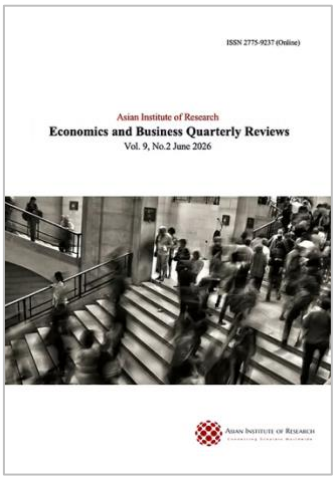

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Exploring the Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability Factors in Fostering Franchising Intention of SMEs in Oman

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Abstract
Background: Franchising is considered one of the most significant mechanisms of unlimited investment in the modern era and has increasingly expanded across various countries worldwide. The franchising sector in the Sultanate of Oman is witnessing a rapid institutional movement aimed at empowering national brands under Vision 2040. However, a significant "practical gap" emerges between the scale of intensive technical support and the behavioral readiness of local entrepreneurs. Objective: This study aims to investigate the dynamics of the Omani institutional framework in the franchising sector, specifically identifying the "practical gap" between standardized technical empowerment (manuals and legal documentation) and the behavioral/leadership readiness of Omani SME owners as a fundamental pillar for long-term operational sustainability. Methodology: A descriptive methodology employing a cross-sectional design was adopted, with data collected via a structured questionnaire from a sample of 219 SME owners in Oman. Data were analyzed using SPSS (v. 27), utilizing descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, RII) and inferential analyses (t-tests, ANOVA, and Bonferroni post-hoc tests). These findings were triangulated with a qualitative document analysis of the OCCI's "2026 5th Edition Tender" within the "Motivation, Ability, and Opportunity" (MOA) framework. Results: The findings revealed that participants' perceptions across the study axes were generally at a medium level, with the "Opportunities" axis recording the highest Relative Importance Index (RII = 0.592), followed by Ability (0.457) and Motivation (0.415). These results underscore a qualitative "practical gap"; despite the high perception of institutional opportunities (legislation and financing), the relatively lower scores for ability and motivation suggest that current "technical qualification" is not yet matched by sufficient "behavioral qualification." Statistically significant differences were found favoring males, older participants with prior experience, and the restaurants/cafes sector, indicating that behavioral readiness varies significantly across demographic and sectoral variables. Conclusion: The study concludes that Omani SMEs generally exhibit a neutral or slightly unfavorable perception toward franchising, with limited endorsement of its quantitative advantages such as increased profits and low-risk expansion. The analysis also highlights a notable influence of demographic characteristics, with males, experienced individuals, and those in the restaurants and cafés sector demonstrating more positive attitudes. Consequently, the study posits that bridging the "practical gap" requires the adoption of a strategic model prioritizing "behavioral qualification" as a proactive and essential prerequisite for achieving operational sustainability, emphasizing the need to develop behavioral readiness indicators prior to initiating technical support.

Keywords: Franchising, SME, Oman

1. Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) represent are the backbone and primary engine of growth in contemporary business communities, constituting the vast majority of active economic entities in global markets. The fundamental significance of these enterprises stems from their superior adaptability to economic fluctuations, low barriers to market entry due to flexible operational costs, and their precise specialization in filling niche service and product gaps often overlooked by large corporations. As noted by Al-Naas (2018), these attributes have motivated a broad segment of youth toward entrepreneurship as a strategic path for national economic development and financial independence. However, a persistent challenge remains: these enterprises operate as "open systems," highly sensitive to both internal and external environmental disruptions. This reality compels their leaders to seek innovative and sustainable managerial models that ensure not only survival but also accelerated growth and market penetration.

Faced with structural challenges that impede SME growth, franchising emerges as a sophisticated economic and engineering mechanism that integrates the institutional strength of large corporations with the field-level flexibility of smaller ventures. The International Franchise Association (IFA, 2001) defines this system as a legal license and agreement granting a party the right to utilize another's commercial identity and business system. This concept has evolved into an integrated package of technical knowledge transfer (Know-how) and legal obligations that ensure standardized quality (Aziz & Mohsen, 2024). The global momentum of franchising is attributed to its unique capacity for highly efficient capital allocation and the creation of extensive distribution networks that achieve competitive advantages difficult to attain individually (Jumadildayeva & Uspanova, 2015). Consequently, franchising is not merely a distribution method but a strategic approach to extending the life cycle of successful enterprises and maximizing profitability through low-risk expansion.

The Sultanate of Oman places exceptional strategic emphasis on the franchising sector, which has undergone a fundamental institutional shift reflecting industrial maturity. While initiatives were previously centralized within the SMEs Development Authority (Riyada), the weight of regulatory leadership has now transitioned to the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), specifically through the Oman Franchise Center. Currently, the center leads this industrial transformation through ambitious programs and strategic tenders, most notably the 5th edition tender (2026), targeting the qualification of up to 30 national brands. Despite this momentum, institutional focus remains almost entirely on "technical and documentation qualification" through the preparation of operational manuals and contracts, with a clear oversight regarding the "behavioral qualification" of the entrepreneur. Parallel to this, independent initiatives are emerging in the Omani market, where brands develop their franchise packages through private consulting firms at their own expense, outside the institutional umbrella. This trend underscores the urgent need to standardize behavioral readiness criteria and ensure their alignment with technical qualification outcomes to guarantee the success of these investments.

The primary aim of this study is to explore and analyze the role of Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability (MOA) factors in shaping the franchising readiness and strategic orientation of SMEs in Oman, with a specific focus on bridging the gap between institutional support and behavioral practice.

This study derives its value from being a robust research response to the accelerating economic movement in the Sultanate of Oman. This study enriches both Arabic and international academic literature on the MOA framework by applying it to franchising in emerging markets. The scientific value lies in synthesizing a theoretical framework that integrates intrinsic motivations, environmental opportunities, and behavioral abilities (Quang & Truong-Thi, 2023; Kim & Lee, 2020). This addresses a research gap regarding the factors influencing the sustainability of national brands, moving beyond traditional statistical "intention to adopt" studies. The study provides a strategic "roadmap" for the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the Oman Franchise Center. The findings assist in redesigning qualification programs and government tenders (such as the 5th edition 2026). By highlighting the "practical gap," the study enables policymakers to design support initiatives focusing on the "behavioral and leadership qualification" of entrepreneurs alongside technical and legal support, ensuring the efficiency of government investment expenditure.

The significance of this research lies in its ability to analyze the variance in readiness and strategic orientations based on demographic variables (gender, age, experience) and sectoral factors (e.g., the restaurants and cafes sector). Understanding these nuances. contributes to providing "tailored" recommendations that help stakeholders direct resources toward sectors most prepared for international expansion, rather than employing generic solutions that overlook the specificity of each business activity.

