

Role of Digital Entrepreneurship in Social Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs in India: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Digital entrepreneurship has emerged as a transformative force that offers numerous opportunities for the social empowerment of women in India. The study explores the way the digital platforms and technologies allow women entrepreneurs to overcome barriers like “limited access to markets, financial resources, and socio-cultural restrictions.” Women are now creating ground-breaking business models, accessing wider audiences, and achieving financial independence with the help of digital tools. It is seen that digital entrepreneurship enhances economic participation and also fosters confidence, skill development, and societal recognition for women. Government initiatives and policies are there to support female entrepreneurship. There are some challenges also like digital literacy gaps, inadequate infrastructure in rural areas, and gender biases. Previous studies show that training programs, mentorship, and improved internet access amplify the role of digital entrepreneurship in bridging gender disparities. The study suggests for collaborative ecosystem that have full control on full potential of digital platforms that empowers women entrepreneurs in India. A sample of 203 women entrepreneurs from different entrepreneurial sectors were surveyed know the factors that determines different Role of Digital Entrepreneurship in Social Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs and found that Breaking Barriers, Skill Development, Financial Independence and Community Building are the factors that shows different role of Digital Entrepreneurship in Social Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs.

Keywords: *Digital Entrepreneurship, Social Empowerment, Women Entrepreneurs, Digital platforms, Technologies*

Introduction

In India, women are determined by their passion for professional and entrepreneurial goals to overcome the longstanding male dominated business. They actively collaborate in different industries and demonstrate their capabilities in both public and private sectors. They are now breaking the societal barriers and making significant strides in entrepreneurship. The craving of independence, financial stability, and the need to create an expressive impact, motivates women to move in business sector facing numerous challenges like societal expectations, limited access to resources, and the competitive nature of the business world. The emerging digital technologies that work as transformative tools reshape the industry and foster socio-economic development. According to Ongo Nkoa and Song (2023), these technologies have revolutionized entrepreneurship, making the business landscape more adaptable and innovative. Organizations are now using digital tools to access information swiftly, identify opportunities, and drive innovation, as observed by Fahmi and Savira (2021). Digital entrepreneurship continues to grow by overcoming the obstacles like “technological complexities and digital gaps,” by integrating digital solutions into existing businesses or establishing new digital ventures (Fernandes et al., 2022). When it comes to women entrepreneurs, different studies show different opinions differ on their readiness to embrace digital technology. There are researchers that focus more on the need for enhanced learning and knowledge acquisition, while others believe women are already making significant progress in this domain.

Immense potential is offered by advancement of digital technology that helps to bridge the gender gap in entrepreneurship with the help of “digital tools, platforms, and resources.” This help women entrepreneurs to overcome the restrictions of

traditional business practices and access greater opportunities and support (Srivastava et al., 2024). Along with number of benefits that promotes women entrepreneurship through digital technology there are challenges as well like gender biases, the digital divide affecting women, and cybersecurity threats. Digital technology is found to play an increasingly crucial role in advancing women's entrepreneurship. It equips women with digital skills, fosters an inclusive and bias-free digital environment, and help to implement supportive policies. These policies should focus on “providing financial aid, technical resources, and market access to empower female entrepreneurs” (Sun et al., 2024). A significant increase is found in the market that is touched by women entrepreneurs after adopting digital technologies. They are tending to break all the geographical barriers and are now able to access to broader customer base. In addition, the “operational efficiency, allowing women entrepreneurs to streamline processes and dedicate more time to strategic business growth” are all enhanced by the used of digital tools. Social media and digital platforms have also become vital for marketing and promoting products and services, offering women entrepreneurs an effective means to boost visibility and engagement (Kumari, 2021).

