, evidenced by an improvement in the Global Entrepreneurship Index, which rose from 73rd in 2014 to 49th in 2018 (Ministry of Digital Economy & Entrepreneurship, 2021).

Irbid, a significant commercial hub in northern Jordan, illustrates the dynamic interplay between regional economic conditions and retail business performance. Spanning approximately 1,572 square kilometers and located about 80 kilometers north of Amman, Irbid's strategic position and infrastructure contribute to its role as a regional commercial center (Jordanian Department of Statistics, 2022). As the second most populous region in Jordan, Irbid hosts 18.5% of the national population and is the third most urbanized area in the country (UN-Habitat, 2022). The city's economic landscape is notably influenced by its substantial refugee population, including Syrians, Palestinians, and Iraqis, whose presence affects various economic sectors and financial capacities (UN-Habitat, 2022). Irbid's commercial vitality is reflected in its 26,145 establishments across 26 sectors, with a significant concentration in internal trade and services (Jordanian Department of Statistics, 2018). Among these, approximately 14,715 micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises contribute substantially to the retail sector, with 2,100 micro-level businesses engaged in diverse retail trades (Jordanian Department of Statistics, 2018). Despite this economic vibrancy, Irbid faces persistent challenges, including poverty rates exceeding the national average and high unemployment, particularly among women and youth (Jordanian Department of Statistics, 2022; UN-Habitat, 2022; ILO, 2016). Addressing these issues is vital for enhancing job creation and service provision in the region. This study aims to explore the factors influencing the success and failure of retail businesses in Irbid by examining societal influences, market adaptability, supplier relationships, operational strategies, and demographic dynamics. Through the lenses of Resource-Based Theory (RBT) and Open Innovation Theory (OIT), this research seeks to provide valuable insights into how these factors impact retail enterprises. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing strategies to bolster business resilience and performance in Jordan's evolving retail landscape. The research will address the following questions: How do societal norms and gender dynamics affect the success and failure of retail microenterprises in Irbid? What strategies do retail microenterprises employ to adapt to market changes and maintain competitiveness? How do relationships with suppliers impact the performance and operational challenges of retail microenterprises in Irbid? What operational strategies are associated with the success of retail microenterprises, and how do operational challenges contribute to their failure? In what ways do demographic factors influence the success and failure of retail microenterprises in Irbid? The purpose of this study is to analyze various factors influencing the success and failure of retail microenterprises in Irbid, Jordan. Specifically, the study aims to analyze the impact of societal norms and gender dynamics on the performance and sustainability of retail micro-enterprises, assess strategies employed by these enterprises to adapt to changing market conditions, evaluate the role of supplier relationships, explore operational strategies that contribute to success, and investigate how demographic factors affect micro-enterprises.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The success and failure of retail micro-enterprises are crucial areas of study, as these businesses play a significant role in local economies and employment. This literature review explores various dimensions affecting retail micro-enterprises, including theoretical foundations, societal influences, supplier relationships, market adaptability, operational strategies, and demographic factors. By integrating Resource-Based Theory (RBT) and Open Innovation Theory (OIT), this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the performance of retail micro-enterprises.

Theoretical Foundations

Resource-based theory (RBT) posits that firms gain a competitive advantage through the effective management and utilization of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991). For retail micro-enterprises, internal resources such as human capital, technological capabilities, and financial assets are critical for achieving success. Studies emphasize that micro-enterprises with unique resources can better navigate competitive pressures and market challenges (Wright et al., 2001; Teece et al., 1997). However, resource constraints typical of micro-enterprises often limit their capacity to invest in advanced technologies or skilled personnel, which can impact their ability to sustain operations and growth. Open Innovation Theory (OIT), introduced by Chesbrough (2003), complements RBT by focusing on the importance of external collaboration. OIT suggests that firms can enhance their innovation capabilities by integrating external ideas and technologies into their processes. For retail micro-enterprises, engaging in open innovation through partnerships with suppliers, customers, and research institutions can provide access to new technologies and market opportunities, essential for adapting to evolving consumer demands (Chesbrough, 2006). Empirical research supports the notion that open innovation practices contribute to improved performance and competitive advantage (Enkel et al., 2009; Laursen & Salter, 2006).