This research directly aligns with the objectives of "Oman Vision 2040," which aims to diversify income sources and increase the contribution of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to the GDP. By promoting a franchising culture built on behavioral readiness, the study facilitates transforming Omani enterprises into cross-border national assets, thereby reducing operational failure risks and enhancing In-Country Value (ICV) within the national economy.

Given that research on franchising intentions and readiness in Oman is still in its nascent stages, this study gains particular significance by highlighting the unique Omani cultural and economic context. Furthermore, it opens new avenues for future exploration of "moderating effects" of demographics and investigating post-franchising performance and its long-term impact on the local economy, thereby providing a comprehensive and qualitative understanding of the sector.

2. Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

In contemporary literature, the concept of franchising has traversed its role as a mere legal mechanism for product distribution, evolving into a comprehensive "Business Format Franchising" system based on the transfer of "Technical Know-how" and commercial reputation. Studies (Ali, 2022; Mustafa, 2022; Aziz & Mohsen, 2024) emphasize that the essence of this system lies in the "continuous contractual relationship" between the franchisor and the franchisee. The franchisor provides ongoing technical support and supervision, while the franchisee adheres to strict operational standards in exchange for specific fees. Within the Omani context, this model is pivotal for empowering national brands, facilitating their transformation from fragile individual ventures into sustainable value-chain enterprises capable of regional and international competition.

Existing literature (Timothy, 2018; Abdelkader et al., 2020) converges on the fact that franchising represents a low-risk growth strategy for SMEs, allowing expansion without the need for massive capital investments. This sector contributes between 4-5% of the GDP in advanced economies like the USA (IFA, 2025). For emerging markets, franchising functions as a mechanism for technology transfer, enhancing the efficiency of local supply chains, and generating sustainable employment. This makes it a fundamental pillar in economic diversification plans, such as Vision 2040, aimed at reducing reliance on traditional sectors.

This study adopts the Motivation, Ability, and Opportunity (MOA) framework as an integrated analytical system to explain the behavioral readiness of Omani entrepreneurs. The framework is based on the premise that "strategic action" (adopting franchising) is the result of the intersection of three dimensions: motivation, opportunity, and ability.

Motivation refers to the intrinsic and extrinsic drivers (e.g., expansion goals, profit maximization, or social prestige) that propel the entrepreneur toward franchising (Dant et al., 2021) while opportunity encompasses environmental factors, the regulatory landscape, and institutional support provided by the state (e.g., Oman Franchise Center initiatives), which lower market entry barriers (Carpenter & Nakamoto, 2020). Currently, SMEs have become indispensable in all economies, as they can be described as a driving force for business, growth, innovation and competitiveness. They are also very important employers, as SMEs create and provide new, high-quality job opportunities and help reduce unemployment and poverty rates (Brezinova, 2021). Improving the performance of SMEs companies is a crucial element in the continuity of the work of these companies, their growth, and their increasing ability to achieve prosperity and development.

Performance is considered one of the central concepts in modern administrative thought, as it represents the ultimate outcome of individual and collective efforts within an organization and reflects the actual level of achievement in relation to predetermined objectives. As noted by Zaadoud and Chbab (2021), performance is not limited to the outcome of human effort alone; rather, it reflects the effectiveness of the work system in transforming efforts into tangible results. From this perspective, performance is viewed as a cumulative product of the interaction among multiple elements, including operational efficiency, financial and human resources, leadership systems, and the organizational environment within which the institution operates. Furthermore, Alvi et al. (2020) argue that organizational performance constitutes the overall expression of an organization's ability to achieve its strategic and operational objectives through the effective utilization of its resources to attain a balanced combination of financial growth, service quality, beneficiary satisfaction, and organizational sustainability.

In addition to the original dimensions of the MOA framework (Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability), this study incorporates the variable of perceived performance enhancement. This variable was added because franchising intention among SMEs is not only influenced by internal motivation, available opportunities, and organizational abilities, but also by the extent to which business owners believe that franchising can improve organizational performance, profitability, market expansion, and long-term sustainability. Therefore, perceived performance enhancement serves as an important explanatory factor that strengthens the understanding of franchising intention within the Omani SME context.

Finally, ability is the core pillar of this research, including both technical competencies (contracts and manuals) and behavioral readiness (leadership and delegation). The study posits that an imbalance between these three dimensions explains the "practical gap" observed in the Omani market (Elango et al., 2019).**The Omani Context: Between Institutional Initiatives and the Behavioral Gap**

At the national level in the Sultanate of Oman, **to empower national brands S**mall and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have received extraordinary government attention since 2014, through the establishment of the Rafad fund and "Riyada" initiatives, culminating in the current strategic shift led by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) via the Oman Franchise Center. The "Franchise Consultancy and Qualification Program Tender - 5th Edition 2026" (Tender No. 3/2026) aims to qualify a minimum of 26 brands, with an option to reach 30, reflecting a desire to create a "Critical Mass" of Omani companies ready for granting franchises. Allocating 70% of the weight to technical evaluation versus 30% for financial evaluation reflects an institutional awareness of the necessity for high-quality consultancy outputs and ensuring their alignment with international standards. The tender document obligates consultancy firms to undertake highly complex technical tasks, including:Building Operational Structures: Developing manuals covering all aspects of quality, health, safety, and operations, Legal Framework: Drafting franchise contracts to protect intellectual property rights and ensure complianc and, Designing Support Systems: Establishing ongoing support mechanisms for franchisees.

Despite the institutional momentum and technical support manifested in successive government tenders, a "developmental paradox" persists in the Omani context, where the actual expansion and regional growth of national brands remain modest relative to the scale of support provided. A critical gap exists between technical qualification and actual implementation. Although brands may possess well-developed operational manuals, effective execution often fails due to the absence of a corresponding behavioral culture of discipline within the franchisor. Thus, the core issue is not the quality of technical documentation, but the behavioral readiness of the individual managing it. Existing qualification processes emphasize the "tool" while neglecting the "user," implicitly assuming that the franchisor is capable of enforcing discipline, monitoring, and delegation. However, without this behavioral capacity, operational manuals remain ineffective, highlighting an overlooked dimension that this study seeks to address.

The core of the problem lies in the fact that institutional efforts focus heavily on "providing opportunities" (Opportunities) through legislation and financing, and "technical capabilities" (Technical Ability) through the preparation of manuals and contracts. However, they largely overlook the "Behavioral Readiness and Motivation" of the Omani entrepreneur. This imbalance within the (MOA) framework may lead to wasteful expenditure on

consultancy services for creating operational manuals that remain "ink on paper" due to the brand owners' inability or reluctance to shift from "individualized management" to "standardized leadership."

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

This study adopts a cross-sectional quantitative research design. A structured survey was employed as the primary data collection instrument to measure the key constructs derived from the Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability (MOA) framework. This approach enables the examination of relationships among variables and the assessment of differences across SME sectors in Oman. The quantitative design was deemed appropriate for capturing and analyzing measurable patterns related to franchising intention and its influencing factors within the Omani SME context.

