

Women's Home-Based Businesses (HBB) In Saudi Arabia: Marketing Practices and Business Growth

Nawal Abdalla Adam¹, Shatha Ayub Alabduljabbar²

1.Associate Professor

*College of Business & Administration
Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*

2.Assistant Professor

*College of Business & Administration
Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*

Corresponding Author: Nawal Abdalla Adam

ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of marketing practices of home –based marketing on growth of home-based businesses owned by women using 4P’s marketing mix as theoretical frame work. A questionnaire survey and face-to-face interview were conducted to collect data. The study included 263 randomly selected home-based business women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia. Multiple regression analysis was used to measure the association between HBB marketing practices and business growth. Quantitative study results has revealed a significant impact of HBB current marketing practices on business growth. Qualitative study manifested lack of marketing outlets as the main problem impedes home -based business growth. These results have great implications for home based business owners as well as policy makers.*

KEYWORDS: *Women's Home-based Businesses, Business Growth, Market mix, Marketing Practices,, Saudi Arabia.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Home-based business (HBB) have attracted the attention of academicians and policy makers in the current era. It represent a significant and growing proportion of the small business sector in many countries in the world. It is considered as an important tool for economic growth and community development. Being defined as “any small business that performs its production and managerial activities within the owner’s basic residence, implied in may favorable characteristics of HBB. HBB convenient and flexible in working hours and space, it needs small amount of capital, has limited risk, less expenses, fewer or no taxes, enabling a person to be independent and his own boss (Phillips, 2002). Therefore, HBB provides an excellent solution to the problem of unemployment (Duggan, 1988) and better compatibility between home duties and career for women (Dannhauser, 1999; Butter and Moore, 1997; Jurik, 1998; Trent, 2000; Preisnitz, 1989, Ferguson and Dunphy, 1991; Taylor, 1988).

However, HBB's location at home outside commercial areas may create many challenges relating to basic business operations. According to BizFilings (n.d.) these challenges include keeping work and home life separate, projecting professionalism, isolation, networking and advertising problems, and insurance. This argument raises many questions concerning ability of the HBB's to grow and increase in size.

Many Researchers addressed home-based growth aspiration and obstacles comparing between females and males (Breen, 2010; Breen and Karanasios, 2010; Bruch, 1992; Clark and Douglas, 2014; Catly and Alten, 1997, Cater etc., 1992, Hamilton, 1998; Hughes, 2003; Kalleberg and Leicht, 1991, Kelly et. al., 2012; Loscocco and Smith-Hunter, 2004, Vorley and Rodgers, 2012, Danhauser, 1999; Edwards and Field-Hendrey, 1996; Titll and Walken, 2006; Olson, 1997; Thompson et al., 2009; Wynarczyk and Graham, 2013). Despite a huge amount of literature on HBB growth, the impact of HBB women entrepreneurs’ marketing practices on the business growth still uninvestigated.

The literature depicts that application of marketing mix by business varies depending on the size, business strategy, business location, competition, (Dudovskiy, 2012). It is asserted that marketing management theories, are derived for large business rather than small ones. Therefore, marketing mix theory might not be applicable for small businesses due to their unique characteristics (Stokes and Wilson, 2010, Moriarty et al.,

2008, McCartan-Quinn and Carson, 2003; Brooksbank et al., 1992, Carson et al., 1995; Hill and Wright, 2001). Small businesses have their own marketing practices which are completely different from marketing paradigm mentioned in textbooks (Blankson et al., 2006 and Gilmore et al., 2001). This argument makes the examination of application of marketing mix to small businesses in general and to home-based business an indispensable issue.

This paper aims to figure out the impact of marketing practices on HBB growth of women in Saudi Arabia using marketing mix as theoretical foundation.

This paper is structured as follows: The first section reviews the literature on HBB, its importance and the previous studies in the field of HBB. The second, gives an idea about HBB in Saudi Arabia. This is followed by third section on marketing practices in HBB. These sections are followed by the "research theoretical framework" and "methodology" sections, which include description of research theoretical foundation and the sample, research instruments, and operationalization of the research constructs. It is followed by analysis and discussion of the results, and implications for practice and suggested future research in relation to the topic of research.