Societal Influences

Societal influences, including cultural norms and gender dynamics, significantly impact the success of retail micro-enterprises. Societal attitudes towards entrepreneurship, gender roles, and cultural practices shape entrepreneurial behavior and business practices. For instance, societal expectations and gender norms can affect the opportunities available to female entrepreneurs, influencing their business outcomes (Mehtap et al., 2014 & 2017). Research highlights that in contexts where traditional gender roles are prevalent, female entrepreneurs may face additional barriers, affecting their ability to establish and grow their businesses (Ahl, 2006; Brush et al., 2009).

Supplier Relationships

Supplier relationships are pivotal in determining the performance of retail micro-enterprises. Effective collaboration with suppliers can enhance operational efficiency, reduce costs, and improve product offerings. Studies emphasize that strong supplier relationships contribute to better inventory management, quality control, and overall business performance (Gulati, 1999; Håkansson & Snehota, 2006). For micro-enterprises, managing supplier relationships effectively is crucial, as it can directly impact their ability to meet customer demands and maintain competitive pricing.

Market Adaptability

Market adaptability refers to a firm's ability to respond to changes in the external environment, including shifts in consumer preferences, competitive dynamics, and technological advancements. Research underscores the importance of adaptability for business success, highlighting that firms must develop flexible strategies to remain competitive (Rugman & Verbeke, 2001; Kotler & Keller, 2016). Retail micro-enterprises, in particular, must navigate rapidly changing market conditions and consumer behaviors. Adapting to these changes through innovative business models and marketing strategies is essential for sustaining growth and maintaining market relevance.

Operational Strategies

Operational strategies are critical for the success of retail micro-enterprises. Effective management of operational processes, including supply chain logistics, inventory control, and customer service, plays a significant role in business performance (Porter, 1985). Studies indicate that micro-enterprises with well-optimized operations achieve better efficiency and cost-effectiveness, which are crucial for long-term success (Barney, 1991; Prachalad & Hamel, 1990). Operational challenges, such as limited resources and capacity constraints, can impact the ability of micro-enterprises to deliver high-quality products and services.

Demographic Factors

Demographic factors, such as age, gender, and educational background, influence entrepreneurial outcomes. Research shows that these factors affect entrepreneurial behavior, risk tolerance, and business management practices (Kalleberg & Leicht, 1991; Thurik et al., 2008). In Jordan, where micro-enterprises face unique socio-economic challenges, understanding the role of demographic factors is essential for developing targeted support programs and policies. For example, educational attainment can impact entrepreneurial success by influencing skills and knowledge, while age and gender can affect business strategies and opportunities (Jordanian Department of Statistics, 2018).

In conclusion, the literature reveals that the performance of retail micro-enterprises is shaped by a complex interplay of theoretical factors, societal influences, supplier relationships, market adaptability, operational strategies, and demographic characteristics. Integrating Resource-Based Theory and Open Innovation Theory provides valuable insights into these dynamics. The findings emphasize the need for comprehensive strategies that address resource management, external collaboration, and adaptability to enhance the success and sustainability of retail micro-enterprises.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative paradigm to examine factors influencing retail business success and failure in Irbid, Jordan, guided by an interpretivist philosophy. This approach seeks to understand the subjective experiences and meanings that individuals attach to their business practices within their specific contexts (Schwandt, 2000). Ontologically, the study aligns with a relativist perspective, acknowledging multiple, context-dependent realities as perceived by individuals (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Epistemologically, it adopts an interpretive stance, focusing on understanding the personal experiences and meanings derived from participants' interactions and business environments (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Interpretivism and constructivism underpin this study, emphasizing the co-creation of knowledge between the researcher and participants. Interpretivism focuses on understanding the meaning and interpretation of human actions and social contexts, making it suitable for exploring the diverse challenges faced by micro-enterprises in Irbid (Barra et al., 2022). Constructivism, meanwhile, recognizes that knowledge is constructed through individual experiences and interpretations. This approach is beneficial for understanding the similarities and differences between traditional, digital, and hybrid startups in Irbid's retail industry (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

The population of interest includes 14,715 micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, with a focus on 2,100 micro-level businesses in Irbid's retail sector, as reported by the Jordanian Department of Statistics (2018). The researcher selected eighteen businesses from the Ministry of Industry and Trade's successful and unsuccessful projects catalog to ensure comprehensive representation. Purposive sampling, a deliberate selection technique based on specific criteria such as enterprise size, business model, and performance status, was employed to recruit participants. This method aimed to enrich the study's relevance and inclusivity by capturing diverse insights from the chosen sample (Patton, 2002). The sample comprised 18 participants, reflecting a range of experiences and backgrounds within the micro-enterprise retail sector in Irbid, balanced with equal numbers of male and female entrepreneurs (Katz & Vinker, 2014). Criterion-based sampling ensured participants had at least 3.6 years of experience and had managed micro-enterprises with notable success or failure stories. Anonymity was preserved through unique identification codes, ensuring confidentiality and organized referencing (Zehr, 2016). The sample was carefully balanced regarding gender, age, education, and business model.