3.2. Study Population

The target population of this study consists of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in Oman across various sectors, including retail trade, restaurants and cafés, services, and industry. The study focused on owners, managers, and key decision-makers within these SMEs, as they are the most knowledgeable individuals regarding strategic decisions such as franchising intention and organizational development. The selection of this population is justified by their direct involvement in business planning and performance-related decisions, which are central to the objectives of this study.

3.3. Sample Procedures

A purposive sampling technique was adopted to ensure that only relevant respondents who meet the study criteria were included. The survey was designed using Google Forms and distributed electronically to SME owners and managers through professional networks and business contacts across Oman. A total of 219 valid responses were collected and deemed sufficient for statistical analysis, as they meet the minimum requirement for conducting reliable quantitative analysis in cross-sectional survey research and allow for meaningful examination of relationships among variables. The use of online distribution facilitated wider geographical coverage and efficient data collection within a limited time frame.

3.4. Measures

The first section of the questionnaire focused on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, education level, business type, prior franchising experience, and years of experience. The measurement items used in this study were carefully developed based on relevant theoretical foundations and previous empirical studies in the field of SMEs and franchising intention, including (Truong-Thi, 2022), (Orgonáš et al., 2020), (Timothy, 2018), (Brezinova, 2021), (Abd Aziz et al., 2021), (Kamar & Alsetoohy, 2021), and (Ndonga, 2014).

The second section measured the main constructs of the study based on the Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability (MOA) framework, in addition to the perceived performance enhancement variable. Motivation was measured using 22 items, Opportunity using 21 items, Ability using 22 items, and Perceived Performance Enhancement using 15 items. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree was used to capture respondents' perceptions and evaluate their level of agreement with each statement.

The questionnaire was initially developed in English and then translated into Arabic to ensure clarity and suitability for the target respondents in Oman. A back-translation procedure was subsequently applied to ensure linguistic and conceptual equivalence between the two versions. The translated questionnaire was carefully reviewed to ensure consistency and clarity of meaning, thereby enhancing its validity and reliability for data collection in the current study.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedures

Data were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, and Relative Importance Index - RII) were used to summarize the responses. t-tests to capture gender and franchising experience and One-Way ANOVA was conducted for age, qualification, business type, and experience, with Bonferroni post-hoc tests applied where significant differences emerged. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and corrected item-total correlations.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical standards, ensuring informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and secure data handling. Participants were fully briefed on the study's purpose and their rights, with all identifying data anonymized. Data were used solely for research purposes, and transparency was maintained throughout the process.

3.7. Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire's validity and reliability were systematically evaluated. Content validity was ensured through literature-based item development aligned with the MOA framework. Construct validity was confirmed via significant corrected item-total correlations, demonstrating strong internal consistency across all scales.

Table 1: Item-Total Correlations for Study Axes Items

Motivational Factors		**Opportunities**		**Ability**		**Performance Enhancement**	
Items No.	**Correlation Coefficient**	**Items No.**	**Correlation Coefficient**	**Items No.**	**Correlation Coefficient**	**Items No.**	**Correlation Coefficient**
1	.376**	1	.821**	1	.652**	1	.632**
2	.577**	2	.844**	2	.855**	2	.830**
3	.763**	3	.876**	3	.880**	3	.877**
4	.811**	4	.867**	4	.834**	4	.811**
5	.842**	5	.872**	5	.829**	5	.808**
6	.431**	6	.878**	6	.692**	6	.807**
7	.639**	7	.841**	7	.757**	7	.787**
8	.784**	8	.903**	8	.881**	8	.841**
9	.790**	9	.892**	9	.864**	9	.879**
10	.800**	10	.838**	10	.783**	10	.781**
11	.537**	11	.886**	11	.668**	11	.753**
12	.567**	12	.882**	12	.825**	12	.850**
13	.828**	13	.862**	13	.839**	13	.838**
14	.833**	14	.874**	14	.836**	14	.855**
15	.742**	15	.886**	15	.849**	15	.856**
16	.516**	16	.868**	16	.781**		
17	.745**	17	.880**	17	.830**		
18	.808**	18	.874**	18	.827**		
19	.775**	19	.865**	19	.802**		
20	.780**	20	.873**	20	.799**		
21	.695**	21	.868**	21	.826**		
22	.811**	22	.884**	22	.784**		

Note. ** $p < .01$.

Reliability, focusing on internal consistency, was assessed via Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. The results, detailed in Table 2, indicated excellent reliability for all scales ($\alpha \geq .947$), confirming that the questionnaire provided consistent and dependable measurements of the intended constructs within this study's sample.

Table 2: Internal Consistency Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) for Study Axes

Axis	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Level
Motivational Factors	22	0.950	Excellent
Opportunities	22	0.985	Excellent
Ability	22	0.947	Excellent
Performance Enhancement	15	0.963	Excellent
All items	81	0.978	Excellent

Note. Reliability levels based on common interpretation guidelines (>.9=Excellent, >.8=Good, >.7=Acceptable).

4. Results

The study sample (N = 219) was predominantly male (75.3%) and largely composed of individuals under the age of 40, with nearly half (49.3%) aged below 30. Most participants held a Bachelor's degree (48.9%) or a Higher Diploma (19.2%). In terms of business activity, the majority operated within the restaurant and café sector (64.8%), while smaller proportions represented retail, services, and industry. Notably, 93.6% of respondents had no prior experience in franchising, and nearly half reported less than five years of experience in their current field. Overall, the sample reflects a young, relatively inexperienced group of SME owners or managers who are largely new to the franchising model.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Participant Demographic Characteristics (Total No 219

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	165	75.3
	Female	54	24.7
Age	Less than 30 years old	108	49.3%
	30 to less than 40 years old	73	33.3%
	40 to less than 50 years old	26	11.9%
	50 years old and above	12	5.5%
Qualification	General Diploma	35	16.0%
	Higher Diploma	42	19.2%
	Bachelor's Degree	107	48.9%
	Postgraduate Studies	35	16.0%
Type of Business Activity	Services	21	9.6%
	Industry	14	6.4%
	Restaurants and Cafés	142	64.8%
	Retail Trade	42	19.2%
Previous Franchising Experience	No	205	93.6
	Yes	14	6.4

Variable	Category	N	%
Years of Experience in Field	Less than 5 years	108	49.3%
	5 to less than 10 years	76	34.7%
	10 to less than 15 years	23	10.5%
	15 years or more	12	5.5%

4.1. Descriptive Statistics and Relative Importance Index (RII)

Descriptive analysis of the motivational factors influencing franchising intentions among Omani SMEs is presented in Table 4. Results revealed an overall moderate level of perceived importance (M = 2.08, RII = 0.415). Participants generally expressed neutrality or mild disagreement regarding the role of these factors as motivators. The highest-rated items—such as reducing financial risks, enabling regional/global expansion, and offering managerial support—were still within the medium range. In contrast, traditionally strong motivators like profitability, brand reputation, and long-term financial returns received the lowest ratings, categorized as medium-low. These findings suggest that motivational drivers are not strongly endorsed by the sample, indicating limited enthusiasm toward franchising as a strategic choice.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics and Relative Importance Index for Motivational Factors