There is a crucial role of social media platforms for women entrepreneurs that help to establish connections and overcome “societal pressures, family responsibilities, and traditional gender roles” (Miniesy et al., 2022; Beninger et al., 2016). Digital entrepreneurship helps women to become economic independent and also improve their social development and standings. Women gain confidence when they are economically independent, and society is able to appreciate and acknowledge their accomplishments. This, in turn, encourages their participation in economic growth and nation-building while offering them psychological satisfaction and a sense of achievement that strengthens their social identity. Several women entered into e-commerce sector and sell their products across various categories (jewellery, home furnishings, handicrafts, home utilities, fashion apparel, and accessories). The market opportunities are broadened in significant manner through the advancement in digital entrepreneurship and digitalization for women entrepreneurs. Internet and e-commerce platforms have removed geographical restrictions and gave women access to larger markets for their products and services. A creative entrepreneurial ecosystem stimulates innovation and competition by social media platforms like Facebook (Beliaeva, 2020). Women who want to launch their own companies frequently participate in internet forums that support female company owners. This helps them to get connect with groups that share their interests and experience. They develop bridge and bond social capital through different communities and boost their networks and cultivate connections with peers and possible partners.

Literature Review

Salamzadeh (2024) found that the customer reach and professional networks of women-owned businesses is significantly enhanced by accessing online markets and digital networking. It is proved that there are number of benefits of digital skill development platforms as they help to overcome traditional barriers, support the need for improved digital literacy among women entrepreneurs. Digital technologies play a vital role and help women entrepreneurs to overcome socio-cultural challenges and achieve sustainable growth in their businesses. These technologies help women entrepreneurs to increase their network, improve their skill, and expand their market. Targeted training programs and mentorship initiatives help women entrepreneurs to develop the skills that are important to utilize digital platforms to their full potential. Women are able to support organizations by creating inclusive online networks and resources designed specifically for women which is very useful for them to connect more efficiently with peers, mentors, and broader markets.

Apeh (2023) examined the impact of digital entrepreneurship on empowerment and revealed that introduction of innovative ways for entrepreneurs to digitize their businesses significantly contributes to youth empowerment and national development through job creation. People are utilizing different digital platforms to generate income, being engaged in activities like “content creation, web development, digital marketing, cryptocurrency trading, and app development.” These businesses empower youth as they foster self-employment, increase income, expand business networks, and provide better access to markets and knowledge. In addition, there is a great contribution of these practices to national growth in the form of tax and employment. Along with number benefits there are challenges as well in digital entrepreneurship like “limited access to capital, unreliable internet connectivity, lack of interest, inadequate electricity supply, insufficient technical skills, and lack of information.” Constructive support and promotion to digital platforms have the potential to develop career, skills and overall well-being among youth. It is important to make efforts and raise awareness among young people about the opportunities offered by digital platforms and the benefits in adopting them in effective way.

Goel and Ahuja (2018) explores the developing role of women in entrepreneurship in terms of of digitalization and its impact on empowerment in India. In the digital world, women are improving themselves by lifting their interpersonal skills like “empathy and team building,” which cannot be replaced by technology. Social capabilities and skills are playing a vital

part in the success of their entrepreneurial journey. Introduction of numerous digital tools and web-based networks by the government has the aim to enhance entrepreneurial capabilities of women and provide access to mentors. The increased adoption of digital technologies and platforms in financial sectors has created new opportunities for women by improving access to startup capital. Women all over the world are performing unpaid labour and are excessively represented in casual, insecure, and vulnerable jobs. Also, they facing “occupational discrimination, limited access to social protection, and prohibited from pension systems.” it is important to incorporate gender equality as a core principle in different policies related to “infrastructure, manufacturing, and trade to financial regulation, taxation, health, and education,” so that women are able to achieve their full potential.

Karnavat et al. (2024) examined “Entrepreneurship Development Programs (EDPs)” and analyzed the connection between their demographic characteristics and perceptions of these programs in women's perspectives. It is revealed that since women recognised the efficiency in communicating essential entrepreneurial knowledge and skills, addressing the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, and boosting confidence and self-efficacy, had positive views towards “Entrepreneurship Development Programs.” In addition, the study focused more on general benefits of “Entrepreneurship Development Programs” among demographic groups and highlights their importance in women empowerment, flourish their entrepreneurship journey and contribute in economic growth and social progress.