Participants ranged from 26 to 52 years old, with a mix of 10 males and 8 females. Their educational backgrounds varied from secondary education to bachelor's and master's degrees. The sample spans three business models—traditional, digital, and hybrid—with six individuals representing each model. Half of the participants experienced success, while the other half faced failure, as detailed in Table 1. Examples from the traditional sector included a 52-year-old male with secondary education and 8 years of experience managing a successful minimarket, and a 32-year-old female with secondary education and 5 years of experience running a successful clothing shop. In the digital sector, examples included a 30-year-old female with a bachelor's degree and 5 years of experience successfully running a clothing shop and a 32-year-old female with secondary education and 3.9 years of experience managing an unsuccessful household goods store. In the hybrid sector, a 28-year-old male with a master's degree and 5 years of experience successfully managed a shoe shop, while a 38-year-old female with secondary education and 5 years of experience ran an unsuccessful mobile store. Data collection involved in-depth interviews, following Alawamleh et al. (2021), with a mix of guided and open-ended questions to explore participants' experiences and perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Interviews were conducted face-to-face or online, recorded, and transcribed to ensure accuracy (Creswell, 2014). Participants were informed about the research agenda and methodology to build trust. The interview started with the question: "How would you describe your experience in the retail industry in Irbid, Jordan?" Follow-up questions were used to obtain clarification, such as, "Have you observed any specific factors that have led to the success or failure of startups in the retail industry in Irbid, Jordan?" Interviews lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and were conducted over six months in a natural setting at the participants' places of work. Thematic analysis was employed to extract prominent themes from participants' understanding of their realities (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data were analyzed using NVivo 14 software, enabling thematic coding and theme identification (Elo et al., 2014; Moustakas, 1994). Reflexive analysis was used to interpret participants' experiences, and member-checking validated findings to ensure credibility (Harper & Cole, 2012). Data security was maintained with password-protected and encrypted cloud storage, and physical copies were securely stored. Ethical standards and data protection regulations were adhered to, focusing on reliability, validity, and overall trustworthiness (Zehr, 2016; Leedy & Ormrod, 2012; Morse, 2015). Methods such as member checking and within-method triangulation enhanced credibility and confirmability (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). To ensure trustworthiness, the credibility of the data was established through peer review by two qualitative research experts. An audit trail was used to improve dependability, documenting all results and activities.

Table 1 Participants

Cases	Model	Sector	Gender	Success/Failure	Age	Education	Age of enterprise
1	Traditional	Minimarket	Mail	Success	52	Secondary	8 Years
2	Traditional	Household goods store	Mail	Success	28	Secondary	10 Years
3	Traditional	Clothing Shop	Femail	Success	32	Secondary	5 Years
4	Traditional	Minimarket	Mail	Failure	38	Secondary	4 Years
5	Traditional	Vegetable and Fruit store	Mail	Failure	38	Bachelor	4.8 Year
6	Traditional	Candy Store	Femail	Failure	45	Secondary	3.6 Year
7	Digital	Clothes Shop	Femail	Success	30	Bachoeior	5 Years
8	Digital	Electronics shop	Mail	Success	32	Bachoeior IT	6 Years
9	Digital	Costmatics and clothes shop	Femail	Success	28	Bachoeior	6 Years
10	Digital	Household goods store	Femail	Failure	32	Secondary	3.9 Years
11	Digital	Children's toys online	Femail	Failure	35	Bachoeior+ Secondary	3.7 Years
12	Digital	Electrical devices shop	Mail	Failure	26	Master degree	4 Years
13	Hybrid	SHOE SHOP	Mail	Success	28	Master degree	5 Years

14	Hybrid	Costmetics shop	Mail	Success	52	Secondary	8 Years
15	Hybrid	Clothing shop	Mail	Success	27	Bachelor in business administration	6 Years
16	Hybrid	Mobile store	Femail	Failure	38	Secondary	5 Years
17	Hybrid	A bookstore and stationery store	Mail	Failure	45	Secondary	4 Year
18	Hybrid	Children's toys	Mail	Failure	35	Secondary	4.3 Years

Source: Researcher (2023)

RESULTS

The analysis of the data provides significant insights into the factors influencing the success and failure of retail businesses in Irbid, Jordan. The Word Frequency Analysis, detailed in Table 2, highlights key themes related to the research objectives, revealing critical factors impacting business outcomes.

