

A Study of Women Entrepreneurs in Jaipur, doing e-business with the help of social media platforms

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Abstract

Technology plays an important role in our lives by supporting us and providing a comfortable living at home, technology equally aids our professional activities at work. Especially during the COVID era, technology kept us in touch with our dear ones away from home and helped us to communicate with the rest of the world. This was possible with the help of social media platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, etc. Since then, people from all walks of life have become internet-friendly. In the past couple of years, social media platforms have also supported many businesses in marketing and selling their products as there was no possibility of using physical spaces during COVID times. These social media platforms have emerged as a boon for those small women entrepreneurs who cannot invest a large amount in business and are comfortable doing business from home. The current study examined a few women entrepreneurs in Jaipur who used one or the other social media platforms to start and run their small businesses. The findings suggest that social media with all its pros and cons, is an important tool for these women entrepreneurs to showcase their products and sell them effectively while being at home.

Keywords: Business, technology, social media, women entrepreneurs, small business

Introduction

The field of entrepreneurship has grown extensively in the last few days in almost all countries across the globe. The reason attributed to this growth is the development that entrepreneurship brings along with it, at local, national, and international levels. Entrepreneurship in current times is considered as the fastest way to economic development of nations and that is why all the nations are encouraging their youth to indulge in entrepreneurial activities. In India also, the Government is taking necessary measures to foster the growth of entrepreneurship and new startups which would not only accelerate India's economy but also provide wings to her dream of featuring in the list of developed nations from the current title of a developing country. Apart from this, entrepreneurship is also imperative from the point of view of bringing out the ideas and innovations of the new India, where 70% of the population is youth, unlike other nations where the majority of their population now consists of old people. The demographic features of the Indian population have proven to be a boon

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to our country and very soon we will be able to outshine the economic giants of the world like the US, China, and Russia. The journey of India's development has started and we have become the fifth-largest economy in the world beating the United Kingdom. Entrepreneurship not only provides businessmen with profits, it also brings with it several other benefits like the creation of jobs, infrastructural and social development, empowerment of women and other minorities, upliftment of the poor, and quality products and services for the residents. This contribution of entrepreneurship to the economic development of a nation has long been recognized in the past literature. Entrepreneurship in its initial phase, was considered to be a men's field, but with the changing times, women have also entered the field and have proved that they can handle business as proficiently as they manage their homes. In the present era, women play a vital role as entrepreneurs and contribute noticeably to the economic development of a nation. (Minniti, 2010; Sharma, 2018).

Digital Entrepreneurship

With the advent of the digital revolution, which was one of the greatest inventions in the year 2000 (Gates, 2000), India has been continuously moving ahead. Technology not only helps us live a comfortable life; it also helps in solve routine life problems with its intelligent solutions. The e-commerce market in India at present is so big that experts like Andrew Roach believe, that by 2034, India will exceed the US and become the second-largest e-commerce market in the world. The reason behind this is that India is the second largest country in the world after China in population, and population demography includes mostly youth, who are very proficient in the use of technology, and that is the reason India ranks third in maximum number of mobile users. Mobile phones have not remained the medium of communication and entertainment these days, but have also become digital marketplaces, where a large number of buyers and sellers are present in order to exchange goods and services in an easy, quick, and cost-effective manner. Therefore, digital entrepreneurship is the new buzzword in the era of digitalization. Digital entrepreneurship is defined as "the pursuit of opportunities based on the use of digital media and other information and communication technologies" (Davidson and Vaast, 2010, p. 2). With the use of mobile applications, our lives have become quite comfortable. Some of these mobile applications have also aided entrepreneurs across the globe in their business activities, but they have certainly proved to be a boon for women entrepreneurs across the globe. Especially during the COVID era, when it was not possible to sell products in physical spaces, it was social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram that aided women entrepreneurs to effectively showcase and promote their products and reach out to a global consumer base. Though women entrepreneurs face problems while using social media it also rewards them (Rajahonka and Villman, 2019). Many big brands have redefined their marketing strategies and have shifted their focus solely from traditional marketing media like banners, hoardings, and TV and radio commercials to social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. Several big brands like Coca-Cola and Nike have been able to enhance their brand image by running marketing campaigns on social media platforms like Facebook and iTunes (Porterfield, 2010; Rognerud, 2011).