Item No.	Statement	M	SD	RII	Important levels
1	Profits and financial returns are a key motivator.	1.75	0.61	0.351	M-L
2	Offers opportunities for growth and expansion with minimal risk.	1.91	0.70	0.383	M-L
3	Helps in building a strong commercial reputation with ease.	2.00	0.69	0.399	M-L
4	Existence of proven operational/management systems reduces difficulties.	2.08	0.89	0.416	M
5	Contributes to reducing financial risks when expanding operations.	2.35	1.16	0.469	M
6	Provides opportunities for stable long-term financial returns.	1.91	0.72	0.383	M-L
7	Helps accelerate market entry compared to starting a new business.	2.01	0.72	0.402	M
8	Reduces marketing costs due to shared advertising campaigns.	2.11	0.86	0.421	M
9	Allows access to a reliable and competitively priced supply network.	2.11	0.9	0.422	M
10	Enables businesses to receive ongoing managerial support/training.	2.25	1.12	0.450	M
11	Provides the opportunity to benefit from strong brand reputation.	1.98	0.84	0.395	M-L
12	Reduces legal obstacles thanks to a clear regulatory framework.	2.05	0.83	0.410	M
13	Omani market offers supportive environment due to economic stability.	2.11	0.81	0.421	M
14	Contributes to the rapid expansion of SMEs in Oman.	2.22	0.93	0.445	M
15	Growing interest among Omani entrepreneurs in franchising as a successful investment.	2.18	1.02	0.437	M

Item No.	Statement	M	SD	RII	Important levels
16	Omani laws and regulations provide a suitable environment for franchise projects.	2.05	0.90	0.410	M
17	Helps improve the quality of services and products in the Omani market.	2.00	0.89	0.399	M-L
18	Omani consumers' preference for trusted brands enhances success potential.	2.09	0.89	0.417	M
19	Enables regional/global expansion, aligning with SME Development Authority objectives.	2.27	1.0	0.454	M
20	Government support/initiatives contribute to strengthening franchise culture.	2.13	1.12	0.426	M
21	Facilitates access to funding from Omani banks/financial institutions.	2.00	0.77	0.401	M
22	Contributes to transferring global knowledge and expertise into Oman.	2.12	0.89	0.425	M
	Overall Axis 1	**2.08**	**0.618**	**0.415**	**M**

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; RII = Relative Importance Index. Means are based on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). Importance Levels based on RII: High (H) = 0.8 < RII < 1.0; High-Medium (H-M) = 0.6 < RII < 0.8; Medium (M) = 0.4 < RII < 0.6; Medium-Low (M-L) = 0.2 < RII < 0.4; Low (L) = 0.0 < RII < 0.2. N = 219.

Descriptive analysis results for Opportunities revealed an overall mean of 2.96 (RII = 0.592), indicating a medium level of perceived importance regarding franchising opportunities among Omani SMEs (Table 5). While most items reflected neutral perceptions, a few—such as supportive laws and regulations, facilitated financing, and prospects for local/international expansion—were rated within the High-Medium range, suggesting relatively stronger confidence in the legal and financial environment. In contrast, traditional opportunity drivers like market supportiveness, infrastructure quality, tourism growth, and government initiatives were rated lower within the medium range, reflecting more moderate or uncertain views. Notably, the relatively high standard deviations across items point to divergent perceptions among respondents.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics and Relative Importance Index for Opportunity Factors

Item No.	Statement	M	SD	RII	Important levels
1	The Omani market provides a supportive environment for franchise growth.	2.65	1.32	0.531	M
2	Growing interest from SME Dev. Authority/Chamber of Commerce in supporting SMEs.	2.88	1.18	0.575	M
3	Current laws and regulations support franchising well.	3.14	1.34	0.627	H-M
4	Consumers in Oman prefer well-known and established brands.	2.91	1.22	0.582	M
5	Offers companies access and rapid expansion at low cost.	3.04	1.33	0.608	H-M
6	Franchise contracts are characterized by low risk.	2.96	1.33	0.592	M
7	SME Dev. Authority/Chamber offer support programs to promote adoption.	2.98	1.26	0.596	M
8	Omani government initiatives (Franchise Program, "Nazdaher") facilitate procedures.	2.83	1.32	0.565	M
9	Eased financing from supporting entities encourages investment.	3.11	1.31	0.622	H-M
10	Franchising supports Vision 2040 by promoting economic diversification.	3.01	1.22	0.603	H-M

Item No.	Statement	M	SD	RII	Important levels
11	Special economic zones and free zones offer ideal growth opportunities.	2.84	1.36	0.568	M
12	Training/qualification programs help empower entrepreneurs for management.	3.02	1.33	0.604	H-M
13	SME Dev. Authority/Chamber encourage entrepreneurs to adopt models.	2.99	1.28	0.598	M
14	Omani market offers opportunities due to increasing economic growth.	3.02	1.33	0.605	H-M
15	Provides Omani SMEs opportunities to expand locally and internationally.	3.11	1.35	0.622	H-M
16	Oman's strong infrastructure provides favorable conditions.	2.82	1.29	0.564	M
17	Interest of SME Dev. Authority/Chamber in raising awareness of franchising.	3.00	1.27	0.600	M
18	Modern legislation offers legal protection, enhancing confidence.	3.09	1.35	0.618	H-M
19	Partnerships between Omani companies and global brands facilitate adoption.	2.94	1.28	0.587	M
20	Digital transformation enhances opportunities via e-commerce/digital marketing.	3.03	1.34	0.606	H-M
21	Expansion in infrastructure projects creates attractive business environment.	2.93	1.39	0.585	M
22	The growing interest in tourism opens horizons for hospitality/restaurants/cafes.	2.82	1.26	0.564	M
	Overall Axis 2	**2.96**	**1.13**	**0.592**	**M**

Note. M = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; RII = Relative Importance Index. Means are based on a 5-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*). Importance Levels based on RII: High (H) = 0.8 < RII < 1.0; High-Medium (H-M) = 0.6 < RII < 0.8; Medium (M) = 0.4 < RII < 0.6; Medium-Low (M-L) = 0.2 < RII < 0.4; Low (L) = 0.0 < RII < 0.2. N = 219.

