

Empowering Women in E-Commerce: Motivations, Challenges and the Impact of Role Models in Shaping India's Female Entrepreneurs

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ABSTRACT

In India, the journey of women towards entrepreneurship, particularly in the e-commerce sector, is influenced by deep-rooted societal norms and a male-dominated sociological structure. Despite these challenges, the advent of e-commerce has provided women with unique opportunities to achieve financial independence, work flexibility, and business success. This study examines the factors motivating women to become e-entrepreneurs, the challenges they face, and the role of successful female entrepreneurs as role models. The primary motivations identified include the flexibility in work hours, desire for financial independence, and passion for the industry. Major challenges encompass technical difficulties, limited access to funding, and gender bias. Notable women entrepreneurs like Namita Thapar, Ghazal Alagh, and Vineeta Singh are admired for their contributions and serve as inspirations. The findings underscore the importance of e-commerce in empowering women and highlight the need for continued support, targeted policies, and societal change to foster gender equality in entrepreneurship. This evolution within the e-commerce sector signifies a transformative shift towards greater financial independence and self-reliance for Indian women.

Index Terms- Entrepreneurship, Women, E-Commerce, Successful, India.

INTRODUCTION

The women who have received education would never want to be restricted to their homes. They look up to their male counterparts for value, respect, and equality of rights. But because Indian society is built on deeply ingrained traditions and a male-dominated sociological structure, Indian women still have a long way to go before they can attain equal rights and a better place in society. Because women are perceived as the weaker sex, they are raised to depend on men their entire lives, whether they are from within or outside the family. In a normal Indian family structure, men treat women as subordinates and expect them to carry out their decisions. Even with women making up half of the world's brainpower, they continue to be the most undervalued and marginalized resource. India is home to many successful female entrepreneurs despite all of these societal issues (Meeta Jethwa et al., 2016).

The term "e-commerce" (often written "e-commerce") refers to the upcoming trend. E-commerce, or electronic commerce, is the exchange of money or data via an electronic platform, most commonly the internet, as well as the purchasing and selling of goods and services. In addition to the more established online retail and lifestyle categories, more recent internet business niches like real estate, healthcare, groceries, and classifieds were also explored. In India, e-commerce is expanding quickly, partly due to the country's rising adoption of social media and cutting-edge technologies. It has given Indian women entrepreneurs additional opportunities (Mehnaz Akhter, 2017). E-commerce is special because it allows a buyer and a seller to meet whenever and wherever they choose, without needing to get to know each other personally.

This allows people to connect more easily and globally. Because of its flexibility and technological advancements, women entrepreneurs are able to operate their businesses exclusively online. It has helped women entrepreneurs expand tremendously by enabling them to penetrate foreign markets, opening up new avenues of opportunity for them. Women now feel much more financially independent and satisfied with their level of self-reliance thanks to the e-commerce boom. Flexibility, safety while working from home, and the ability to work in part during pregnancy are among the advantages of e-commerce for women. Due to the ongoing expansion of e-commerce worldwide, prominent female players have entered the Indian market in an effort to promote the growth and development of e-commerce platforms. The widespread use of social media and the internet have a significant impact on how their firm is run by lowering obstacles to cross-border collaboration and enabling schedule flexibility through the introduction of virtual workplaces and digital lifestyles. Thus, e-commerce is experiencing significant growth thanks to the culture of niche company.

Over time, e-commerce businesses in the nation are becoming more and more popular and in demand (Jayen et al., 2013). A growing number of young, accomplished women are entering the market and showcasing their abilities. A lot of people are interested in the E-commerce enterprises that have emerged in the industry in the last few years. They will face many challenges and barriers, but they are resilient enough to get past them all (T. Charulakshmi et al., 2019). Entrepreneurs who are successful march forward with dedication towards their goal, regardless of the circumstances. Even though this industry is receiving a lot of attention, entrepreneurs nevertheless face a number of extremely difficult obstacles. (C.P., Prof. Kothawale, 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sutherland, K et. al. 2024

In response to the increasing need to combat climate change, a new wave of female e-commerce entrepreneurs in RRR Australia has emerged, fostering community development. This paper talks about the common challenges faced by these successful female e-commerce entrepreneurs and how they use social media to reach customers both domestically and abroad. The research mostly consists of interviews with these women in rural Queensland, Australia. According to the results, inconsistent internet access, product distribution, and product supply are their top three challenges. Research on social media usage revealed a heavy reliance on Facebook and Instagram to increase website traffic and revenue. This study offers a distinctive contribution to our understanding of an understudied subset of entrepreneurs and their role in community development.

Mahawar, Hemlata. (2023)

There are numerous obstacles facing women entrepreneurs in India, and society as a whole needs to drastically shift its views and perspectives. There is a dearth of information regarding the economic value of women participating in entrepreneurial programs and the impact these initiatives have on the economy and society. Programs should therefore be created to address how people's attitudes and mindsets are changing. This essay aims to examine the entrepreneurship-related opportunities and difficulties that women in our nation encounter on a worldwide scale. Additionally, it will offer suggestions for removing obstacles to women's entrepreneurship in the Indian setting.

