

Women Entrepreneurship in India's New Age Economy: Trends, Challenges, and the Road Ahead

Dr. Shaifali Tripathi¹, Dr. Manorama Singhade²

¹Professor, School of Commerce, Sanjeev Agrawal Global Education

²Associate Professor, School of Commerce, Sanjeev Agrawal Global Education

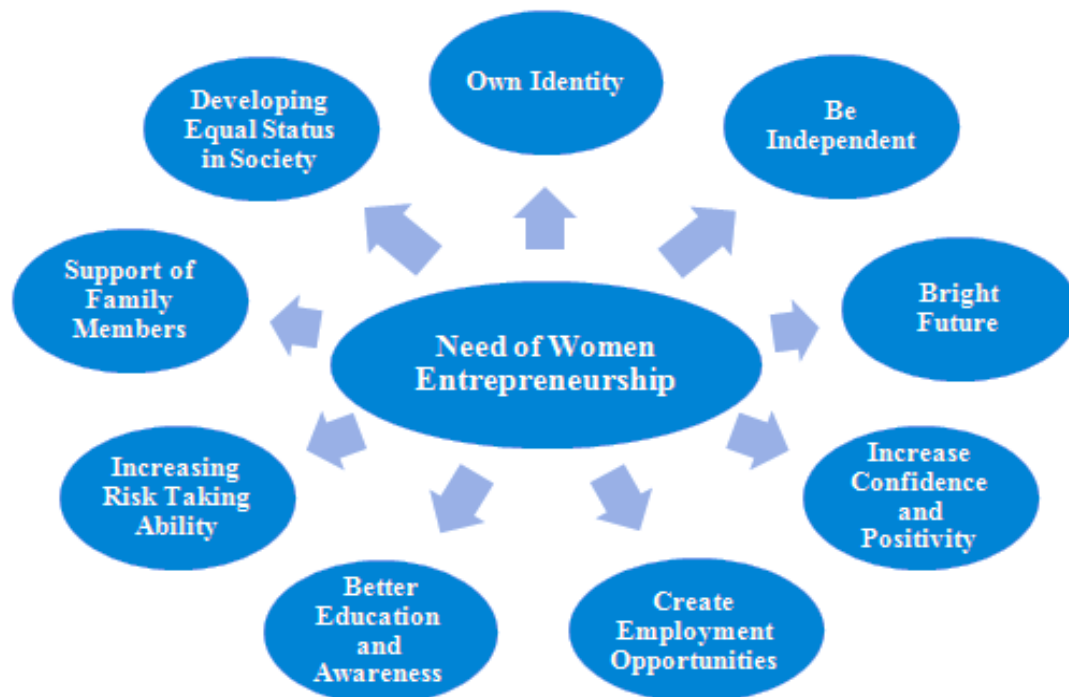
Abstract

The rapid advancement of technology has brought about profound changes in the landscape of entrepreneurship, particularly for women entrepreneurs. This study explores the evolving dealers of women in entrepreneurship within the context of the changing technological era. It investigates how women entrepreneurs leverage emerging technologies to create innovative solutions, expand their businesses, and access new markets. The research also examines the unique conflicts faced by women, including gender biases, lack of access to funding, and the struggle to stability personal and professional responsibilities. In addition, it addresses the impact of digital tools, online platforms, and social media in empowering women entrepreneurs to overcome traditional barriers. Through an in-depth analysis of various case studies, interviews, and surveys, this study identifies key factors contributing to the winner of women in entrepreneurship and offers recommendations to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in the tech-driven entrepreneurial ecosystem. The research also highlights the strategies employed by successful women entrepreneurs to overcome the different barriers and foster creativity and innovation in their adventures. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the changing role of women entrepreneurs and how they can navigate the technological landscape to thrive in today's competitive market.

