

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN TECH AN OFFBEAT VENTURING

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ABSTRACT

India the land of opportunities facilitated Indian Start-ups to flourish and positioned them next to UK, US and China. The Indian Start-up eco system is dominated by male Entrepreneurs, as women Entrepreneurs lose their venture track and give up half way due to lack of support system. To overcome this challenge, Indian Government has initiated many programme to support women entrepreneurs and develop a sound ecosystem for Indian Women Entrepreneurs. WEP (The Women Entrepreneurship Platform), launched by Niti Aayog, Bharatiya Mahila Bank, Annapurna Scheme are such initiatives. Major challenging avenue for women entrepreneurs is technical venturing. As per MAKERS India report on the State of Women in Tech Entrepreneurship in India Ecosystem stakeholders are still skeptical about women entrepreneurs in tech, as they believe its offbeat for women entrepreneurs to be in tech ventures. More than 30 % of women entrepreneurs believe that the main reason for not being able to raise funds or scale up is the inherent mindset that reflects a patriarchal society, which unwelcomes women at leadership positions. Through this research paper, researcher wants to make an attempt to bring into notice the challenges and status of women entrepreneurs in tech ventures. Also to find out possible methods and solutions to enhance and encourage more women entrepreneurs in technical ventures.

Keywords : Women Entrepreneurs, Eco-System, Tech Ventures.

Introduction :

With the introduction of the Internet and related technologies into the market, the industry of startups arose. It has been documented that high rates of entrepreneurship with an innovation component play a critical role in the wealth of nations, economic dynamism (Decker et al. 2014), and job creation (Kuschel et al. 2018).

Moreover, and parallel with the increased number of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), more startups are being led by women.

Nowadays, everyday challenges don't distract women from achieving their goals as the environment as well as the scenario is getting more secured and liberal for

them. Favourable Economic Policies of country, Indian Government Initiatives such as Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP), Annapurna Scheme, Bharatiya Mahila Bank Business Loan, Mudra Yojana Scheme, Orient Mahila Vikas Yojana Scheme, Dena Shakti Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Yojana, Udyogini Scheme, Cent Kalyani Scheme, Mahila Udyam Nidhi Scheme, along with the advent of latest communication technologies are opening new platform and gateways for aspiring women leaders in digital market.

Still, according to the estimations of Robb and Coleman (2009), only 5–6% of high-technology entrepreneurs are women, and about 3–5% of incubated and accelerated projects are led by women. Start-Up Chile, a public accelerator in South America, bucks that

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trend, with around 20% women founders and 8.9% women-led startups (Kuschel and Labra 2018).

The high penetration of internet and use of social media is also playing critical role in clearing the roadmap to drive and scale up their digital business or start-up to conceive financial independence and profitability.

Digital ecosphere has brought so many opportunities for women entrepreneurs to showcase their feminine spirit, intellect, talent and creativity and transform their ideas into realities. Digital media revolution lets women entrepreneurs conduct their business entirely on internet and provide flexibility around their schedule by introducing virtual workplaces and digital lifestyle.

Though, women are poorly represented in these spaces, uncertainty, competitiveness, aggressiveness, and fast pace are characteristics of the high-growth technology industry. The—masculine and male-dominated feature of the environment raises the question of whether the technology industry is welcoming to women entrepreneurs.

Literature Review :

A recent review of the literature on startups and gender (Kuschel and Lepeley 2016a) identified that most studies were concentrated in the U.S., and there is little knowledge of startups in Europe and emerging economies [such as Latin America, BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China), and MENA (Middle Eastern and North African countries)]. In most of those studies, startup performance was compared without reference to the perspectives of women entrepreneurs in technology (Singh Cassidy 2015).

Lately, new evidence has shown that women leading tech ventures face gender-based stereotypes. This affects how these women design their teams, raise capital, and grow their businesses. Women normally build their teams based on trust, partnering with their romantic partners or close friends (Kuschel and Lepeley 2016b).

Therefore, these teams are smaller, less diverse, have less credibility with potential investors, and grow more slowly than male-led teams (Kuschel and Labra 2018; Kuschel and Lepeley 2016b; Kuschel et al. 2017).

However, women-led startup teams contribute to job creation (Kuschel et al. 2018), and a third of women-led startups keep raising funds after acceleration (Kuschel et al. 2017).

Women must surmount several obstacles to be part of the growth of women's business ownership. The masculinization of entrepreneurship—including stereotypical masculine behaviors such as aggressiveness, assertiveness, independence, and self-confidence—generates serious difficulties for women who wish to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Ahl 2002; Bird and Brush 2002; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001).

Moreover, women's perceived capabilities (a type of human capital) and economic participation both play roles in influencing the start-up rates of women entrepreneurs (Brush et al. 2017). The constant comparison also ends up becoming a trap. Researchers and society both tend to overlook the complexity and variety of women entrepreneurs, and women become—victims of the male norm (Billing 2011).