Social Media

Social media is defined as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content"

(Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). In present times, mobile phone applications have become a necessity for the effective performance of any business. There are many popular applications that provide opportunities for businesses to market their products, research current trends, tastes, and preferences of consumers reach out to a global customer base, and create a digital presence for their products. Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Amazon, and Google are some of the popular examples of such applications. The biggest advantage for women entrepreneurs in using social media platforms in our country to market and sell their products is that it is accessed by a very large segment of the population in India and it only requires one to have a mobile phone, and internet with some basic mobile literacy. No huge investment or specific infrastructure is needed to sell through social media. Also, some research has shown that women as entrepreneurs tend to have better social skills as compared to their male counterparts due to their genetic brain structure which makes them more empathetic and compassionate as compared to men (Baron-Cohen, 2003) and hence they can make better use of social network platforms. The use of social media platforms by women entrepreneurs is solving a dual purpose, it is contributing to empowering women in terms of economic gains, and at the same time, it is adding to the GDP of the nation with these women entrepreneurs' contribution to the economy.

Objectives of study

The present study aims at the following objectives:

1. To find out the most popular social media platforms used by women entrepreneurs in Jaipur to market and sell their products.
2. To find out the demographic profile of women entrepreneurs running e-business through social media platforms.
3. To know about the major types of businesses operated by women entrepreneurs through social media platforms.
4. To find out the reasons women entrepreneurs choose social media platforms to market and sell their products.
5. To identify the major obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs in operating their businesses through social media platforms.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through a survey questionnaire and secondary data was collected through magazines, journals, newspaper articles, related websites, etc. In order to conduct the study, 60 women entrepreneurs operating their businesses through social media platforms were chosen through a convenient sampling method and were asked to fill out the structured questionnaire designed to fulfill the objectives cited above. The data was collected through the questionnaire in the form of a Google form. The collected data was checked for its completeness and was analyzed using simple statistical methods like the percentage method.

Interpretation and analysis of the study

Table 1 and Fig. 1 showing the age of respondents is given below. Its analysis shows that the majority of women entrepreneurs in the present study (more than half), fall in the age bracket of 31 to 40 years of age, whereas the least number of women i.e., 8% fall in the age group of 51 and above. This implies that women normally choose to enter the field of entrepreneurship between 31 to 40 years of age.

Table I : Age of respondents

Age group	No. of respondents	Percentage
51-60	05	8.30%
41-50	15	25%
31-40	26	43.30%
21-30	14	14%
Total	60	100%

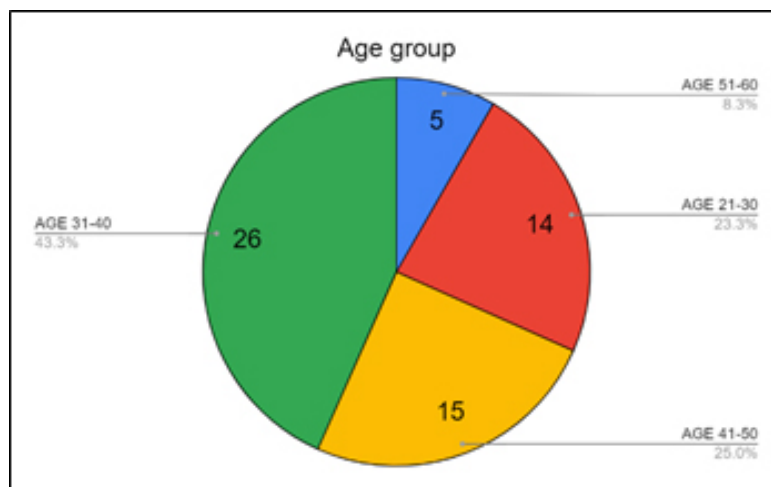


Figure 1: Age of respondents

Table II and Fig. II show the marital status of the women under study and clearly indicate that the majority of women entrepreneurs (80%) under study are married and only 20% of women entrepreneurs in this field of study are unmarried, another implication of this may be that women generally enter into entrepreneurship after marriage and also that married women prefer more to pursue business through social media platforms.