Chandwani and Verma (2020) highlights the establishment of digital presence that enables women to overcome many of the obvious limitations forced on them. The digital presence helps women to ease out and lessen the restrictions related to time and space, address the challenges. It is found that women are mostly juggling around both the responsibilities of earning an income and managing household duties which in turn reduces their dependency on physical mobility which allows women to navigate societal restrictions more effectively. The growth of women-owned businesses is fostered and supported by transformative digital technologies and entrepreneurship. The communication is improved and exchange of essential information, supporting activities like marketing, purchasing, creativity, and collaboration, among others are all facilitated by digitalization and digital entrepreneurship.

Objective

To know the factors that determines different Role of Digital Entrepreneurship in Social Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs.

Methodology

A sample of 203 women entrepreneurs from different entrepreneurial sectors were surveyed know the factors that determines different Role of Digital Entrepreneurship in Social Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs. This study is based on a survey conducted using a structured questionnaire specifically designed for this research. The primary data was collected using a “random sampling method,” and “Factor Analysis” was employed to derive the results.

Findings

The table below presents the general details of the respondents where 34.0% are below 38 years of age, 40.9% are between 38 and 48 years old, and the remaining 25.1% are above 48 years of age. 53.7% are graduate and below and 46.3% are post graduate and above. 25.1% are in service sector, 33.0% in e-commerce, 34.5% in digital content creation and rest 7.4% are in other digital business sectors.

“Table 1 Demographic details”

“Variable”	“Respondents”	“Percentage”
Age		
Below 38 yrs	69	34.0
38-48 yrs	83	40.9
Above 48 yrs	51	25.1
Total	203	100
Education		
Graduate and below	109	53.7
Post graduate and above	94	46.3
Total	203	100
Digital Business sector		

Service	51	25.1
e-commerce	67	33.0
Digital content creation	70	34.5
Others	15	7.4
Total	203	100

“Table 2 KMO and Bartlett's Test”

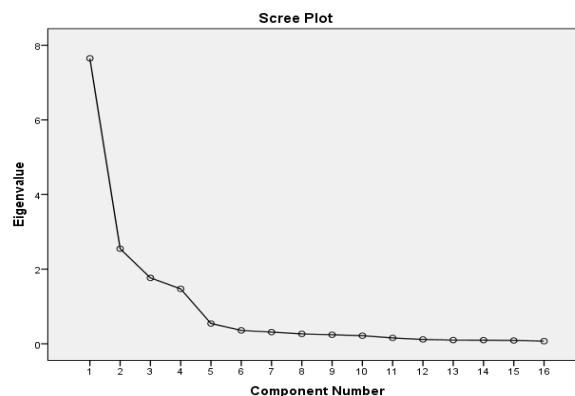
“Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy”		.864
“Bartlett's Test of Sphericity”	“Approx. Chi-Square”	3303.045
	“df”	120
	“Sig.”	.000

KMO value in table 2 is 0.864 and the “Barlett’s Test of Sphericity” is significant.

“Table 3 Total Variance Explained”

“Component”	“Initial Eigen values”			“Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings”		
	“Total”	“% of Variance”	“Cumulative %”	“Total”	“% of Variance”	“Cumulative %”
1	7.648	47.802	47.802	3.447	21.543	21.543
2	2.546	15.915	63.717	3.362	21.015	42.559
3	1.767	11.041	74.758	3.329	20.809	63.368
4	1.471	9.193	83.951	3.293	20.583	83.951
5	.543	3.394	87.345			
6	.359	2.241	89.586			
7	.313	1.958	91.544			
8	.266	1.660	93.204			
9	.243	1.517	94.721			
10	.217	1.354	96.075			
11	.157	.978	97.053			
12	.116	.723	97.776			
13	.098	.614	98.391			
14	.098	.610	99.001			
15	.089	.554	99.554			
16	.071	.446	100.000			

“Principal component analysis” shows 16 variables from 4 Factors. The factors explained the variance of 21.543%, 21.015%, 20.809% and 20.583% respectively. The total variance explained is 83.951%.