Analysis of Ability Factors (Table 6) indicated a moderate level of perceived ability among Omani SMEs to engage in franchising, with an overall mean of 2.28 and RII of 0.457. Respondents generally showed neutral or slightly negative perceptions regarding their readiness and the presence of enabling factors. Relatively higher-rated items included perceptions of economic stability, support from entrepreneurship centers, and the availability of trained local professionals. In contrast, foundational factors such as infrastructure quality, franchising knowledge, managerial skills, and entrepreneur awareness were rated lower within the same medium category. These findings suggest a lack of strong confidence among SME owners and managers in their ability or preparedness to adopt franchising, despite modest support from certain structural elements.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics and Relative Importance Index for Ability Factors

Item No.	Statement	M	SD	RII	Important levels
1	Possess sufficient knowledge about the franchising system.	2.18	0.94	0.437	M
2	Have adequate capital to purchase franchise rights.	2.25	0.94	0.450	M
3	Capable of adhering to standards and procedures imposed by the brand.	2.31	1.12	0.462	M
4	Possess the managerial skills required to operate a franchise.	2.21	1.01	0.443	M
5	Omani market enjoys a stable economic environment.	2.43	1.13	0.486	M

Item No.	Statement	M	SD	RII	Important levels
6	SME Dev. Authority/Chamber offer specialized programs to empower entrepreneurs.	2.35	1.21	0.469	M
7	Oman's advanced infrastructure supports expansion.	2.12	0.91	0.425	M
8	Trade agreements facilitate regional expansion.	2.27	0.98	0.454	M
10	Entrepreneurship centers/incubators strengthen skills.	2.41	1.11	0.482	M
9	Government offers administrative facilitations/expedited licensing.	2.25	1.15	0.450	M
11	SME Dev. Authority/Chamber provide free consultations/guidance.	2.26	1.04	0.451	M
12	Partnerships with international investors enhance success potential.	2.31	1.11	0.461	M
13	Rising awareness among Omani entrepreneurs promotes adoption.	2.21	0.97	0.442	M
14	Public/private sector efforts contribute to spreading franchise culture.	2.30	1.02	0.459	M
15	Availability of trained Omani professionals supports management.	2.38	1.23	0.477	M
16	Innovation/entrepreneurship initiatives help develop new models.	2.20	1.0	0.439	M
17	Growing number of successful Omani brands motivates adoption.	2.26	1	0.453	M
18	Government policies encourage FDI for global brand partnerships.	2.35	1.19	0.469	M
19	Moderately competitive environment facilitates expansion.	2.27	1.04	0.454	M
20	Trade exhibitions/conferences provide ideal platform.	2.32	1.1	0.465	M
21	Development of smart city projects creates digital environment.	2.26	1.15	0.453	M
22	Omanization initiatives encourage engagement in franchising.	2.36	1.05	0.471	M
	Overall Axis 3	**2.28**	**0.86**	**0.457**	**M**

Note. M = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; RII = Relative Importance Index. Means are based on a 5-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*). Importance Levels based on RII: High (H) = 0.8 < RII < 1.0; High-Medium (H-M) = 0.6 < RII < 0.8; Medium (M) = 0.4 < RII < 0.6; Medium-Low (M-L) = 0.2 < RII < 0.4; Low (L) = 0.0 < RII < 0.2. N = 219.

The findings for Perceived Performance Enhancement revealed a moderate level of agreement regarding the role of franchising in improving SME performance, with an overall mean of 2.23 and RII of 0.446 (Table 7). Respondents generally expressed neutral or reserved views, with relatively higher importance attributed to franchising's role in easing access to financing, reducing costs through supply networks, and improving product or service quality. Conversely, traditionally emphasized benefits—such as increased profits, innovation, effective management models, and standardization—received lower ratings at the medium level, suggesting limited conviction in franchising as a performance-enhancing strategy among the surveyed SMEs.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics and Relative Importance Index for Perceived Performance Enhancement Factors

Item No.	Statement	M	SD	RII	Important levels
1	Contributes to increasing profits and revenues.	2.05	0.80	0.411	M

2	Helps reduce marketing and advertising costs via brand recognition.	2.18	0.96	0.437	M
3	Contributes to enhancing the quality of products and services.	2.32	1.06	0.463	M
4	Plays significant role in improving competitive ability.	2.21	0.99	0.443	M
5	Enables SMEs to obtain financing more easily due to brand association.	2.39	1.08	0.478	M
6	Provides an effective management model that helps improve operational efficiency.	2.15	1.08	0.430	M
7	Assists SMEs in adopting standardized operational procedures.	2.16	0.89	0.433	M
8	Helps SMEs effectively penetrate new markets (Oman/internationally).	2.30	0.94	0.459	M
9	Allows SMEs to benefit from extensive supply network, reducing operational costs.	2.37	1.15	0.473	M
10	Helps mitigate risk of failure when expanding (proven model).	2.21	1.05	0.443	M
11	Training and support provided by franchisors help develop employee skills.	2.23	0.97	0.447	M
12	Offers opportunity to expand rapidly across governorates without large investments.	2.21	1.14	0.443	M
13	Contributes to enhancing innovation and improving products.	2.12	0.88	0.425	M
14	Can improve customer satisfaction and increase loyalty.	2.27	1	0.454	M
15	Supports Oman's Vision 2040 by fostering entrepreneurship/SME contribution.	2.30	1.1	0.459	M
	Overall Axis 4	**2.23**	**0.82**	**0.446**	**M**

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; RII = Relative Importance Index. Means are based on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). Importance Levels based on RII: High (H) = 0.8 < RII < 1.0; High-Medium (H-M) = 0.6 < RII < 0.8; Medium (M) = 0.4 < RII < 0.6; Medium-Low (M-L) = 0.2 < RII < 0.4; Low (L) = 0.0 < RII < 0.2. N = 219.

4.2. Analysis results

Independent samples t-test results revealed that male participants perceived significantly higher levels of motivation ($p < .001$), ability ($p = .038$), and performance enhancement ($p = .003$) related to franchising compared to female participants. However, no statistically significant gender difference was observed regarding perceived opportunities ($p = .604$). These findings suggest that gender plays a role in shaping perceptions toward franchising, particularly in terms of internal motivation, perceived capacity, and expected performance benefits.

Table 8: Independent Samples T-test Results for Gender

Axis	**Gender**	**M**	**SD**	**t**	**p**
Motivational Factors	Female	1.77	0.45	-5.10	<.001**
	Male	2.18	0.63		
Opportunities	Female	2.94	1.08	-0.520	0.604
	Male	3.04	1.29		
Ability	Female	2.07	0.91	-2.09	.038*
	Male	2.35	0.83		

Performance Enhance.	Female	1.95	0.77	-3.09	.003**
	Male	2.33	0.82		

Note. M = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05. * *Significant at P ≤ 0.01.

T-test analysis results based on prior franchising experience showed that participants with such experience reported significantly higher perceptions of both Motivational Factors (p = .004) and Perceived Performance Enhancement (p = .034) compared to those without experience. However, differences in perceptions of Opportunities and Ability were not statistically significant. These findings suggest that previous exposure to franchising positively influences perceived motivation and expected performance outcomes, while perceptions of external opportunities and internal capabilities remain relatively unaffected.