Table 2 Research Objectives Word Frequency Analysis

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
business	8	271	1.28
customer	8	257	1.21
irbid	5	236	1.11
challenges	10	234	1.10
success	7	223	1.05
financial	9	197	0.93
sales	5	158	0.74
societal	8	156	0.74
crucial	7	145	0.68
family	6	145	0.68
women	5	145	0.68
market	6	144	0.68
traditional	11	144	0.68
management	10	138	0.65
retail	6	134	0.63
effective	9	124	0.58
strategies	10	109	0.51
issues	6	105	0.49
enterprises	11	104	0.49
especially	10	102	0.48

Source: Author (2024).

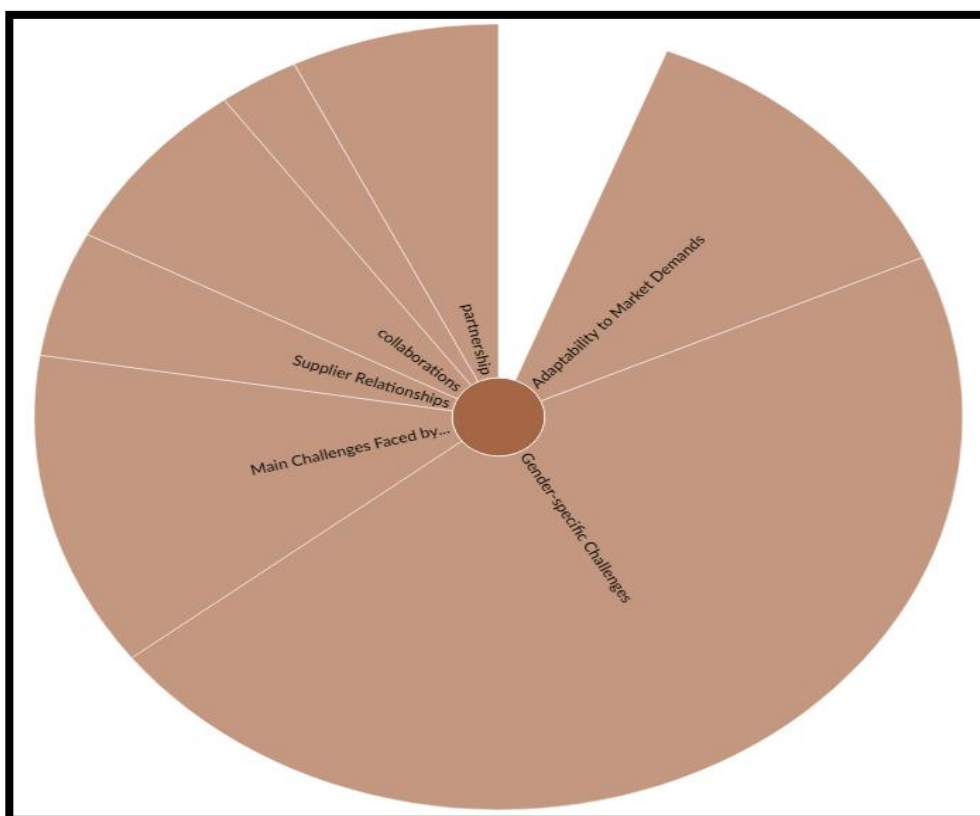


Figure 2 Hierarchy Chart for the Objectives

Source: Author (2024)