Table II : Marital status of respondents

Marital status	No. of respondents	Percentage
Married	48	80%
Unmarried	12	20%
Total	60	100%

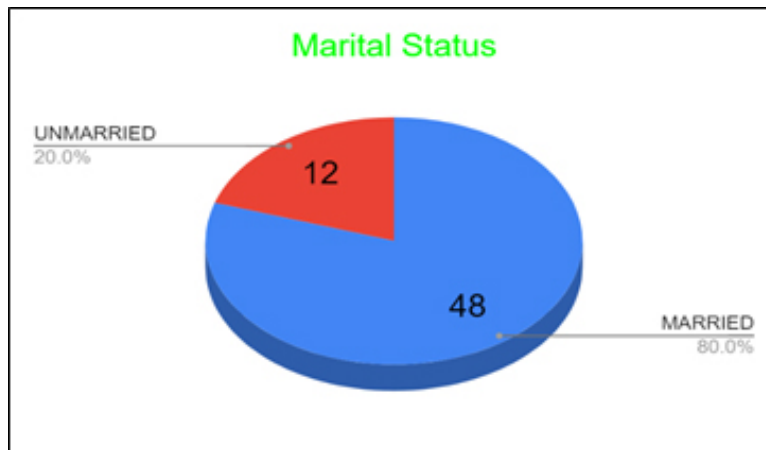


Figure II : Marital status of respondents

Table III and Fig. III show the educational background of the respondents. The analysis shows that 35 women entrepreneurs under study forming 58.3% of the total number of respondents were well educated up to the post-graduate level and only 8 respondents forming 13.3% of respondents went through a diploma/formal institutional training. It clearly indicates that education has a role to play in the usage of technology.

Table III: Educational background of the respondents

Marital status	No. of respondents	Percentage
Educational Background (up to)	No. of respondents	Percentage
Secondary	0	0%
Senior Secondary	3	5%
Graduate	14	23.3
Postgraduate	35	58.3
Diploma/ Formal Institutional training	8	13.30%
Total	60	100%

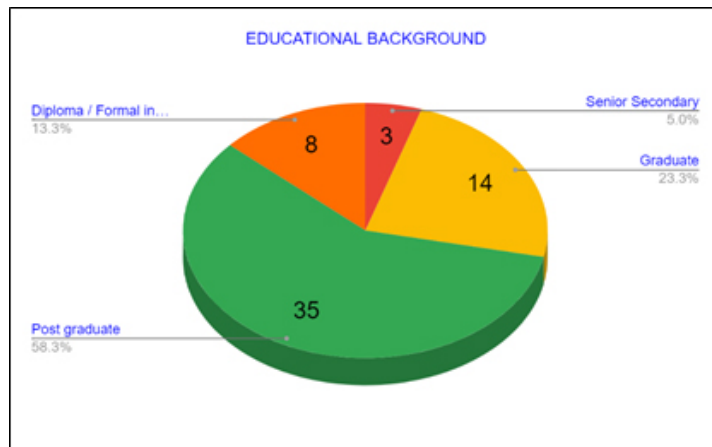


Figure III : Educational background of the respondents

Table IV and Fig. IV shows whether the respondents have children or not. It shows that 43 women forming 71.7% of total respondents had children, whereas 17 women (28.3%) of total respondents did not have children. It signifies that married women with the responsibility of children are more keen on using these applications to carry out their business activities as this gives them flexible working hours, as per their preference so that they may comfortably maintain a balance between work and family responsibilities.