Table 9: Independent Samples T-test Results for Previous Franchising Experience

Axis	**Previous Franchising Experience**	**M**	**SD**	**t**	**p**
Motivational Factors	Yes	2.74	0.77	3.38	0.004**
	No	2.03	0.58		
Opportunities	Yes	2.65	0.83	1.43	0.172
	No	2.67	0.96		
Ability	Yes	2.98	1.15	1.76	0.080
	No	2.26	0.84		
Performance Enhance.	Yes	2.68	0.84	2.13	0.034*
	No	2.2	0.81		

Note. M = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05.

4.3. ANOVA results

Table 10 summarizes the results of one-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the four study axes based on participants' age groups. Statistically significant differences were found among the age groups for all four axes: Motivational Factors (F = 8.00, p < .001), Opportunities (F= 6.91, p < .001), Ability (F= 4.07, p = .008), and Performance Enhancement (F= 3.67, p = .013).

Table 10: One-Way ANOVA Summary for Differences by Age Group

Axis	**Source / Group**	**M**	**SD**	**SS**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Motivational Factors	Between Groups			8.37	2.79	8	<.001**
	Within Groups			74.99	0.35		
	Less than 30	1.99	0.5				
	30 to <40	2.08	0.63				
	40 to <50	2.07	0.74				
	50 and above	2.87	0.73				
Opportunities	Between Groups			24.59	8.2	6.91	<.001**
	Within Groups			255.19	1.19		

	Less than 30	2.83	1.14				
	30 to <40	3.3	1.11				
	40 to <50	2.32	0.95				
	50 and above	3.49	0.68				
Ability	Between Groups			8.6	2.87	4.07	0.008**
	Within Groups			151.29	0.7		
	Less than 30	2.17	0.77				
	30 to <40	2.39	0.89				
	40 to <50	2.15	0.92				
	50 and above	2.98	0.94				
Performance Enhance.	Between Groups			7.17	2.39	3.67	0.013*
	Within Groups			140.11	0.65		
	Less than 30	2.11	0.7				
	30 to <40	2.35	0.86				
	40 to <50	2.15	0.98				
	50 and above	2.83	0.96				

*Note. SS = Sum of Squares; df = Degrees of Freedom; MS = Mean Square; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05*

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Table 11: Bonferroni Post-Hoc Comparisons for Significant Differences in Axis Scores by Age Group

Axis	Age Group		Mean Difference	Std. Error	p
Motivational Factors	Less than 30	30 to <40	-0.09	0.09	1.000
		40 to <50	-0.08	0.13	1.000
		50 and above	-0.88	0.18	**<.001****
	30 to <40	40 to <50	0.01	0.13	1.000
		50 and above	-0.79	0.18	**<.001****
	40 to <50	50 and above	-0.80	0.21	**0.001****
Opportunities	Less than 30	30 to <40	-0.48	0.17	**0.026***
		40 to <50	0.51	0.24	0.202
		50 and above	-0.66	0.33	0.280
	30 to <40	40 to <50	0.98	0.25	**0.001****
		50 and above	-0.19	0.34	1.000
	40 to <50	50 and above	-1.17	0.38	**0.014***
Ability	Less than 30	30 to <40	-0.23	0.13	0.464
		40 to <50	0.02	0.18	1.000
		50 and above	-0.81	0.26	**0.010***
	30 to <40	40 to <50	0.25	0.19	1.000
		50 and above	-0.58	0.26	0.159
	40 to <50	50 and above	-0.83	0.29	**0.029***
Performance Enhance.	Less than 30	30 to <40	-0.24	0.12	0.285
		40 to <50	-0.04	0.18	1.000

		50 and above	-0.72	0.25	**0.022***
	30 to <40	40 to <50	0.20	0.18	1.000
		50 and above	-0.48	0.25	0.355
	40 to <50	50 and above	-0.68	0.28	0.098

Note. Bonferroni adjustment is used for multiple comparisons. Significant at P ≤ 0.05. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05.*

Results based on prior franchising experience showed that participBonferroni post-hoc test results indicated that age significantly influenced perceptions toward franchising. Participants aged 50 years and above consistently reported higher scores across all axes—Motivation, Opportunities, Ability, and Performance Enhancement—compared to younger age groups, particularly those under 30 and 40 to <50. Additionally, individuals aged 30 to <40 showed significantly more positive perceptions of Opportunities compared to other age brackets. These findings suggest that older participants demonstrate greater motivation, confidence, and perceived benefit regarding franchising adoption than their younger counterparts.

Table 12 presents the results of one-way ANOVAs examining differences in mean scores on the four study variables across different levels of educational qualification. Statistically significant differences among qualification groups were found for Motivational Factors ($F = 3.22$, $p = .024$) and Opportunities ($F = 10.85$, $p < .001$). No statistically significant differences were found for Ability ($F = 2.05$, $p = .108$) or Performance Enhancement ($F = 1.36$, $p = .255$).

Table 12: One-Way ANOVA Summary for Differences in Axis Scores by qualification Group

Axis	**Source / Group**	**M**	**SD**	**SS**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Motivational Factors	Between Groups			3.59	1.2	3.22	0.024*
	Within Groups			79.77	0.37		
	General Diploma	1.93	0.65				
	Higher Diploma	2.22	0.66				
	Bachelor's Degree	2.0	0.57				
	Postgraduate	2.27	0.62				
Opportunities	Between Groups			36.77	12.26	10.85	<.001**
	Within Groups			243.01	1.13		
	General Diploma	2.18	0.92				
	Higher Diploma	3.08	0.99				
	Bachelor's Degree	3.28	1.2				
	Postgraduate	2.63	0.81				
Ability	Between Groups			4.44	1.48	2.05	0.108
	Within Groups			155.45	0.72		
	General Diploma	1.98	0.82				
	Higher Diploma	2.35	0.79				
	Bachelor's Degree	2.3	0.89				
	Postgraduate	2.45	0.84				
Performance Enhance.	Between Groups			2.75	0.92	1.36	0.255

	Within Groups			144.54	0.67		
	General Diploma	2.01	0.85				
	Higher Diploma	2.23	0.68				
	Bachelor's Degree	2.25	0.84				
	Postgraduate	2.39	0.88				

Note. SS = Sum of Squares; *df* = Degrees of Freedom; *MS* = Mean Square; *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05.

Table 13: Bonferroni Post-Hoc Comparisons for Significant Differences in Axis Scores by qualification Group

Axis	**qualification Group**		**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error**	**p**
Motivational Factors	General Diploma	Higher Diploma	-0.29	0.14	0.240
		Bachelor's Degree	-0.07	0.12	1.000
		Postgraduate Studies	-0.34	0.15	**0.022***
	Higher Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	0.22	0.11	0.283
		Postgraduate Studies	-0.05	0.14	1.000
	Bachelor's Degree	Postgraduate Studies	-0.27	0.12	0.132
Opportunities	General Diploma	Higher Diploma	**-0.91***	0.24	**0.001****
		Bachelor's Degree	**-1.10***	0.21	**<.001****
		Postgraduate Studies	-0.45	0.25	0.471
	Higher Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	-0.19	0.19	1.000
		Postgraduate Studies	0.46	0.24	0.369
	Bachelor's Degree	Postgraduate Studies	**0.65***	0.21	**0.011***

Note. Bonferroni adjustment is used for multiple comparisons.* Significant at P ≤ 0.05. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05.