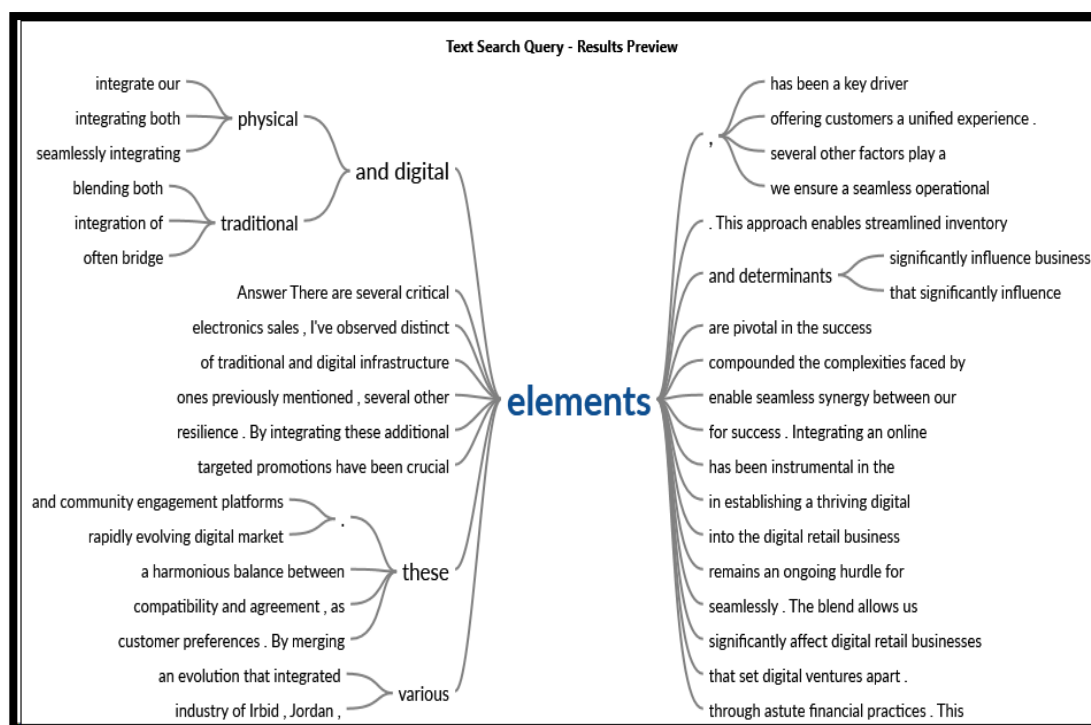


Figure 3 Text Search Query for the Objectives

Source: Author (2024)

The Comparative Analysis, including the Word Cloud, Hierarchy Chart, and Text Search Query, reinforces the central themes of adaptability, supplier relationships, and collaborations. These visualizations highlight the need for businesses

to remain flexible, build strong supplier networks, and engage in collaborative ventures to improve competitiveness. The influence of gender-specific challenges, indicated by terms like "women," "societal," and "family," emphasizes the impact of gender dynamics and societal norms on business outcomes. Age diversity among entrepreneurs also affects their sales strategies and market responses. Older entrepreneurs tend to leverage their experience and established networks, focusing on relationship-based sales and traditional marketing approaches. In contrast, younger entrepreneurs, particularly in digital startups, adopt agile sales tactics, digital marketing strategies, and data-driven insights to stay competitive and respond rapidly to market trends.

Educational background plays a role in entrepreneurs' ability to adapt to market demands and manage supplier relationships. Entrepreneurs with higher education levels often possess skills in procurement, negotiation, and market analysis, which are crucial for optimizing supply chains and fostering effective partnerships. Those with lower education levels may encounter difficulties in supplier management, impacting product availability and pricing competitiveness. Finally, sectoral diversity among micro-enterprises shapes their adaptability and collaboration strategies. Traditional businesses prioritize long-term supplier relationships and competitive pricing, while digital and hybrid startups focus on agile supply chain management, cross-sector collaborations, and strategic partnerships to drive innovation and scalability. In summary, the results provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing business success and failure in Irbid's retail industry. The insights derived from the Word Frequency Analysis, supported by theoretical frameworks and comparative analyses, underscore the importance of adaptability, supplier relationships, gender dynamics, and educational background in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes. These findings offer valuable implications for theory, practice, and policy, emphasizing the need for targeted support measures and strategic approaches to enhance business resilience and success in Irbid's competitive retail landscape.