Home-based Business Growth

HBBs have become a dominant segment even in great economies, such as United States of America and United Kingdom (Philips, 2002; Mason et al., 2010, 2011; Jay and Shaper, 2003; Clark and Douglas, 2011; Robert and Robinsons, 2010; Lynn and Earles, 2006; Hipple (2004)). This growth in number of HBBs has been attributed to tremendous developments in the information and communication technology (ICT), change in people's lifestyle and predominance of the service sector (as cited by Stanger (n.d.), Lynn and Earles, 2006, Clark and Douglas, 2011). Irrespective of reasons behind HBB's growth, the important point is that women represent a vast majority of owners of these businesses (Buttner and Moore, 1997; Dannhauser, 1999; Edward and Field-Hendry, 1996; Olson, 1997).

Business growth is resulting from increase in demand for business' goods or services which leads to increased sales and number of employees and requires more capital increase to fulfill the demand; and it is essential for survival and continuance of the HBBs (Breen and Karanaios, 2010; Coad et al., 2013; Janssen, 2009; Rauch and Rijksik, 2013). Studies have shown that most of the women's HBBs achieve limited sales size, have lower income and tend to recruit smaller number of employees, have little contribution to family income, and are not expected to achieve any future growth (Baires and Wheelock, 2000; Baker and Moen, 1999; Edwards and Field-Hendrey; Loscocco and Smith-Hunter, 2004; Marlow and McAdam, 2011; Morris et al., 2006). According to Duggan (1988) HBB owners are facing difficulty in deciding to move their businesses out of their homes to market area.

The literature cited several reasons for poor performance of women's HBBs. Some women entrepreneurs are facing difficulties in keeping the balance between family duties and business activities, as a result they are trying to solve home-business conflict at the expense of economic success of their business (Brush et al., 2004; Loscocco and Smith-Hunter, 2004; Jamali, 2009; Ramadani et al., 2015; Roomi and Parrot, 2008). However, HBBs have limited business sector choices given the spatial constraints of home and limited number of hours devoted to business and limited amount of capital (Thompson et al., 2009; Priestnitz, 1989; Olson, 1997; Smith-Hunter, 2004; and Field-Hendrey, 1996). According to Shifflett and Hoskins (1985) the lack of marketing outlets, lack of self-confidence, family need for money generated by the business, and the necessity of child-care are the main reasons behind HBB weak financial performance.

The theme of HBB growth has attracted many researchers. Clark and Douglas (2011) conducted an exploratory study to investigate HBB growth indicators of both men and women. They confirmed that the small size of HBB is not a barrier for marketing its products at the regional level as well as internationally. They imputed this to the availability of internet, which provides an easy use of websites in the selling process. Their study showed that the nature of HBB marketing activities vary depending on the geographical area of the market. They confirmed that business growth is influenced to a large extent by entrepreneur's personal factors. Their conclusion partially supports the assertion of Walker (2003) and Phillips (2002), who asserted that ICT can contribute significantly to the growth of HBBs.

Breen and Karanaios (2010) examined the factors influencing the growth of HBBs owned by women. They concluded that most women aspire the growth of their businesses and intend to undertake their business activities outside their homes. HBB growth requires wise management, government encouragement and support. They asserted that HBB growth is affected by the number of working hours, degree of family dependence on the business income, and the existence of overseas customers. They concluded that women, who have business skills or who always seek advice and consultancy, are more likely to have business growth.

Previous research also focused on HBB's growth intentions and motivators. Venugopal (2016), for example, pointed out that women's belief in their capabilities and family support are the most important factors that determine women's HBB growth in general. Modarresi et al. (2016) investigated the growth motivators of

women's HBBs. They cited that need for achievement, self-reliance, competency and socio-cultural concerns are among the main motivators to HBB business growth. According to Muntean (2013) "legal and social status, institutional presence, and economic empowerment are the factors affecting business establishment and expansion decisions". He asserted that women, who have family support, tend to make use of marketing opportunities and translate their ideas, creativity and skills into high business growth.