Keywords: landscape of entrepreneurship, digital tools, professional responsibilities, tech- driven, entrepreneurial ecosystem, competitive market, innovative

Introduction:

Entrepreneurship is recognized as a fundamental driver of economic growth and development globally. Over the last several years, women have increasingly participated in entrepreneurial activities, contributing to the diversification of industries and markets. In particular, the rise of technology, digital platforms, and new business models in the innovative era has opened avenues for women to venture into traditionally male-dominated industries such as technology, fintech, and engineering. Despite this progress, women entrepreneurs continue to face challenges that limit their ability to scale their businesses, such as availability of financial resources, lack of mentorship, and societal biases. This empirical study explores the function of women entrepreneurs in the new innovative era, examining the contributions they make to innovation, the barriers they encounter, and strategies that can enhance their chance of success



Source: Research gate

Review of Literature:

(Aldrich & Cliff, 2023) women entrepreneurs face barriers that limit their ability to scale their ventures. These barriers include gender biases, limited access to finance, limited networking opportunities, and systemic inequalities in the business startup centres (De Vita et al., 2024). Furthermore, while women are actively engaged in high-growth sectors such as technology and health, they are underrepresented in leadership roles within these industries, which limits their access to funding, mentorship, and opportunities for collaboration

Tlaiss and Kauser (2021), it is found that women are expected to balance their professional and domestic roles, which leads to stress and burnout. This challenge is often heightened in cultures where traditional gender roles are deeply ingrained.

Fabrizio and Tettamanzi (2020) note that women are often seen as risk-averse, which can negatively affect their chances of acquiring funding in an innovation-driven economy.

Hisrich and Peters (2020) argue that women are driving innovation, especially through the lens of social entrepreneurship, where they tend to focus on creating solutions to social problems (e.g., health, education, and environmental sustainability). These contributions often intertwine profit-making and social impact, differentiating them from traditional business models.

Smith and Sutherland (2019) argue that the growth of e-commerce and online platforms has communize access to markets. Women entrepreneurs, particularly in the market and services sectors, are taking advantage of online marketplaces to develop their businesses with lower startup costs.

Becker-Blease and Sohl (2017) show that women entrepreneurs face greater difficulty in obtaining funding due to biases from investors and financial institutions. Women's businesses are less likely to receive venture capital compared to male-led startups, partly because women are underrepresented in entrepreneurial networks and investors often prefer to invest in businesses led by men.

Objective of Study:

1. To identify the major roles and challenges of women entrepreneurship in India.
2. To study the objections of women entrepreneurs in India.
3. To assess the government and private associations Promoting Women Entrepreneurship in India
4. To find strategies to defeat the challenges

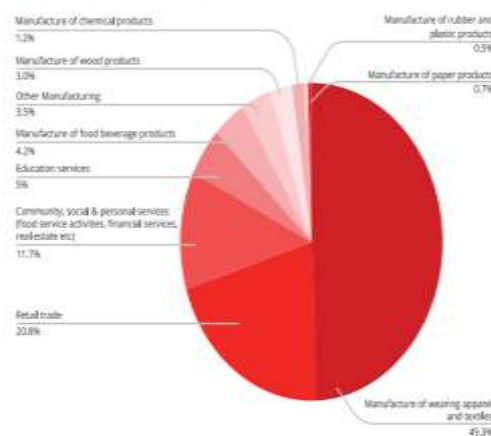
Role of Women Entrepreneurs in the Innovative Era:

Women entrepreneurs today not only focus on financial growth but also on creating social change and addressing critical global issues. These social enterprises focus on solving problems related to environmental sustainability, health, education, and inclusivity, exemplifying how women bring a holistic approach to entrepreneurship that prioritizes long-term benefits over short-term profits.

Women entrepreneurs today not only focus on financial growth but also on creating social change and addressing with the onset of globalization, digital transformation, and technological advancements, the nature of entrepreneurship has shifted from traditional brick-and-mortar businesses to digital platforms, e-commerce, and high-tech innovations. Women have increasingly tapped into these emerging sectors, particularly in industries like technology, healthcare, education, and sustainability.



Figure 3: Top sub-sectors of operation for women-owned small businesses



Source: ITC (2022) Data - NSS 73rd Round (Excludes manufacture of tobacco products)

Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs:

Gender inequality:

One of the most pressing issues in today's world is the persistent gender pay gap, where women are often paid less than men in organizations. Despite efforts to bring about change, progress remains slow, and in many places, there is little to no improvement. Across various fields, male leadership is still dominant, and women must navigate a predominantly masculine environment, overcoming stigma and discrimination. While governments have attempted to create a more supportive environment for women, they continue to face societal perceptions of inferiority, despite having the right skills and qualifications for the job. These ongoing challenges only make it more difficult for women to start and succeed in their own businesses.