DISCUSSION

Objective 1: Societal Influences

The integrated analysis, combining Word Frequency Analysis, Word Cloud, Hierarchy Chart, and Text Search Query, reveals the critical role of societal influences in shaping business practices and success in Irbid's retail sector. The prominence of terms such as "societal," "family," and "women" highlights their significant impact on entrepreneurial ventures. Societal factors play a pivotal role in business dynamics, with gender-specific challenges, particularly those encountered by women entrepreneurs, being a notable theme. This aligns with the findings of Malmström et al. (2023) and Boshmaf and O'Keeffe (2022), who emphasize the substantial impact of societal expectations and familial responsibilities on business operations. According to Open Innovation Theory (OIT), these external socio-cultural dynamics significantly influence business success and failure. Gender-specific challenges, as illustrated by the frequent mention of terms related to women and family, underscore the need for supportive measures to foster inclusive growth and address unique obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs (Yao et al., 2024). Resource-based theory (RBT) complements this perspective by suggesting that businesses can effectively leverage internal resources, such as social capital and existing networks, to navigate societal challenges. The emphasis on societal terms underscores the importance of internal capabilities in addressing external socio-cultural factors. RBT posits that sustainable competitive advantage can be achieved through the strategic utilization of these internal resources to enhance resilience and business success (Malmström et al., 2023).

Objective 2: Market Adaptability

The analysis of key terms such as "market," "sales," and "retail" reveals the critical importance of market dynamics and adaptability in business success. These terms are prominently featured in the Word Frequency Analysis and visualized in the Word Cloud and Hierarchy Chart, emphasizing the necessity for businesses to remain flexible and responsive to changing market conditions. Effective market adaptability is crucial for business survival and success, as supported by Iranmanesh et al. (2023) and Sreenivasan and Suresh (2023). From the perspective of RBT, businesses can achieve sustained success by strategically managing internal resources to adapt to market demands. This includes leveraging internal capabilities to navigate the dynamic business environment effectively (Sreenivasan & Suresh, 2023). Conversely, OIT underscores the importance of integrating external knowledge and collaborating with diverse stakeholders to understand market trends and consumer preferences. By combining internal resource management with external partnerships, businesses can enhance their market adaptability, thereby reducing the risk of failure.

Objective 3: Supplier Relationships

The significance of terms such as "supplier" and "relationships" highlights the importance of building and maintaining strong supplier networks. The visual representations from the Word Frequency Analysis and Hierarchy Chart emphasize that robust supplier relationships are vital for business success. Strategically managing supplier relationships is crucial for achieving sustainable competitive advantage, as indicated by Pratono (2023). RBT supports this by suggesting that businesses can leverage supplier networks as vital internal resources to enhance resilience and competitiveness. OIT also suggests that engaging in collaborations and partnerships with suppliers can drive innovation and enhance competitiveness. By integrating RBT and OIT, the analysis underscores the need for both internal resource management

and external collaborations to build and sustain effective supplier relationships, thereby mitigating potential risks of failure.

Objective 4: Operational Strategies

Key terms such as "strategies," "management," and "effective" underscore the importance of operational strategies in achieving business success. The visual analysis reinforces the significance of strategic planning and management in navigating business challenges and seizing opportunities. RBT suggests that businesses can attain sustained success by strategically managing their internal resources and capabilities to develop and implement effective operational strategies (Barra et al., 2022). The frequent appearance of terms related to strategies and management highlights the need for careful planning and execution. OIT complements this by emphasizing the role of external knowledge flows and collaboration in developing innovative operational strategies. By combining internal strategic planning with external insights, businesses can enhance their operational effectiveness and reduce the likelihood of failure (Sreenivasan & Suresh, 2023).

Objective 5: Demographic Dynamics

The significance of terms such as "age," "gender," and "education" indicates the influence of demographic factors on business practices and outcomes. The visual analysis emphasizes the role of demographic dynamics in shaping entrepreneurial ventures. RBT highlights that managing demographic factors as internal resources can lead to sustainable competitive advantage (Thaier et al., 2021; Kusuma et al., 2020). This aligns with the findings, which stress the importance of understanding age, gender, and educational backgrounds in influencing business outcomes. OIT suggests that understanding and adapting to demographic dynamics can drive innovation and competitiveness. By integrating internal resource management with external insights into demographic factors, businesses can enhance their success while addressing potential risks of failure (Audretsch, 2023; Tasman et al., 2022; Brixiová et al., 2020).