Rani, Vosuri& Sundaram, Natarajan. (2023)

The current study is to look at the connection between women's empowerment and female entrepreneurship in the Chittoor district. There are 300 female entrepreneurs in attendance, both from the city and the country. The researcher examines the problems and challenges that female entrepreneur face when running their businesses, as well as the resources available to help them. There is a positive correlation between female entrepreneurship and women's empowerment. Regardless of whether they operate in an urban or rural setting, the majority of female entrepreneur's face pressure from their jobs and money problems.

Programs and policies from the government assist female entrepreneurs by providing them with finance, marketing support, and training. By changing the terms of supply and creatively combining pre-existing resources, the entrepreneur creates new jobs for a generation of people. Entrepreneurship not only improves the lives of women but also enables them to participate completely in the progress and development of their nation. One of the first studies to give a thorough overview of the research on women entrepreneurs in Chittoor, India, is this one.

Kumar, J.Suresh& Dr, D.Shobana. (2023)

This study intends to investigate the development of women's entrepreneurship in India and its increasing importance to the country's economy and society. It starts by exploring the historical background, emphasizing the customary responsibilities that women were given and the obstacles that prevented them from pursuing entrepreneurship. Subsequently, the study delves into significant regulatory and socioeconomic advancements that have supported the current expansion and empowerment of women entrepreneurs.

A thorough analysis of published works, reports, and statistical information about women entrepreneurs in India is part of the research. The article also discusses the economic impact of female entrepreneurs in terms of GDP contribution, employment generation, and women's empowerment in the workforce. It also talks about how important it is for society to have female entrepreneurs as role models who promote gender equality and women's empowerment. In the end, the study highlights the necessity of ongoing assistance and focused legislation to further promote and nurture women entrepreneurship in India.

Ameena Begum et. al. 2023

This study attempts to pinpoint the different obstacles that Indian women entrepreneurs encounter and their opportunities, offer corrective actions as the driving forces behind Indian start-ups, emphasize their role in the country's development, and demonstrate how they are establishing norms in the community.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

After the exploratory research and defining set of objectives it has been decided to go for descriptive research. The descriptive study is selected with a purpose to find out and be able to revealed the characteristics of the variables of interest pertinent to the study. Research design provides framework for research methodology whereas Research methodology (RM) aims at designing mechanism for data collection followed by data analysis. The study will be based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data will be collected using structured questionnaire. Secondary data will be collected through, books, journals, websites and other article related to this topic. A sample of 200 women entrepreneurs, residing in Maharashtra (Mumbai, Thane & Nashik) and involved in the business in E-commerce sector. The primary data will be collected by administering a structured questionnaire to the respondents. Interviews were also conducted, both physically and telephonically, to access the information about impact of E-commerce on Women entrepreneurs, challenges faced by them and to determine the factors which will enable more women to enter into the E-commerce sector, consecutively having positive effect on Indian economy.

The primary data is collected through proper sample design outlined as under:

Sample design: -

While designing the sample following important parameters were taken:

1. Sample size
2. Sample area
3. Sampling techniques
4. Sampling instruments
5. Sample unit.

Sample size: - To arrive at sample size statistical formula for descriptive research has been undertaken. The Formula of calculating the sample Size is as under:

$$SS = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times (1 - p)}{C^2}$$

Where:

SS = Sample Size

Z = Z-value (e.g., 1.96 for a 95 % confidence level)

P = % of population picking a choice, demonstrated as decimal

C = Confidence interval, expressed as decimal (e.g., .05 = +/- 5percentage points)

The total rural population of women entrepreneurs engaged in business through E-Commerce platform was 412 during the period of data collection.

A Z-value (Cumulative Normal Probability Table) represents the probability that a sample will fall within a sure distribution.

The Z-values for confidence level 95% is 1.96 = 95

Based on online sample size calculator (URL: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size-calculator/>) based on population size 412, confidence level 95% and margin of error 5% came out to 200.

Thus, for sample survey 200 women entrepreneurs in Maharashtra region doing business through E-Commerce platform were chosen for primary data collection.

Sample Area: The Sample area for the proposed study was Maharashtra (Mumbai, Thane & Nashik).

Sampling Techniques: - It was difficult to track women entrepreneurs engaged in E-Business due to lack of physical location, the convenience sampling technique was adopted for choosing respondents i.e. women entrepreneurs for primary data collection.

Sampling unit: - The sampling units were the women entrepreneurs engaged in E-Business Across Mumbai, Thane & Nashik.

Sampling Instruments: - Structured questionnaire in the form of schedule was used to collect the data.

Data Collection and Analysis

Primary data were collected through personally administered structured questionnaire through schedule techniques of collecting the primary data from the respondents i.e. women entrepreneurs engaged in E-Business in Maharashtra region.