Table IV : Whether the respondents have children or not

Children	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	43	71.70%
No	17	28.30%
Total	60	100%

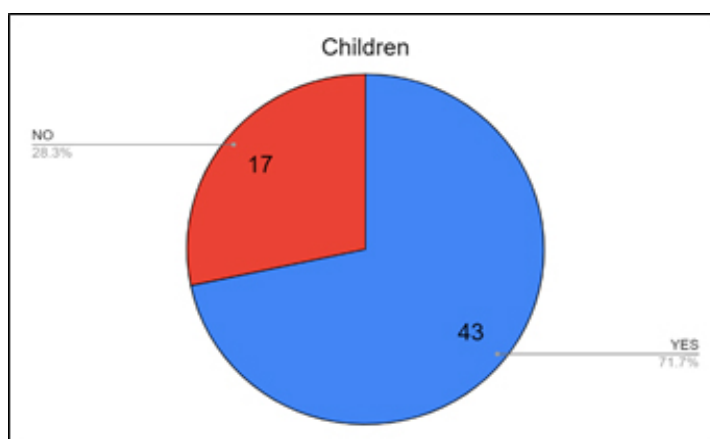


Fig. IV : Whether the respondents have children or not

Table V and Fig. V shows the type of business run through social media platforms in Jaipur. It shows that a majority of 19 women out of a total of 60 respondents owned the garments business, 11 women-owned jewellery and accessories business, 8 women-owned food and confectionery business, beauty and herbal products business was run by 6 women, same number of women-owned painting and folk-art business, 4 women sold home décor and furnishing products, 3 women sold organic farm products, 2 women sold handicraft items and only one woman owned a pottery business. The analysis shows that in our study, the majority of women-owned garment businesses.

Table V : Type of business run through social media platforms

Children	No. of respondents	Percentage
Business Type	Number of respondents	Percentage
Clothing	19	31.6%
Jewellery and accessories	11	18.3%
Home décor and furnishing	4	6.6%
Handicraft items	2	3.3%
Pottery	1	1.6%
Beauty and herbal products	6	10%
Food and confectioneries	8	13.3%
Paintings and folk-art products	6	10%
Organic farm products	3	5%
Total	60	100%

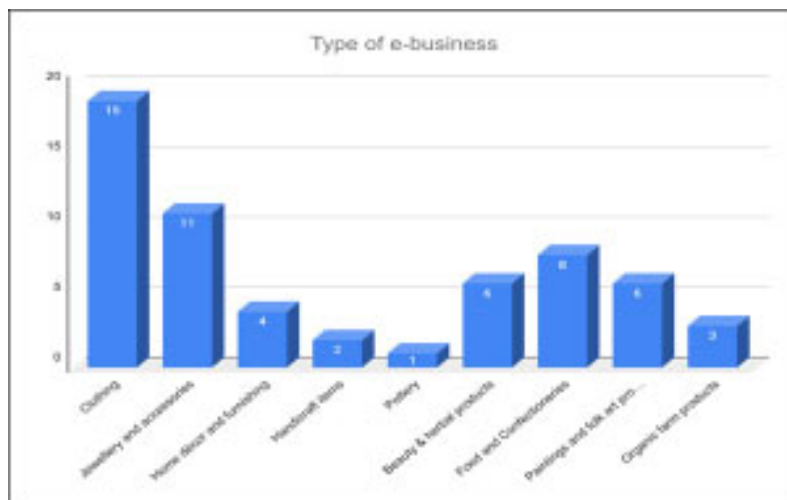


Fig. V : Type of business run through social media platforms

Table VI and Fig. VI show the social media platforms used by women entrepreneurs under study. It reveals that the most preferred social media platform is WhatsApp, second preference is Facebook, then Instagram, and then Facebook Messenger. The analysis shows the popularity of WhatsApp as the social media platform for business over other platforms.