Comparison with Previous Studies

Supplier Relationships

The study's findings on supplier relationships correspond with existing literature highlighting their importance for business performance. The prominence of terms such as "supplier" and "relationships" aligns with Pratono's (2023) research, which emphasizes the critical role of robust supplier networks in achieving business resilience and competitive advantage. Pratono discusses how leveraging multiple suppliers and digital capabilities can provide firms with a strategic edge, particularly during market turbulence. This view complements Resource-Based Theory (RBT), which suggests that managing supplier relationships as internal resources is essential for sustaining competitive advantage. Additionally, Emon et al. (2023) underscore the significance of effective Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) practices in achieving cost-effectiveness and optimizing supply chain operations. Their findings support the study's emphasis on building strong supplier networks to mitigate operational challenges and enhance business performance.

Operational Strategies

The study's findings on operational strategies, with a focus on terms such as "strategies," "management," and "effective," resonate with Goedhart et al. (2023), who advocate for advanced models like the multi-period Markov Decision Process (MDP) to address inventory imbalances in omnichannel retailing. Goedhart et al. argue that such models enable more informed fulfillment and replenishment decisions by considering future demand and current inventory levels, thereby enhancing operational efficiency. Moreover, Hsin-Pin Fu et al. (2023) highlight how AI adoption influences operational strategies. They identify critical factors that retailers consider when implementing AI technologies, emphasizing that focusing on technology and organizational context helps align AI integration with business goals. This perspective supports Resource-Based Theory (RBT), which underscores the strategic management of internal resources for improved operational performance. Open Innovation Theory (OIT) complements this by highlighting the importance of external knowledge flows and collaborations in developing innovative operational strategies, integrating both internal and external perspectives for enhanced performance.

Market Adaptability

The study's findings on market adaptability align with previous research emphasizing the importance of agility and responsiveness in the retail sector. Terms such as "market," "sales," and "retail" underscore the need for businesses to remain flexible and responsive to changing market conditions. Sreenivasan and Suresh (2023) highlight the significance of agility, adaptability, and alignment (triple-A) in fostering resilience for startups navigating uncertainties. Their research emphasizes that these concepts are pivotal in supply chain dynamics, with management involvement, conflict management, collaboration, and information integration being key enablers of adaptability and alignment in startup environments. Iranmanesh et al. (2023) further contribute to this understanding by exploring how blockchain technology impacts supply chain parameters, influencing SMEs' adaptability to market demands. Their study demonstrates that supply chain transparency, alignment, and adaptability are crucial for navigating market turbulence, which positively moderates the relationship between agility and blockchain adoption intention.

Demographic Dynamics

The findings on demographic dynamics, focusing on terms like "age," "gender," and "education," align with research by Tasman et al. (2022) and Kusuma et al. (2020). Tasman et al. highlights how factors such as age, business experience, and education influence the success of women-led businesses. Older age, longer business tenure, and higher education levels are associated with better business performance, underscoring the importance of experience and education in entrepreneurial success. Kusuma et al. (2020) reveal that while ICT adoption factors do not differ significantly based on gender or educational qualifications, age, managerial status, and years in business show notable disparities. Younger managers are more adept at adopting new technologies compared to their older counterparts, who may struggle with technological changes and risk aversion. This highlights the need for targeted support for different demographic groups within SMEs. Additionally, Brixiová et al. (2020) find that financial literacy training benefits men more directly, while women entrepreneurs benefit more from tertiary education. This suggests that women entrepreneurs with higher education and perseverance achieve better sales performance. The study's findings emphasize the need for comprehensive training programs that integrate educational and non-cognitive skills to support women-led businesses effectively.

Societal Influences

The study's focus on societal influences, including gender dynamics and cultural norms, aligns with research by Malmström et al. (2023) and Md Mehedi Hasan Emon and Tahsina Khan (2023). Malmström et al. highlight persistent gender disparities in access to bank financing, with women facing higher loan rejection rates and interest charges, particularly in conservative societies. This underscores the impact of societal norms on gender disparities in entrepreneurial finance and suggests a need for policy interventions to address these inequalities. Emon and Khan (2023) discuss how cultural factors, such as risk avoidance and social networks, influence business practices in SMEs. Overcoming cultural obstacles requires informed policies and regulations, which have broader implications for developing countries with similar cultural and regulatory challenges.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study contribute significantly to existing theoretical frameworks by shedding light on the various factors influencing retail business success and failure. Specifically, the results reinforce Resource-Based Theory (RBT), which posits that a firm's competitive advantage stems from its internal resources and capabilities. The frequent emphasis on terms such as "business," "challenges," "success," and "management" underscores the importance of effectively leveraging internal resources to navigate the competitive landscape of retail in Irbid. Additionally, the study aligns with Open Innovation Theory (OIT), which highlights the value of integrating external knowledge and collaborations. The prominence of terms like "customer," "market," and "societal" suggests that businesses can enhance their competitiveness by adapting to market demands and engaging with external stakeholders. Furthermore, the significant mentions of gender-related terms contribute to a deeper understanding of how societal and familial dynamics impact entrepreneurial success and challenges, aligning with social theories that explore the intersections of gender, society, and business outcomes.

Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, the study offers several actionable recommendations for retail businesses and policymakers in Irbid. Entrepreneurs are encouraged to harness their internal resources, including social networks and managerial capabilities, to address challenges and drive business growth. This involves building strong relationships with customers and suppliers and adopting flexible market strategies to stay competitive. For policymakers and business support organizations, there is a clear need to develop targeted initiatives that address the specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. This could include improving access to financial resources, providing critical information, and facilitating networking opportunities. Additionally, businesses should embrace digital transformation and technological advancements, particularly in e-commerce, to enhance their competitiveness. Strengthening supplier relationships through technological innovations and best practices in Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) is also crucial. Operationally, retailers should aim to balance cost control, quality assurance, and customer satisfaction by employing lean management techniques and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. The focus on a relatively small sample of 18 businesses within a specific geographic region limits the generalizability of the findings. A larger and more diverse sample would offer a broader perspective and enhance the applicability of the results. Moreover, the reliance on qualitative data and purposive sampling may introduce bias, suggesting that future research could benefit from a mixed-methods approach to provide a more balanced view. The study captures a snapshot of the retail environment in Irbid at a particular time, and changes in market conditions, economic policies, and societal norms could affect the relevance of the findings over time. Finally, while the study provides valuable insights into the retail sector in Irbid, the applicability of these findings to other regions or sectors may be limited, necessitating further research to test the results in different contexts and environments. Future research should expand on these findings through longitudinal and cross-cultural approaches. Longitudinal studies would provide valuable insights into how the factors affecting retail business success and failure

evolve over time, offering a deeper understanding of the dynamics within micro-enterprises as they mature. Cross-cultural research, on the other hand, can explore how these factors impact retail businesses in different cultural and economic contexts, providing a more comprehensive view of micro-enterprise dynamics across diverse settings. Additionally, sector-specific studies could further investigate unique challenges and opportunities within particular retail sectors or types of micro-enterprises, enriching the understanding of industry-specific factors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the success and sustainability of retail businesses in Irbid. Entrepreneurs should focus on leveraging their internal resources, including social networks and managerial skills, to address operational and market challenges effectively. Developing robust relationships with customers and suppliers, coupled with the adoption of flexible market strategies and digital innovations, is crucial for maintaining competitiveness in a dynamic retail environment. Policymakers and business support organizations are advised to create targeted initiatives that support women entrepreneurs, such as improving access to financial resources, providing tailored business information, and facilitating networking opportunities. Additionally, there should be an emphasis on enhancing technological infrastructure and providing access to advanced supply chain solutions to support business growth and resilience. Retailers should prioritize operational efficiency by adopting lean management practices and fostering a culture of continuous improvement to balance cost control, quality assurance, and customer satisfaction. Finally, to address demographic influences, it is important to develop support programs that cater to diverse entrepreneurial needs based on age, gender, and educational background, ensuring equitable opportunities for all business owners in Irbid. Implementing these recommendations can contribute to greater business success and stability in Irbid's retail sector, as well as provide valuable lessons for similar contexts.

Conclusion

This study offers a detailed examination of the factors influencing retail micro-enterprises in Irbid, Jordan, through Resource-Based Theory (RBT) and Open Innovation Theory (OIT). Key findings reveal the significant impact of societal influences, market adaptability, supplier relationships, operational strategies, and demographic dynamics on business success. Societal factors, including gender norms and cultural practices, critically shape entrepreneurial ventures, underscoring the need for inclusive policies and support for women entrepreneurs. Market adaptability, driven by AI and digital transformation, is essential for maintaining competitiveness. Robust supplier relationships and strategic operational practices are crucial for business resilience. Demographic factors further influence performance, highlighting the need for targeted support programs. Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of integrating internal resources and external collaborations to enhance business outcomes, offering valuable insights for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and investors. Future research should explore these dynamics across different contexts to deepen understanding and drive sustainable growth.

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