Educational qualification was found to significantly influence perceptions of both Motivational Factors and Opportunities. Postgraduate participants reported higher motivation levels than those with only a General Diploma (p = .022). Regarding Opportunities, Bachelor's Degree holders scored significantly higher than both General Diploma (p < .001) and Postgraduate holders (p = .011), while Higher Diploma holders also scored higher than those with a General Diploma (p = .001). These results suggest that participants with higher educational attainment tend to perceive greater motivation and more favorable opportunities toward franchising than those with lower qualifications.

Table 14 presents the ANOVA results comparing mean scores based on the type of business activity. Statistically significant differences were found among the groups for all four axes: Motivational Factors (F = 5.76, p = .001), Opportunities (F = 3.07, p = .029), Ability (F = 3.73, p = .012), and Performance Enhancement (F = 2.92, p = .035).

Table 14: One-Way ANOVA Summary for Differences by Type of Business Activity Group

Axis	**Source / Group**	**M**	**SD**	**SS**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Motivational Factors	Between Groups			6.2	2.07	5.76	.001**
	Within Groups			77.15	0.36		
	Services	2.05	0.59				
	Industry	2.21	0.47				
	Restaurants & Cafés	2.53	0.67				

Axis	Source / Group	M	SD	SS	MS	F	p
	Retail Trade	1.88	0.63				
Opportunities	Between Groups			11.48	3.83	3.07	.029*
	Within Groups			268.3	1.25		
	Services	2.84	1.12				
	Industry	2.83	1.01				
	Restaurants & Cafés	3.43	1.25				
	Retail Trade	2.92	0.081				
Ability	Between Groups			7.91	2.64	3.73	.012*
	Within Groups			151.98	0.71		
	Services	2.17	0.76				
	Industry	2.39	0.84				
	Restaurants & Cafés	2.81	0.82				
	Retail Trade	2.37	1.09				
Performance Enhance.	Between Groups			5.77	1.92	2.92	.035*
	Within Groups			141.51	0.66		
	Services	2.15	0.74				
	Industry	2.34	0.79				
	Restaurants & Cafés	2.70	0.80				
	Retail Trade	2.25	1.03				

Note. SS = Sum of Squares; *df* = Degrees of Freedom; *MS* = Mean Square; *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05.

Table 15: *Bonferroni Post-Hoc Comparisons for Significant Differences in Axis Scores by Type of Business Activity Group*

Axis	Type of Business Activity Groups		Mean Difference	Std. Error	p
Motivational Factors	Services	Industry	0.32	0.21	0.721
		Restaurants & Cafés	-0.48	0.14	**0.005****
		Retail Trade	0.17	0.11	0.667
	Industry	Restaurants & Cafés	0.16	0.17	1.000
		Retail Trade	0.32	0.18	0.489
	Restaurants & Cafés	Retail Trade	0.65	0.16	**<.001****
Opportunities	Services	Industry	0.09	0.39	1.000
		Restaurants & Cafés	-0.59	0.29	**0.019***
		Retail Trade	0.08	0.26	1.000
	Industry	Restaurants & Cafés	-0.01	0.31	1.000
		Retail Trade	-0.6	0.34	0.501
	Restaurants & Cafés	Retail Trade	-0.51	0.20	0.535
Ability	Services	Industry	0.42	0.29	0.889

Axis	Type of Business Activity Groups		Mean Difference	Std. Error	p
		Restaurants & Cafés	-0.63	0.2	**0.009****
		Retail Trade	0.44	0.22	0.304
	Industry	Restaurants & Cafés	0.21	0.24	1.000
		Retail Trade	0.02	0.26	1.000
	Restaurants & Cafés	Retail Trade	-0.19	0.15	1.000
Performance Enhance.	Services	Industry	0.36	0.28	1.000
		Restaurants & Cafés	-0.55	0.19	**0.024***
		Retail Trade	0.45	0.22	0.245
	Industry	Restaurants & Cafés	0.19	0.23	1.000
		Retail Trade	0.09	0.25	1.000
	Restaurants & Cafés	Retail Trade	-0.11	0.14	1.000

Note. Bonferroni adjustment is used for multiple comparisons.* Significant at P ≤ 0.05. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05.

Business activity type significantly influenced perceptions across all four study axes. Participants from the Restaurants & Cafés sector consistently reported higher levels of motivation, perceived opportunities, ability, and performance enhancement compared to those in Services and Retail Trade. Notably, Restaurants & Cafés scored significantly higher than Services in all four domains, and higher than Retail in motivation. These findings suggest that SMEs in the food and beverage sector hold more favorable views toward franchising than those in other industries.

Table 16 summarizes the one-way ANOVA results comparing mean scores on the four study axes based on participants' years of experience. Statistically significant differences were found among the experience groups for all four axes: Motivational Factors ($F = 9.12$, $p < .001$), Opportunities ($F = 6.60$, $p < .001$), Ability ($F = 3.45$, $p = .017$), and Performance Enhancement ($F = 4.38$, $p = .005$).

Table 16: *One-Way ANOVA Summary for Differences in Axis Scores by Years of Experience Group*

Axis	Source / Group	M	SD	SS	MS	F	p
Motivational Factors	Between Groups			9.41	3.14	9.12	<.001**
	Within Groups			73.95	0.34		
	< 5 years	1.95	0.45				
	5 to <10 years	2.11	0.67				
	10 to <15 years	2.13	0.77				
	15+ years	2.87	0.73				
Opportunities	Between Groups			23.61	7.87	6.6	<.001**
	Within Groups			256.17	1.19		
	< 5 years	2.76	1.16				
	5 to <10 years	3.32	1.09				
	10 to <15 years	2.45	0.94				
	15+ years	3.49	0.68				
Ability	Between Groups			7.35	2.45	3.45	0.017*
	Within Groups			152.54	0.71		

Axis	Source / Group	M	SD	SS	MS	F	p
	< 5 years	2.18	0.81				
	5 to <10 years	2.35	0.84				
	10 to <15 years	2.23	0.95				
	15+ years	2.98	0.94				
Performance Enhance.	Between Groups			8.48	2.83	4.38	0.005**
	Within Groups			138.81	0.65		
	< 5 years	2.07	0.69				
	5 to <10 years	2.37	0.86				
	10 to <15 years	2.23	1				
	15+ years	2.83	0.96				

Note. SS = Sum of Squares; *df* = Degrees of Freedom; *MS* = Mean Square; *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05.