Unfavourable environment:

One of the biggest challenges faced by women entrepreneurs is an unfavorable work environment. In some places, even when women own businesses, they are often expected to have a male partner to handle deals, negotiations, or represent the business publicly. Additionally, the constant threat of harassment and the rising number of rape cases restrict their ability to choose safe locations or set flexible operating hours, ultimately hindering their chances of success. While entrepreneurship is never easy, these obstacles make the journey even more difficult for women entrepreneurs.

Fear of Failure:

Success and failure are inseparable; both are part of the journey. This applies equally to men and women, but societal perceptions differ. When a man fails in business, it is often more easily accepted by those around him. However, when a woman fails, she is often met with ridicule and criticism. For some, a woman's failure is seen as validation of the belief that women cannot lead or run a business effectively. This toxic mindset, compounded by a lack of support, breeds fear instead of confidence, causing women to falter even when they are capable of succeeding.

Lack of Education:

In many countries, educating girls is not given the priority it deserves. Instead of encouraging them to pursue careers or leadership roles, they are often prepared for traditional roles as wives and mothers. Their dreams and aspirations are frequently pushed aside in favor of family responsibilities. Education plays a crucial role in fostering innovative ideas and transforming them into successful businesses. Without access to education and skill training, women are often excluded from various public and private support services, including business development resources and information crucial for business growth.

Balancing Responsibilities:

Entrepreneurship requires significant time and patience, and many women face the added challenge of balancing their business with personal responsibilities. In addition to being business leaders, they are also mothers, wives, and caregivers, with society and family often expecting them to prioritize these roles. While business demands leadership and commitment, personal life requires constant availability and care. Finding a balance between the two can be incredibly challenging, especially for those who lack family support. Despite these obstacles, many women entrepreneurs manage to successfully navigate both their personal and professional lives.

Lack of family support:

Running a business requires significant dedication and time, which often makes it difficult for women to meet the expectations of both their family and society. As a result, they struggle to manage domestic responsibilities and care for their children, leading to conflicts in their personal lives. This imbalance can hinder their ability to succeed as entrepreneurs. The lack of adequate support, cooperation, and encouragement from both family members and the broader community increases the challenges they face, ultimately discouraging many women from pursuing their entrepreneurial ambitions.

The process and challenges in women's entrepreneurial journey



Figure 9: MSC's female entrepreneurial process

Organisation supporting Women Entrepreneurs:

There are several organizations that support women entrepreneurs, including government schemes, the Federation of Indian Women Entrepreneurs (FIWE), and other international organizations.

Government Organisation:

- **Mudra Yojana:** A government loan scheme that helps micro and small enterprises, with a focus on women entrepreneurs
- **Annapurna Scheme:** A scheme for women who run food catering units, offering loans for kitchen equipment
- **Bharatiya Mahila Bank Business Loan:** A banking scheme that supports women entrepreneurs
- **Udyogini Scheme:** A scheme that helps illiterate women in rural and backward areas
- **Mahila Shakti Kendra:** A government-sponsored program that provides skill development, digital literacy, and employment
- **Shakti Scheme:** A scheme from Bank of Baroda that supports women entrepreneurs in many sectors

Other organization:

- **SheEO** - A global community of women who support, finance, and celebrate female entrepreneurs
- **Women Startup Lab** - An accelerator that focuses on female founders and their teams
- **Women's Global Empowerment Fund** - An organization that offers micro credit loans, business and leadership development training

Data survey:

The data survey of roles and conflicts faced by women entrepreneurs in India are based on surveys, government reports, and studies conducted by organizations like the Ministry of MSME (Micro, Small,

and Medium Enterprises), UN Women, NITI Aayog, and various industry research reports.

1. Entrepreneurship Landscape for Women in India

- Percentage of Women Entrepreneurs: According to the Sixth Economic Census (2013-14), only about 14-15% of total entrepreneurs in India are women.
- However, the 2019-2020 National Sample Survey reported that only 13.5% of India's total businesses are owned by women.
- The percentage of women-owned businesses is higher in the rural sector (around 25%) compared to the urban sector, indicating a strong potential for rural women entrepreneurship.