“Table 4 Rotated Component Matrix”

“S. No.”	“Statements”	“Factor Loading”	“Factor Reliability”
	Breaking Barriers		.944
1	Digital entrepreneurship provides access to global markets and opportunities		
2	Enable women to overcome geographical and cultural restrictions		
3	Help women to lowers the barriers and enter into market		
4	Helps to bridge the gender gap		
	Skill Development		.934
5	Encourages digital literacy and entrepreneurship skills		
6	Enhance employability and independence		
7	Provide access to online courses, webinars, and communities for upskilling		
8	Develop expertise in social media marketing, SEO, and content creation		
	Financial Independence		.928
9	Facilitates access to online platforms for business		
10	Creates income opportunities		
11	Reduce dependence on traditional employment		
12	Enables women to start businesses with minimal capital		
	Community Building		.927
13	Supports networking and collaboration through social media		
14	Connects women with peers, mentors, and investors		
15	Builds direct relationships with customers, fostering trust and loyalty		
16	Enables women to create or join communities for sharing experiences, challenges, and resources		

Table 4 shows the factors that shows different Role of Digital Entrepreneurship in Social Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs. Factor “Breaking Barriers” includes the variables like Digital entrepreneurship provides access to global markets and opportunities, enable women to overcome geographical and cultural restrictions, help women to lowers the barriers and enter into market and helps to bridge the gender gap. Factor “Skill Development” includes the variables like encourages digital literacy and entrepreneurship skills, enhance employability and independence, provides access to online courses, webinars, and communities for upskilling and develops expertise in social media marketing, SEO, and content creation. Factor “Financial Independence” includes the variables like digital entrepreneurship facilitates access to online platforms for business, creates income opportunities, reduce dependence on traditional employment and Enables women to start businesses with minimal capital. Factor “Community Building” includes the variables like digital entrepreneurship supports networking and collaboration through social media, connects women with peers, mentors, and investors, Builds direct relationships with customers, fostering trust and loyalty and Enables women to create or join communities for sharing experiences, challenges, and resources

“Table 5 Reliability Statistics”

“Cronbach's Alpha”	“N of Items”
.926	16

The value of “Cronbach’s Alpha” should be more than 0.07. Total reliability is 0.926 for 4 constructs including sixteen, hence it is sufficient.

Conclusion

Digital entrepreneurship works as a catalyst for social empowerment of women entrepreneurs in India that help women to break long-standing barriers and reshape the traditional gender roles. Women are accepting, adopting and implementing different digital tools and platforms to gain access to larger markets, enhance their financial independence, and improve their societal status. Digital entrepreneurship empowers women in terms of their economic status and help them to improve their “confidence, self-reliance, and active participation in decision-making processes.” Government is taking numerous steps to encourage women to led their startups with the help of policies, support and creating a working environment. Along with several benefits, digital entrepreneurship offers challenges and hindrances like “digital literacy gaps, limited internet access in rural areas, and persistent socio-cultural norms” that restricts their progress socially and mentally both. It is essential to address these problems and make efforts to make “affordable digital infrastructure, skill development programs, and community support networks” which in turn strengthen the impact of digital entrepreneurship. Digital entrepreneurship offers enormous potential to empower women in India, this in turn attracts multi-stakeholder approach involving policymakers, private organizations, and civil society.

The study aims to know the factors that determines different Role of Digital Entrepreneurship in Social Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs and found that Breaking Barriers, Skill Development, Financial Independence and Community Building are the factors that shows different role of Digital Entrepreneurship in Social Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs.

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