Historically, self-employed women were less likely than men to become small business owners due to societal and patriarchal pressures (Marlow 1997) that acted as discriminatory barriers at all business stages. A proven barrier for women's small business growth has been limited access to financial resources (Carter and Allen 1997; Brush et al. 2004), and this is true for women founders of technology ventures as well (Demartini 2018; Demartini and Marchegiani 2018).

Women who do participate in business incubator or startup acceleration programs are often exhibited as—tokens to illustrate gender diversity.

This visibility may have negative consequences for the founder. Tokenism affects women's—sense of fit and draws attention away from their businesses (Marlow and McAdam 2012). Nevertheless, there are some successes specific to women in tech startups. Unlike gender discrimination in traditional investment settings, crowdfunding has been found to be a great tool for women in the early stages of raising capital (Gorbatai and Nelson 2015). According to Gorbatai and Nelson (2015), donation-based crowdfunding sites offer a completely

different institutional setting in which to obtain funding for new small businesses or products, bypassing many risks and difficulties inherent in traditional methods of fundraising, as success depends much more on written language rather than visual and verbal cues. Nowadays, research on women's entrepreneurship is growing (Jennings and Brush 2013), but there are still some gaps, particularly regarding women-led startups (Kuschel and Lepeley 2016a) in developing countries (Bullough 2013) and from a feminist perspective (Marlow and McAdam 2012, 2015).

Supreet Juneja Wahee, Vaishali Garg and Shashank Gupta (2016)'s study found that cyber world can play very important role in empowering the women as it gives a platform to females to handle their business from home giving them an opportunity to maintain proper work life balance. Their study states that the drivers of women cyber entrepreneurship can be identified which could help in increasing the success rate of startups as well as women empowerment. Prakash, Goyal (2011) the researchers in their study aimed to understand the reasons behind women becoming successful entrepreneurs, like in education, support of family member, successful stories of family and friend etc.

Still they also face lots of hurdle like family obligation, lack of self-confidence and old and outdated social outlook to stop women to enter into entrepreneurship. Schemes of promotion and development of women entrepreneurship also floated by the government for the growth of women entrepreneurs in India. Babu (2015) discusses that India's startup scene is encouraging and attracting more women entrepreneurs, and now global investors increasingly start raising funds for new women startups.

Digital Media is one of the platforms for women that empowered them into entrepreneurship. It was found that women entrepreneurs are concentrating in the urban areas only, this reveals the lack of women centric avenues in rural areas.

Nehru and Bhardwaj (2013), analyzed the factors which motivate women to start their own venture and problems faced by them they ventured out to shape their

own position in the competitive world of business environment. Meeta Jethwa and Chhaya Mishra(2016), described the status of women entrepreneurs in e-commerce environment and also the factors which encourages them to become e-entrepreneurs such as Global Reach, Cost Saving, Ease of Communication etc. The study mentioned the list of successful women entrepreneurs in India and also the issues and challenges faced by women in e-commerce sector.

Objectives :

The study was planned with the following objectives :

- 1) To study the Eco-System and motivating factors that encourages women to set up digital startups.
- 2) To critically examine the major issues and challenges faced by women in digital market.

Research Methodology :

The present study is purely based on secondary data collected through literature survey, journals, newspapers, websites and published articles relating to this particular topic.

Data Analysis :

Eco-System and Motivating Factors that Encourages Women to Set Up Digital Startups

Women have held a very important social, political and economic role in India. Modernizing this role and giving a kind of shape of entrepreneurship have brought lot of structural and transformational reforms in the country. Encouraged by fast emerging group of successful women entrepreneurs,

NITI Aayog has launched Women Entrepreneurial and Innovation Cell' which offers financial support Rs.10,000 crore funds under the scheme Fund of Funds, Mudra micro loan scheme and mentorship to women entrepreneurs. Besides, Government and No-Government bodies are increasing their attention towards women's contribution to economic development by launching various operated by different department and ministries.

The following are the key points which motivate women entrepreneur to go for startups :

1. **Global Reach :-** The world has turned into small village because of digital revolution. Digital

marketing helps women entrepreneurs to get global exposure for their startups and to achieve fastest business growth.