However, authors concurred on the necessity of using more than one indicator to measure performance of the HBB. These indicators can be classed into financial indicators such as sales volume, profitability, business expenditure, labor's wages, and finance. Other indicators are entrepreneurs themselves such as gender and family responsibility, previous experience, and knowledge and skills (Rosnafisah et al. 2010). Business characteristics also was used as indicators like number of employees, age of the business, industrial sector, business plan, and business location (Holmes and Smith, and Cane 1997). There are also other factors, such as government legislation, technology and relationship between businesses, as stated by some researchers.

The literature described above illustrates the current situation in respect HBB growth, as well as the factors that influence such growth, besides the obstacles to growth and growth motivators. It is clear that the impact of marketing practices on women HBB growth needs to be investigated.

HBB in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is one of the rapid growth economies Yea (2013) and rated as the 22nd most economically competitive country in the world (World Bank, 2013). However Small and medium businesses represent 92 percent of the businesses in Saudi Arabia and employ over 80 percent contribute to GDP only 28 percent. Recently the country adopted 25 years economic development vision (2030 vision) which aimed at reducing reliance on oil as the main source of country's income and giving women greater economic and social roles. As in the case of many countries, a vast majority of women entrepreneurs are operating HBB. According to the World Bank report (2009) Saudi women have the lowest participation in economic activity compared to women in other middle east countries (only 19%). Women represent minority of firm owners in middle east and north Africa (13%) (World Bank report, 2009). Most women entrepreneurs are working in microbusiness sector and informal sector. (World Bank report on environment for women's entrepreneurship, 2008).

HBB sector in Saudi Arabia represent large segment of small business. This sector includes small and micro unregistered businesses and it is dominated by women. These businesses are related to handicrafts, fashion designs, accessories, decorations, party organization, drawing, food preparation, and babysitting arrangements. This research is aimed at contributing to Saudi women's HBB expansion, growth, and continuity by drawing their attention to the importance of marketing practices for such growth.

Marketing Practices in HBB

Marketing practices are concerned with performance of marketing functions and activities within the organization (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012). Marketing activities are an important aspect of any business and necessary for its success (Lorette, 2014). Kotler (1984) asserted that for successful marketing a business should achieve the optimal marketing mix concerning the price, product and service, distribution channel and promotion. The business should provide the product or service that the customer wants at a suitable price using appropriate publicizing and promotion methods to introduce them to customer and then deliver the product to the customer using suitable distribution methods. Finding the customers who prefer the business' product or services is a great challenge for any business, including the HBB. Bhuian and Habib (2008) concluded businesses with high marketing orientation tend to have better performance.

Previous research showed that marketing in small businesses, in general, seems to be informal, non-traditional, and unplanned activities based on judgment of business owners (Blankson and Omar, 2002; Anderson et al., 2004). Hogarth-Scott, et al. (1996) asserted that small businesses are dealing with marketing in different ways. While some of them do not pay attention to marketing, others treated it seriously and put plans and integrated marketing strategies. Hogarth-Scott, et al. (1996) state that "Entrepreneurs are not always receptive to marketing, unless there is a need for growth or expansion, or profits/revenue level off or fall". This is because they have limited time and resources to undertake marketing activities (Oakey, 1991; Melodena, 2009, Davis et al., 1985; Weinrauch et al., 1991). A meta-analysis conducted by Krasnikov and Jayachandran (2008) showed that marketing capabilities have stronger impact on business performance compared to all other business operations. Their conclusion had been asserted by Khizindar and Darley (2017) proved the positive impact of both marketing capabilities and financial capabilities on customer's satisfaction and business performance. However, some other researchers attributed the failure of small businesses to their marketing practices (Bruno and Leidecker, 1988).

Duggan (1988) conducted an exploratory study to tackle the marketing practices in textile-related HBB. He concluded that the HBB use "word of mouth" and "networking and professional cards" as their main methods of promotion and "direct selling" to customers and on "customer orders" as the main method of

product distribution. He also noted that sometimes HBB seize the opportunity of festivals or exhibitions to sell their product directly to customers. Hess(1987) also concluded that “personal contact” is the main marketing method used by HBB owners. Being located away from commercial areas makes it necessary to rely on social media as means to connect with customers (Hewes, 1981).