Table VI : Social media platforms used by women entrepreneurs

Social media platform used for e-business	
WhatsApp	35
Facebook	49
Instagram	27
Facebook Messenger	18

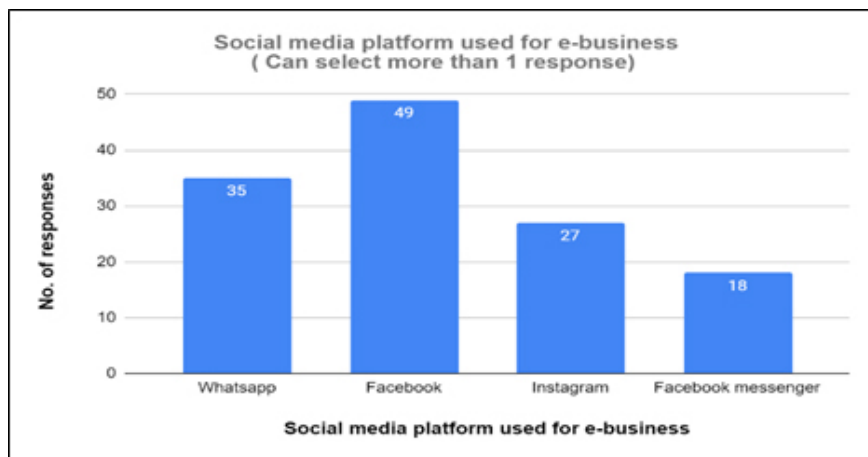


Fig. VI: Social Media Platforms Used by Women Entrepreneurs

Table VII and Fig. VII show the size of an enterprise run by women entrepreneurs under study. It shows that 58 women owned micro enterprises which had a number of employees between 1 to 9. Only 2 women-owned small enterprises have 10 to 49 employees in number. The analysis clearly shows that the majority of women operating businesses through various social media platforms own micro-enterprises.

Table VII : Size of enterprise

Size of enterprise	No. of respondents	Percentage
Micro (1-9 employees)	58	96.67%
Small (10-49 employees)	02	3.33%
Total	60	100%

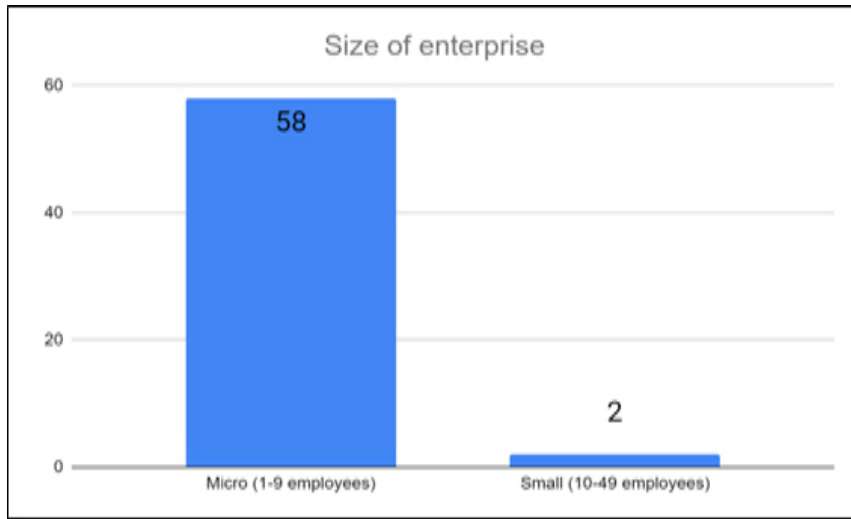


Figure VII : Size of enterprise

Table VIII: Sources of capital invested

Source of capital	No. of respondents	Percentage
Savings	50	83.3%
Bank loans	12	20%
Loans from family or friends	20	33.33%
Govt. funds	2	3.33%
Total	60	100%