In this I have used schedule techniques to get the appropriate response from the selected respondents, it helps the researcher to make the respondents understand the questions correctly and evaluate the response correctly as per the requirement of the questions to full fill the objectives of the research.

The respondents were chosen by the researcher as per the convinces of the researcher. However deliberate effort has been to bring representativeness in the sample chosen for the study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Factors motivated women to become an E-entrepreneur

The table provide a clear overview of what motivates women to pursue e-entrepreneurship. The data shows that the top two motivating factors are fairly evenly distributed, with "Flexibility in Work Hours" and "Desire for Financial Independence" with 61 and 60 individuals respectively with 30%, and "Passion for the Industry" close behind at 29% with 58 individuals. The "Identification of a Business Opportunity" is the least common motivator at 11% with 21 women individual out of 200.

Table 1- Table Depicting Factors Motivated Women To Become An E-Entrepreneur

Factors	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Passion for the Industry	58	29.0
Flexibility in Work Hours	60	30.0
Desire for Financial Independence	61	30.5
Identification of a Business Opportunity	21	10.5
Total	200	100%

Challenges faced during the journey as a woman E-entrepreneur

The table highlight the main challenges encountered by women e-entrepreneurs. The most commonly reported challenges are "Technical Challenges" and "Limited Access to Funding," each affecting 30% of the women surveyed both with 61 individuals. "Gender Bias and Stereotypes" is another significant challenge, impacting 28% with 57 women's. "Competition" is the least cited challenge, affecting 10% of the 21 women out of 200. These insights underscore the varied obstacles women face in the e-entrepreneurial landscape.

Table 2- Table Showing Number Of Women Faced Challenges During The Journey As A Woman E-Entrepreneur

Challenges	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Technical Challenges	61	30.5
Limited Access to Funding	61	30.5
Gender Bias and Stereotypes	57	28.5
Competition	21	10.5
Total	200	100%

Successful women entrepreneurs in the Indian e-commerce sector that are admired

The table showcases a variety of women entrepreneurs who have made significant impacts in their respective fields and are admired by the women entrepreneurs. Namita Thapar from Emcure Pharma holds the highest value (45), indicating her prominent influence and success in the pharmaceutical industry. Ghazal Alagh and Vineeta Singh follow,

highlighting the growing importance and success of the personal care and beauty sectors in India's entrepreneurial landscape.

Table 3- Table Depicting Successful Women Entrepreneurs In The Indian E-Commerce Sector That Are Admired

Entrepreneur	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Radhika Gupta (Edelweiss)	10	5.0
Divya Gokulnath (Byju's)	20	10.0
Vandana Luthra (VLCC)	15	7.5
Vineeta Singh (Sugar Cosmetics)	30	15.0
Ghazal Alagh (Mamaearth)	40	20.0
Other	40	20.0
Namita Thapar (Emcure Pharma)	45	22.5
Total	200	100%

FINDINGS

Motivational Factors

The primary motivations for women to engage in E-commerce include flexibility in work hours (30%), the desire for financial independence (30%), and passion for the industry (29%). These factors highlight the appeal of E-commerce in providing adaptable and financially rewarding opportunities.

Challenges

The main challenges faced by women e-entrepreneurs include technical challenges (30%), limited access to funding (30%), and gender bias and stereotypes (28%). Competition is a less frequently cited challenge, affecting only 10% of the respondents.

Admired Women Entrepreneurs

Namita Thapar from Emcure Pharma (45), Ghazal Alagh from Mamaearth (40), and Vineeta Singh from Sugar Cosmetics (30) are among the most admired, highlighting their influential roles and success in diverse sectors.

CONCLUSION

The landscape of female entrepreneurship in India, particularly within the e-commerce sector, is evolving, with numerous motivating factors driving women to pursue this path. The flexibility in work hours, the desire for financial independence, and a passion for their industry are primary motivators, making e-commerce an appealing and adaptable avenue for women entrepreneurs. Despite the challenges posed by India's traditional and male-dominated sociological structure, women are finding new opportunities in e-commerce, which offers significant advantages such as working from home and entering global markets.

The study highlights several challenges faced by women e-entrepreneurs, including technical challenges, limited access to funding, and gender biases and stereotypes. These obstacles reflect the broader societal issues that continue to impede women's progress in business. However, the resilience and dedication of these women are evident as they navigate these difficulties and strive for success.

Prominent female entrepreneurs such as Namita Thapar, Ghazal Alagh, and Vineeta Singh serve as influential role models, demonstrating the potential for success and impact in various sectors. Their achievements inspire other women to overcome barriers and contribute significantly to the economy. Overall, the growth of e-commerce is not only opening new doors for Indian women but also fostering a sense of financial independence and self-reliance. Continued support, targeted policies, and a shift in societal attitudes are essential to further empower women entrepreneurs and promote gender equality in the entrepreneurial landscape.

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