HBB has limited number of customers (Baines, 1999 and Stanworh, 1995). Francis (1988) confirmed that HBB lack the flexibility to provide a variety products or services. However, the availability and accessibility of ICT can be considered to assistin expanding HBB market to regional or even to global level (Clark and Douglas , 2011). Fetterman (1984) argued that availability of the personal computer, and advances in telecommunications have increased the popularity of HBBs.

The literature listed above deals with the nature of marketing practices in HBB and the methods used in marketing of business products. However, it noted that there is a lack of research on the impact of these marketing practices on the growth of businesses. This research attempts to fill this gap in the literature by figuring out the effect of business' marketing practices on it growth.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In 1960 McCarthysuggested the 4P's marketing mix which are: product, price, place, and promotion. Marketing mix is the most famous theoretical framework used by different businesses. 4p's marketing mix is the most used form of marketing mix because it is easy to apply (Van Waterschoot and Van den Bulte, 1992). Marketing mix is considered as theoretical and practical tool of marketing (Möller, 2006). Sanghvi (2014) andGrönroos(1994) confirmed that marketing mix becomes a powerful paradigm because it facilitated marketing practicing and marketing tasks delegation to experts, it differentiated marketing form the other business activities, and it help in improving the business competitive positions. Researchers asserted that small businesses are facing difficulties in applying traditional 4P's marketing due to its characteristics Resnick et. al. (2016).

The literature review has progressed to establish relevant theoretical foundation and conceptual framework necessary to operationalize the proposed study. The research the framework postulates that women's HBB growth is determined by marketing practices related to 4P's marketing mix components (promotion, pricing, product and distribution).

III. METHODOLOGY

This research exploratory in nature. It aims at finding outeffect of the women's HBBs marketing practices on business growth with to reference to 4P's traditional marketing mix. Given the limited amount of previous research conducted about the relationship between marketing practicesand HBB growth basing on marketing mix theory, the present study has utilized an exploratory qualitative and quantitative methodology to achieve its objectives. Integrating quantitative and qualitative methods leads to a better understanding and interpretation of the nature of the link between marketing practices and the growth of HBB (Hohenthal, 2006 and Campbell and Fiske, 1959). Qualitative approach is seems to be more suitable for studying marketing practices within small business (Hill and Wright, 2001). Therefore, semi- structured interview was used to provide the opportunity to generate rich data and to get more details on questionnaire questions by allow women to involve into a dialogue and talking about their experience and marketing activities in business and to list out obstacles that impede growth more freely than by responding to the questionnaire(Hill and Wright, 2001). However, On the other hand, the mixed method has been criticized as being resource-demanding research design and also demands longer methodology sections in the manuscript (Hohenthal, 2006).

Sampling: Due to lack of recent statistics on number HBBs owned by women in Saudi Arabia and the difficulties in meeting women entrepreneurs attheir homes, the “convenience sampling” approachwas used to make it easier to access women. Therefore, the research focusedon participantsof “Yearly Producers' Exhibition”which held in Riyadh city of Saudi Arabia. This exhibition represents the largest gathering of women's HBBs entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia (includes more than 600 participant women entrepreneurs) and was aimed at creating marketing outlets for HBB products. The research sample included 263 randomly selected women's HBBsoperating in different types businesses (Food, Handicrafts, Paintings, , Sweets, Clothes) selected randomly.Although there were some difficulties in interviewing women as they were busy in selling during the exhibition.

A profile of the sample characteristics (Table-1) shows that the majority of participants are in the 21-25 age group, areschool leavers, and are married.

Table-1: Participant Profile

Item	Frequency	%	Item	Frequency	%
Age			Work status		
21 - 25	77	29	Student	40	15
26 - 30	62	26	Employee	65	25
31 - 35	37	14	Free business	101	38
36 - 40	36	13	Retired	11	4
More than 40	51	19	Other	46	17
	263			263	
Education			Marital status		
Prim. School	9	3	Married	140	53
Intermediate	16	6	Divorced	25	10
Secondary school	38	14	Separate	4	2
Graduate	177	67	Widow	6	2
Postgraduate	23	9	Single	88	33
	0	0			
	263			263	

The characteristics of HBBs studied (Table-2) included location, age, market area, source of finance, number of workers, and type of business.