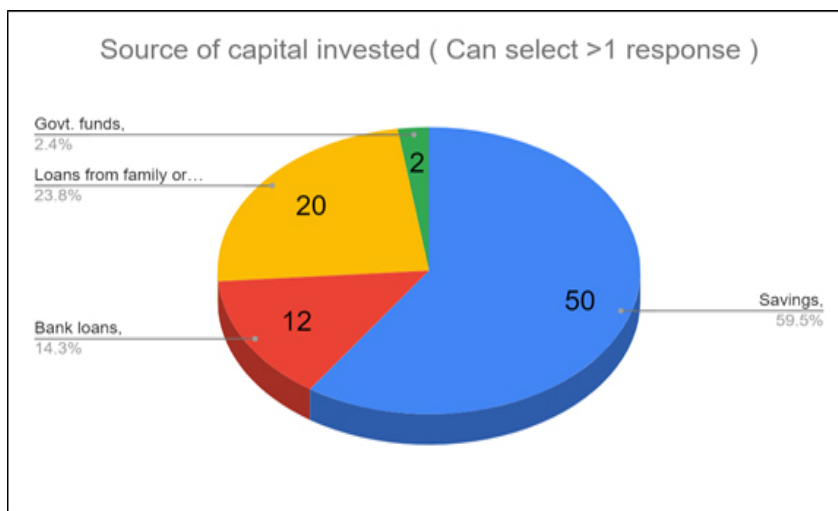


Figure VIII: Sources of capital invested

Table VIII and Fig. VIII show the sources of capital invested by the women entrepreneurs in their e-business. It shows that most women used their savings for their businesses, the others took help from friends and relatives, and some of them also took bank loans to start their businesses but very few (only 2 women) could get the benefit from Government funds. Since the business size is very small, they do not require a large amount to start and run their businesses.

