

# MASTER'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

<b>Thesis title:</b>	Gender Differences in Online Practices Case studies from Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan
<b>Student's name:</b>	Lara Naber
<b>Referee's name:</b>	Layane Alhorr

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
<b>Major Criteria</b>			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	<b>50</b>	47
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	<b>15</b>	15
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	<b>15</b>	14
<b>Total</b>		<b>80</b>	76
<b>Minor Criteria</b>			
	Sources, literature	<b>10</b>	8
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	<b>5</b>	3
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	<b>5</b>	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>20</b>	15
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>	91

## Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score:

*[NB:] If the plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score is above 15%, the reviewer has to include his/her assessment of the originality of the reviewed thesis in his/her review.*

**Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria** (min. 1800 characters including spaces when recommending a passing grade, min. 2500 characters including spaces when recommending a failing grade):

The Master thesis by Lara Naber investigates differences in how male vs. female users on Facebook express themselves when marketing their businesses, and in return how customers react to their posts. This investigation focuses on conservative countries, and particularly on Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq, given that they have some of the world's lowest rates of female labor force participation and highest gender gaps in entrepreneurship. The paper makes important contributions at the intersection of the digitization, entrepreneurship, and gender literatures.

## Major Criteria:

Contribution and argument (quality of research, analysis, originality): one of the paper's biggest contributions is the systematic and thorough collection of data from Facebook groups over a month period. Particularly, the author collects original data from 1,350 posts across 90 Facebook groups in Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq. The data collection captures extensive information from posters' profiles, posts' texts, and post reactions. Given the prevalence of Facebook group, and their high use particularly in the Arab world, the paper fills a gap in our understanding of how these groups are used for economic purposes.

Splitting posts into those written by from male vs. female-looking users, the author compares posting behavior and resulting online interactions across presumed genders. Results suggest that Facebook seems to provide "safe spaces" for women by allowing them to hide parts of their identities, post anonymously, and post in private groups.

With this backdrop, this paper helps us understand why digital technologies alone might be unable to bridge the gender gap in entrepreneurship. Particularly, as digitization is hypothesized to support female entrepreneurship by allowing women to work flexibly from home, this paper highlights that the practices that women adopt online to protect their privacy in conservative settings, such as hiding parts of their identities, are correlated with less interactions from customers. Additionally, the paper shows that although interactions are fully remote, women still mostly target other women as an audience, while men are more likely to target both men and women as customers. This shows that online technologies do not fully close the gap in men vs. women's ability to interact with strangers.

Together, these findings provide new and original evidence on the promise of digitization in increasing market access for male vs. female entrepreneurs in conservative settings.

Research question (objectives, plausibility of hypotheses): in practice, it is hard to investigate the promise of digitization in bridging the gender gap in market access given the lack of data. With the data collection exercise in this paper, the author proposes simply and testable hypotheses, mainly investigating observable practices by male vs. female looking users, and reactions to these practices as visible on the posts.

Theoretical framework (relevance of methods to the research question): the author adopts diverse methods and describes them accurately. Particularly:

- Data used: the author collects original data from 4 countries; analyses survey data from the Arab Barometer; and collects qualitative interviews through semi-structured interviews from different settings. Each of these datasets was used adequately to answer relevant research questions and provide main results and mechanisms
- The author transparently and clearly explains her sampling strategy, highlighting limitations to representativeness and consistency. She also provides maps of her sample, and provides exhibits of posts and profiles she examined. This helps frame the paper and enhance our understanding of the data collection process.
- Methods used: the author uses OLS regressions and graph bars to provide correlational evidence, in addition to providing linguistic and emotional analysis on the text collected from posts. Both these methods are relevant to the questions and mechanisms the author proposes.
- The countries included cover important case studies. In addition to collecting data from countries where gender issues are most relevant, the author also provides evidence from the US context. This comparative case study provides an important benchmark for the results.

- Finally, the author considers the ethical dimensions of the data collection process and clearly outlines these.

**Minor Criteria:**

- Sources, literature: relevant and extensive literature was provided
- Presentation (language, style, cohesion): the paper is well organized, but the writing style can be enhanced; some typos are still in the paper as well. The introduction would flow smoother if results from each method and data used was presented after the method was discussed.
- Manuscript form (structure, logical cohesion, layout, tables, figures): well-organized tables and informative figures.

**Proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F): A**

**Suggested questions for the defence are:**

- You chose to conduct a text analysis of the posts you collected. Can you clarify why you chose to do that? What was your hypothesis going in? (How) do your findings help explain the main results on gender differences in interactions?
- Hypothesis 4 is formulated as “Real identity leads to higher interaction on Facebook group posts”. While you provide correlational evidence from your data, your research design does not allow you to investigate this causally. Can you describe the ideal experiment you would have to run to test this hypothesis causally? Do you foresee a way to do that in the future as an extension?

**I recommend the thesis for final defence.**

Layane Alhorr  
September 13, 2023



**Referee Signature**

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	<b>A</b>	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	<b>B</b>	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	<b>C</b>	= good
61 – 70	<b>D</b>	= satisfactory
51 – 60	<b>E</b>	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	<b>F</b>	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.