Table-2: Business Characteristics

Item	Frequency	%	Item	Frequency	%
Location			Age of business		
Inside home	240	91	Less than one year	101	38
Supplemented business	11	4	1 - 3	112	43
A separate building	7	3	4 - 6	29	11
Near my home	5	2	7 - 9	12	5
Other	0	0	More than 10 years	9	3
Total	263			263	
Market area			Source of finance		
My district	25	10	Personal funds	222	84
Whole city	87	33	Bank finance	3	1
Whole region	38	14	Family finance	42	16
Whole country	87	33	More than one source	3	1
Outside country	26	10	Other	3	1
	263			263	
Type of Business			Number of workers		
Food	60	29	None	85	23
Handicrafts	80	30	1 - 3	161	61
Paintings	43	16	4 - 6	12	5
Sweets	48	18	7-10	5	5
Clothes	32	12			
Other					
	263			263	

Instruments: In view of the exploratory nature of present study both qualitative and quantitative methods were found appropriate. The questionnaire survey was utilized to collect further research data. As stated by Isaac and Michael (1990) that "Surveys are the most widely used technique in behavioral sciences for the collection of data. The study used perceptual measures to capture data on research variables. Perceptual measures are acceptable measures in most survey research including this research (Hussein and Selamat, 2005). Questions included in the questionnaire were derived from relevant literature. Data were collected concerning 1. Basic Business Details, such as sales, profits, employment, and marketing approaches, 2. Marketing Practices: Which represent the dependent variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale, adapted from literature, was used to measure HBB marketing practices. It consisted of questions on marketing practices in relation to the business products, methods of promotion, distribution outlets, and pricing of products, and 3. Business Growth: Is used as dependent variable. HBB in Saudi Arabia sell a wide variety of products which need to different markets and different customers. Therefore the "product" appeared in the questionnaire with opened ended question. Product "pricing" indicator tend to measure the way in which women price their product, whether basing on cost, completion, mark-up, demand, or other basis. To measure "promotion" a number of sales promotion methods was used as newspapers, trade magazines, trade newsletters, catalogs, professional business cards, permanent product labels, trade shows, and word of mouth, and networking. To measure HBB growth the indicators widely used in the literature to measure growth, like sales and employment, were used. Due to the lack of accounting records the business growth was measured by women observations on the growth of her business and the number of workers. As a result scale of four (ranging from "increased largely" to "decreased largely")

was used to measure growth during last three years. Employment was measured using a scale ranging from 0-2 up to 10 persons.

An in-depth face-to-face interview was identified as a suitable technique for broadening the scope of research and to raise further issues to subsequently support a quantitative study. The questions employed were open-ended and adapted from Kohli and Jaworski's (1990) constructs. Whilst virtually all studies of market orientation utilize quantitative techniques to effectively contribute to an understanding of market orientation, a qualitative approach was felt to offer unique advantages for 1. less researched areas, like Saudi HBB sector in this case, and 2. access to firsthand information. This qualitative study consisted of ten HBB women in Riyadh city in Saudi Arabia and the women were selected based on the age of business and diversify of business field. The interview included open-ended questions concerning the nature of the various marketing activities carried out, the difficulties faced by women to do marketing in an effective manner, increase in sales or profits in recent years, factors that limit expansion of the project, and future plans related to the business.

Reliability: The reliability of the questionnaire construct was tested using 20 women, who owned HBB and participated in the exhibition. The alpha coefficient for the four items was 0.886, suggesting an acceptable internal consistency compared to the acceptable level for most social science research of 0.70 (Nunnally 1970; Churchill 1979).

Data Analysis: The questionnaires were handed over to 350 women, who participated in the "Producers' Exhibition" held in Riyadh city in Saudi Arabia. Only 263 filled questionnaires were returned achieving response rate of 75%. Data analysis using SPSS software included descriptive statistics as well as multiple regression analysis, which was conducted to measure the correlation between independent variables relating to marketing mix (promotion, product, price, and distribution) and dependent variable (growth of HBB). The results revealed that HBB practices in relation to elements of marketing mix explain 11.2% of the variation in HBB growth (at 1% significant level) and the relationship was highly significant. It was noted (Table-3) that all the explanatory variables have significant relationship with business growth, except "distribution", which showed an insignificant correlation with business growth. The "price" element shows the highest R² value, compared to other market mix elements, with a significant relationship with business growth (F = 2.762).