Table 17: *Bonferroni Post-Hoc Comparisons for Significant Differences in Axis Scores by Years of Experience Group*

Axis	Years of Experience Group		Mean Difference	Std. Error	p
Motivational Factors	Less than 5	From 5 to less than 10	-0.16	0.09	0.370
		From 10 to less than 15	-0.18	0.13	1.000
		15 years or more	-0.92*	0.18	**<.001****
	From 5 to less than 10	From 10 to less than 15	-0.01	0.14	1.000
		15 years or more	-0.75*	0.18	**<.001****
	From 10 to less than 15	15 years or more	-0.74*	0.21	**0.003****
Opportunities	Less than 5	From 5 to less than 10	-0.56*	0.16	**0.004****
		From 10 to less than 15	0.31	0.25	1.000
		15 years or more	-0.73	0.33	0.173
	From 5 to less than 10	From 10 to less than 15	0.87*	0.26	**0.006****
		15 years or more	-0.17	0.34	1.000
	From 10 to less than 15	15 years or more	-1.04*	0.39	**0.048***
Ability	Less than 5	From 5 to less than 10	-0.17	0.13	1.000
		From 10 to less than 15	-0.05	0.19	1.000
		15 years or more	-0.80*	0.26	**0.012***
	From 5 to less than 10	From 10 to less than 15	0.12	0.2	1.000
		15 years or more	-0.63	0.26	0.099
	From 10 to less than 15	15 years or more	-0.75	0.3	0.079
Performance Enhance.	Less than 5	From 5 to less than 10	-0.3	0.12	0.086
		From 10 to less than 15	-0.16	0.18	1.000
		15 years or more	-0.76*	0.24	**0.013***
	From 5 to less than 10	From 10 to less than 15	0.13	0.19	1.000
		15 years or more	-0.46	0.25	0.399
	From 10 to less than 15	15 years or more	-0.59	0.29	0.236

Note. Bonferroni adjustment is used for multiple comparisons.* Significant at P ≤ 0.05. * Significant at P ≤ 0.05.

Years of experience were found to significantly influence perceptions across all four dimensions of the study. Participants with 15 or more years of experience consistently reported higher scores for Motivation, Opportunities, Ability, and Performance Enhancement compared to those with less than 5 years or 10 to <15 years. Additionally, those with 5 to <10 years of experience showed significantly more positive perceptions of Opportunities than less experienced groups. These findings highlight that greater professional experience is associated with more favorable attitudes toward franchising among SME participants.

5. Discussion

Quantitative analysis using the Relative Importance Index (RII) revealed that participants' perceptions were at a "Medium" level across all dimensions. Notably, Opportunities (RII = 0.592) scored the highest, followed by Ability (RII= 0.457) and Motivation (RII= 0.415). This result is the "cornerstone" of understanding the Omani landscape; the high score for opportunities reflects the success of the OCCI and the Franchise Center in creating a supportive regulatory and institutional environment (Ozkaya et al., 2018). However, the lower scores for motivation and ability signal a state of "apprehension or lack of self-readiness" among entrepreneurs to transition toward this model.

These findings align partially with Kabeel (2016), who noted that franchise projects in emerging markets operate at moderate efficiency levels. They also support Truong-Thi's (2022) view that "Opportunity" is the strongest driver of franchising intention. Yet, the paradox remains: in Oman, "Available Opportunity" is not matched by a strong "Strategic Motivation" (such as global expansion). Instead, motivation remains tied to limited profitability, explaining the reluctance to bear the burdens of "modeling and monitoring" required by franchising.

On the demographic and sectoral front, findings showed statistically significant differences favoring males, older age groups, and the restaurants and cafés sector. The researcher interprets this as the restaurant sector being the most exposed to global franchising culture in Oman, making its owners more "behaviorally mature" and prepared for standardization compared to other sectors. Furthermore, the cumulative experience of older individuals helps reduce "psychological barriers" to delegation, reinforcing the study's hypothesis that "Ability" within the MOA framework is not merely a technical skill but a result of cognitive and behavioral accumulation linked to field experience.

The behavioral gap evident in the "Ability" scores (0.457) reinforces Ndonga's (2014) assertion that entrepreneurial drive must be polished with internal capabilities and managerial expertise before granting franchises. In the Omani context, entrepreneurs perceive the existence of government support (Opportunities) but feel a lack of "Behavioral Ability" to manage complex networks. This explains their neutral or skeptical stance regarding franchising's capacity to drive competitive advantage, contrasting with findings in more mature markets like Sun & Lee (2018).

6. Conclusions

The study concludes that the perception of Omani SMEs toward franchising is characterized by "Strategic Caution and Neutrality," as the findings do not reflect strong enthusiasm for traditional franchising benefits such as profit maximization or low-risk expansion. The conclusions highlight fundamental behavioral and cognitive barriers, including a lack of process awareness, financial constraints, leadership capability gaps, and concerns regarding legal frameworks and IP protection. Furthermore, the results confirm that demographic factors (gender, age, prior experience) and the type of business activity significantly shape these perceptions, with the "Restaurants and Cafés" sector emerging as the most mature and ready for adoption. Consequently, the core conclusion is that bridging the "practical gap" in Oman will not be achieved through "intensive documentation" but rather through "human qualification" capable of transforming these documents into a sustainable operational reality.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the extrapolation of the practical gap in the Omani market, the researcher offers the following strategic recommendations addressed to decision-makers at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Riyada):

1. **Enhancing Behavioral Awareness and Education:** Launch targeted awareness campaigns and specialized workshops that move beyond "what franchising is" to "how to behaviorally prepare for franchising." Entrepreneurs must understand the actual processes, obligations, and the shift from centralized management to standardized modeling to bridge the observed motivation gap.
2. **Re-engineering Financial Support for Readiness:** Develop specialized financial support programs (loans or grants) exclusively for setup costs and franchise fees, provided that disbursement is linked to passing "readiness assessment" phases, ensuring financial opportunities are directed to those with the behavioral ability to execute.
3. **Strengthening the Legal Framework and IP Protection:** Review and improve franchising regulations in Oman to ensure clarity and simplified procedures, with an intensive focus on protecting intellectual property rights for national franchisors, thereby enhancing the "Opportunity factor" and encouraging brand owners to expand securely.
4. **Building Capabilities via Leadership Mentorship:** Replace traditional training with "Leadership and Behavioral Coaching" programs focused on delegation, monitoring, and quality control. We recommend requiring consultancy firms to allocate 40% of their billable hours to this specific mentorship instead of focusing exclusively on documentation.
5. **Institutional Integration and Effectiveness:** Restructure coordination between the Oman Franchise Center and Riyada to ensure integrated support that extends beyond paperwork to direct field assistance addressing the practical needs of SMEs seeking to grant franchises.
6. **Developing a Sector-Specific Franchising Strategy:** Given the superiority of the "Restaurants and Cafes" sector in readiness and interest, the researcher recommends using this sector as a "simulation lab" for a national franchising strategy, later expanding the model to other promising sectors based on their unique characteristics.

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