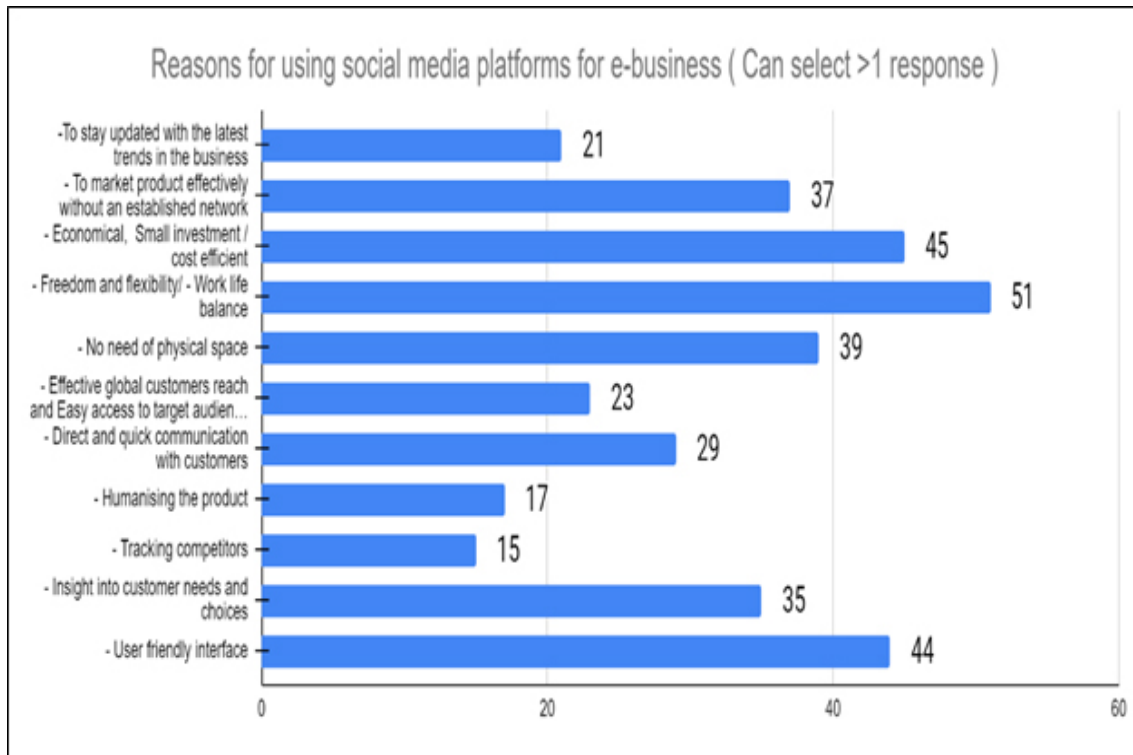


Fig. IX Reasons for choosing social media platforms for business

Fig. IX shows the various reasons given by women entrepreneurs for choosing social media platforms for their businesses. A very important reason for choosing social media platforms for business as given by respondents was because social media platforms provide them with freedom and flexibility in doing business, they can choose their work hours and family hours according to their will. The second most important reason given was that doing business through social media platforms was very easy due to its user-friendly interface, it is cost-effective as it does not require any formal business premise, and it provides a close connection with customers around the world, where they can talk about their demands, so it is effective in knowing their choices. Social media also provides an opportunity to showcase the product easily by wearing and showing it, thereby humanising the product (in the case of a few product categories like garments, jewellery, etc.) It also gives an opportunity to track competitors on the same platform.

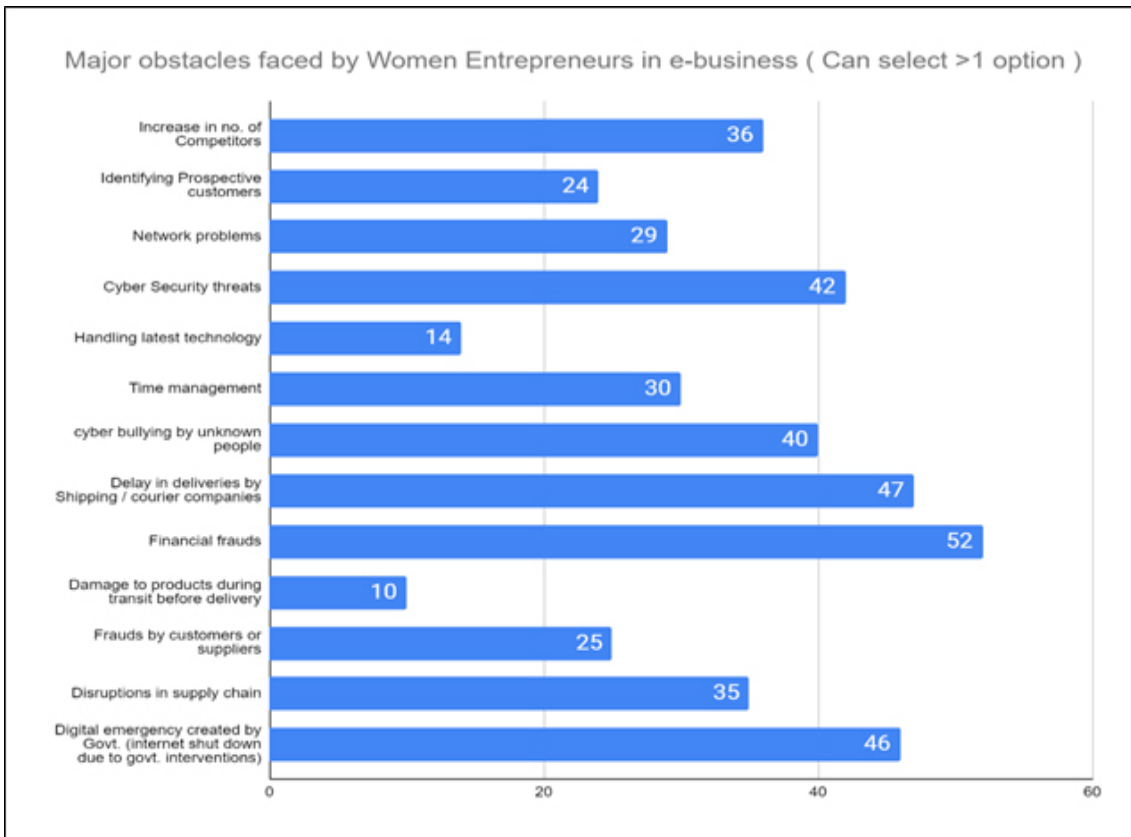


Fig. X: Problems faced by women entrepreneurs using social media platforms for their e-business.