2. **Greater Flexibility :-** The flexibility of digital marketing lets women entrepreneurs conduct their business entirely on internet. Many women entrepreneurs enjoy the flexibility to work from home specifically in the field of – content development, sales, recruitment, lead generation and travel packaging, among others that just require a strong internet connection, a laptop and a mobile phone.
3. **Huge return on investment :-** Digital marketing offers a markable return on small investments. Advertising through social media platforms cost less when compared to traditional marketing techniques. It is a proven way to reach targeted audience with most cost effective way.
4. **Absence of Middlemen :-** Digital marketing is making the globe come closer by helping the buyers meet the sellers and vice versa. There is no scope for middlemen who increase the transaction costs.
5. **Ease in Communication :-** Business communication under digital marketing is easy. Women e-entrepreneurs can do transactions without stepping out of their home. They are generating business through WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and many other social media platforms.
6. **Fastest processing of transactions :-** Executing transactions under digital marketing is easy and nearly instant online. The transactions are effortlessly executed with digital payment services.
7. **Secured platform :-** Digital marketing plays a vital role in removing gender biasness as the online medium places a layer of invisibility on the identity of seller.
8. **Ability to Multitask :-** One of the core benefits of digital marketing is its ability to handle millions of customers at the same time. As long as a website's infrastructure is efficient, numerous transactions

can easily take place simultaneously.

9. **24/7 Business :-** Digital marketing runs around the clock. Compared to traditional marketing, digital marketing does not constrain for opening hours for business transactions since business run for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
10. **Easy access to funds :-** The Indian government has introduced over 50+ startup funding schemes in the recent years. Each startup scheme of government aims at boosting the Indian startup ecosystem.
11. **Tax holiday for 3 years :-** Eligible startups can now avail three year tax holiday in a block of seven years. This helps them to get more time to reach a stage when they start earning profit before they exercise their option for income tax exemption.
12. **Liberal Compliances :-** The Government of India has simplified legal compliance and made it flexible for Startups as per the 2016 'Startup India Action Plan'. The goal is to enable startups to focus on their core business and keep compliance costs low.

Issues and Challenges Faced By Women in Digital Market

There are quite a few women who have built up famous brand in the Industry, thanks to digital business ideas. Last year about 1800 startups have come up in the market and it is something that is grabbing the attention of many specially women across the country. Women have astounding potential to excel in the entrepreneurial environment, but they also have to endure several financial and social hurdles that deprive them of a fair chance to a part of it.

Here are some of the challenges that every women entrepreneur needs to overcome:

1. **Finding suitable market :-** Successful new business enjoys longevity because their owners conduct regular market research to understand their target market, identify consumer's problems and pinpoint realistic competitors. So, it's necessary to carry out market research on continuous basis to keep up with market trends and maintain a competitive edge by sizing up business

opportunity.

2. **Promotion strategy can be easily copied :-** One of the main challenges in digital marketing is that a particular marketing technique can be easily copied by rival. This will force to frequently come up with new marketing strategies.
3. **Security Issue :-** Digital transactions are entirely carried out on internet. For a customer who queries online for products or services, there is a caution not to reveal the private banking information as it might be misused by unidentified people.
4. **Requires huge initial investments :-** Digital marketing through search engines and social media networking is quite expensive. So, it requires huge capital investments at the early stages.
5. **Good and effective customer service :-** It is a big challenge for women e-entrepreneurs to maintain good reputation through constant good services. There are times when goods delivered to the customer are not satisfactory. Customer satisfaction should be utmost priority in digital marketing.
6. **Training the team :-** As companies scale up and technologies continue to evolve, training the team is a greater challenge.

Limitations :

As the study was based on secondary data, it misses the personal interactions and observations.

Conclusion :

Today, India's Digital Startup ecosystem is in a better position, wherein women's participation in the field of entrepreneurship is increasing at a substantial rate. In this fast moving economy, there has always been a choice for women to have a successful career with independency or stay aback due to the society's pull.

Since multitasking is a trait women are born with, it is helping them to maintain a balance between their career and responsibilities simultaneously. It is has become old believe that women become entrepreneurs because of push factors like poverty, husband's death and need of additional income etc. but now they are venturing into business because of risk taking ability, innovative

thinking and passion for achievement.

Start-up India' mission by Prime Minister of India has floated several schemes for creating entrepreneurial awareness, orientation and skill development programs for women. As the environment is changing very fast, investors start investing on woman leadership, and their contribution in economic development is also being recognized and increase at a considerable rate.

Start-up schemes initiated by government is promoting the culture of entrepreneurship by educating women about their hidden potentials and strengths through entrepreneurial orientation programmes, spreading awareness and consciousness amongst women to upstage in the field of entrepreneurship by their creative and innovative ideas, making them realize their prominent position in the society and how they can contribute to the economic development of the country.

Although, India has a handful of successful women entrepreneurs who are making waves in different fields of business, it has ranked 52, much lower than US and China in the list of 57 countries in MasterCard Index of Women entrepreneurs report which is surveyed to ascertain parity for women entrepreneurs. India's rank remained unchanged from previous year at 52.

The report stated that the underlying conditions for women business ownership in India are less favourable, adding that the obstacles are largely caused by perceptions of gender bias, which contribute to poor social and cultural acceptance, lack of self –belief and access to financialfunding or venture capital. So, there is need for more initiatives by the government to help women climb the entrepreneurship ladder in India.

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