Table-3: Regression Analysis Results

Explanatory variable	Estimated Coefficient	R ²	\bar{R}^2	F	Overall Sig. Level
Promotion	-.165 (-2.665)	.030	.022	3.937	.021
Price	-.119 (t = -1.174)	.042	.027	2.762	.025
Product	.180 (t = 1.771)	.037	.025	3.219	.023
Distribution	-.210 (t = -2.673)	.003	-.001	.754	.386

The mean and standard deviation of problems (Table-4) faced by participants was at 95% confidence interval (two sided). Based on these results marketing is the main problem face by women's HBBs.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation

Problem	Mean	Standard Deviation	Chi-Square	95% Confidence Interval
Related to marketing	3.2008	1.34434	14.893	0.000
lack of funding	3.1721	1.38595	25.303	0.000
Inability to work full-time	2.5809	1.35196	28.025	0.000
Lack of raw materials	2.5598	1.38920	25.188	0.000
Lack of advice and guidance	2.5333	1.34091	31.792	0.000

Interview results: Semi-structured in-depth individual interview included ten women, who have HBBs operating in fields of Food, Handicrafts, Paintings, Sweets, Clothes. It was conducted after the questionnaires were collected and conducted with women who operate in the same field of businesses covered by the questionnaire. It included open ended questions covering the way they marketed their product, as well as the obstacles that impeded their business growth. Most of the interviewees were university graduates (66.7%), of age between 35 -45 years (83.3%), and married (83.3%). Interviewed women agreed on some issues and diverged in others. All women included in the interview asserted that they mainly use the direct selling rather than the use of sales representatives. They use social media (especially Instagram) to promote their product. Moreover, they determine the prices of their products based on the costs. However, most of them don't know

the number of their customers. While some have the intention to expand their business in order to gain more customers (50%), others were not keen to expand their business (50%). Those not keen on expanding their business mentioned reasons, such as desire to manage business from home, need for time to do other things and lack of finance. Most of them have emphasized lack of marketing outlets as the main problem, followed by lack of labor, high fees for exhibitions, and lack of finance. Women explained that they facing problem in marketing because they do not have shops in market place, they rely mainly on social networking media and seasonal exhibitions to sell their products. They declared that marketing is the main cause of their other problems (lack of labor and finance) and the main obstacle to the growth and expansion of their businesses.

IV. DISCUSSION

HBBs in many countries were found to have fixed or decreasing sizes. The researchers have attributed this to a number of factors. This study was supposed to identify the impact of marketing practices of women's HBBs on business growth. The quantitative analysis results showed that marketing practices used by HBB women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia can affect HBB growth greatly. Qualitative study findings confirm the results of quantitative analysis stated above. However, the interview results, also, reveal that a considerable proportion of women who operate their business from home are less motivated to expand their businesses for reasons such as lack of time and desire to keep manageable business size.

This supports the findings of other researchers, like Krasnikov and Jayachandran (2008) and Breen and Karanasios (2010). Among the 4P's marketing mix, "pricing" scored the higher impact on HBB growth. This indicates that pricing is the element for modern HBB growth. In the meanwhile regression analysis results showed that distribution of product (place) is no longer an effective market mix ingredient for HBB. This might be attributed to advancement of ICT and usage of the internet in marketing (Clark and Douglas, 2011). This confirms the Resnick and Cheng, (2011)'s conclusion. However, the qualitative study results confirmed that marketing is a major problem for women's HBB growth. The findings of the study emphasize the importance of women's marketing practices in stimulating HBB growth.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This research revealed an unexpected result in the form of a negative relationship between a marketing practice of distribution and business growth. Results of this research have important practical implications, like suggesting the overall need for policies that provide more support for HBB in marketing, networking. Moreover, this empirical investigation highlights the impact of marketing practices on HBB growth and emphasizes the need for provision of marketing outlets and networking.

A more extensive investigation into factors that help in home-based business growth of both men and women entrepreneurs is required. Future research covering not only Saudi Arabia, but other The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) countries shall throw more light on the issues of home-based businesses.

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