Fig. X shows the major problems faced by women entrepreneurs using social media platforms for their e-business. The most important problem indicated by women entrepreneurs was the problem of financial fraud taking place on e-business platforms. Since the true identity of the customer is not known, sometimes fraudsters pose as customers and carry out financial fraud. The second major obstacle was the delay in deliveries by the courier companies, thirdly, these days Rajasthan government announces the internet shut down due to various Government exams or any social issues that have happened in the past. There are cyber security issues involved in using social media platforms, cyberbullying by unknown people is another major problem. Other problems quoted by respondents were network issues, time management, disruptions in the supply chain, and damage to products in transit.

Discussion and conclusion

Social media has become an integral part of our social life in the 21st century. Its popularity gained sudden momentum at a time when the whole world was fighting COVID-19, while encaged at homes, social media was the only medium to connect with the rest of the world. Through these difficult

times, social media has also altered its role. Its scope now is not only limited to awareness, entertainment, and communication, it has also become a new tool for marketing and promoting the business. It serves the purpose very well for small women entrepreneurs operating their businesses from home to very conveniently manage all the activities of business through social media platforms. The current study aimed to find out the major social media platforms and their role in the lives of women entrepreneurs in managing various business activities.

The study has found that there are three major social media platforms used by women entrepreneurs in Jaipur, namely – Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. Out of the women entrepreneurs under study, most of them belonged to the age group of 31 to 40 years. Most of the women were married with children. Most of the women under study were well-educated up to post-graduate level. Many types of businesses are carried out by women entrepreneurs through social media platforms, most of the women under study owned clothing businesses. These businesses were found to be of micro level, with 1 to 9 employees only. The majority of women entrepreneurs used their savings to start their businesses and very few of them could get financial help from Government schemes. Women entrepreneurs in the present study chose social media platforms to market and sell their products for various reasons, out of which the freedom and flexibility of working was quoted as the most popular reason, it requires less investment as compared to other ways of businesses was also an important reason. The ease of social media usage was another reason, it does not require a physical space to carry out business activities was also a reason, since most people these days are present on one or the other social media platforms, it gives a wide consumer base to these women entrepreneurs, it is easier to showcase the product by merely sitting at home, and one can easily track the latest trends in the business and keep an eye on competitors at the same time.

With pros come the cons and, in our study, women quoted some of the very common obstacles they face while doing their business online. The most difficult obstacle was the anonymity of people online. Since many people do not reveal their true identity on social media, it becomes difficult to identify and track people online. This leads to security issues in the case of women and very importantly involves the risk of financial fraud. Another important problem faced by women in an online business is that many times the supply chain gets disrupted because they rely on the delivery of products on the courier companies which hampers the image of the entrepreneur. In Rajasthan, the Government had recently announced an internet shut down for a few days due to reasons like Government exams or any other social cause, which led to loss of business during that period.

All the above findings make it very clear that though women entrepreneurs face a lot of problems in their business through social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc., due to its ease of operation and other benefits attached to it, social media platforms have become a popular media among women entrepreneurs to market and sell their products.

Limitations and future directions for research

The present study has incorporated the analysis of 60 women entrepreneurs in Jaipur City, using various social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc. to market and sell their

products. The study had certain limitations related to sample size, scope, and time. In the future, the study may be conducted with a wider scope and larger sample size, which would add further to the findings of the study. Furthermore, the study may also be conducted with both genders using social media platforms for business. The present study would be of great importance to academicians and industry personnel in terms of growing interest and scope in the field. Business through social media is a concept that is in its budding phase, it can take the world of business and entrepreneurship to a new level.

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