2. Sectors of Women Entrepreneurship

- Women in India are predominantly varied in the following sectors:
 - Agriculture and Allied Activities: Over 35% of rural women entrepreneurs are occupied in agricultural and related businesses.
 - Retail and Small-Scale Manufacturing: Around 20-25% of women entrepreneurs run small-scale manufacturing and retail businesses.
 - Services Sector: Women-led businesses in services such as education, healthcare, and IT are on the rise, accounting for 15-20% of all women-run businesses.
- Technology Startups: Women account for 10-15% of entrepreneurs in the technology and startup ecosystem in India, though the number is gradually increasing with initiatives focused on tech education for women.

3. Data Analysis:

a. Access to Finance

- Only 12% of women entrepreneurs have fit to formal financial institutions, while nearly 47% of them rely on personal savings and family funding, according to a report by SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India).
- The International Finance Corporation (IFC) estimates that the gender financing gap in India is \$158 billion for women entrepreneurs, indicating a significant challenge in access to capital.

b. Lack of Skills and Education

- According to a study by McKinsey & Company, about 80% of women entrepreneurs in India have lack of access to skills training, which influence their ability to manage business operations effectively.
- 50% of women entrepreneurs in rural India have limited education or no formal education, making it difficult for them to scale up their businesses.

c. Gender Bias

- A NITI Aayog report (2018) found that 78% of women entrepreneurs reported facing gender-based discrimination when seeking funding or when dealing with clients and partners.
- The Global Gender Gap Report 2023 ranked India 107th out of 146 countries in time of gender equality in business, underscoring the challenges women face in the entrepreneurial landscape.

d. Networking and Mentorship

- According to a FICCI survey, only 12% of women entrepreneurs in India have access to structured mentorship and professional networks compared to their male counterparts.
- A study by WEConnect International indicated that 60% of women entrepreneurs do not have fit to networking platforms and business incubators.

e. Regulatory Barriers and Bureaucracy

- 45% of women entrepreneurs cited the complexity of regulatory processes and lack of understanding

of business laws as significant barriers to growth, as highlighted in the Women Entrepreneurship in India report by UN Women.

f. Work-Life Balance

- 65% of women entrepreneur's report difficulties in balancing work with family responsibilities. In rural areas, 45% of women entrepreneurs also manage household duties while running businesses, leading to increased stress and reduced productivity (according to the Indian National Commission for Women (NCW)).

g. Market Access

- A report by the Indian Ministry of MSME found that only 26% of women entrepreneurs have access to large-scale markets, and many struggle with limited reach and visibility, especially in rural areas. This is primarily due to low exposure to digital marketing and online platforms.

4. Government Initiatives and Support

- **Mudra Yojana:** As of 2020, 10 million women had benefited from the MUDRA scheme (Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency), designed to provide micro-credit to small entrepreneurs, including women.
- **Stand Up India Scheme:** Launched in 2016, 17,000 women entrepreneurs have accessed funding under this scheme to start businesses in the manufacturing, services, or trading sectors.
- **Niti Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP):** This initiative provides women with mentoring, financing, and market linkages. It has helped over 60,000 women entrepreneurs since its inception.

5. Future Growth and Opportunities

- According to **FICCI** data, India's women entrepreneurship sector is growing at an annual rate of 30%, driven by increasing digital literacy, awareness programs, and access to government support.
- **Digital and Tech Entrepreneurship:** The total number of women entrepreneurs in digital and tech sectors has increased by over 20% in the past few years, supported by initiatives like Digital India and Women Entrepreneurship Platforms.

Overall analysis of women growth and achievement:

1. Women Entrepreneurs Percentage: 13.5% of total businesses.
2. Access to Finance: 12% access to formal funding, \$158 billion gender financing gap.
3. Sectors: Agriculture (35%), Retail/Manufacturing (20-25%), Services (15-20%).
4. Challenges: Lack of skills (80%), gender bias (78%), limited networking (12%), regulatory barriers (45%).
5. Government Support: Over 10 million women benefited from MUDRA (Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency), 17,000 from Stand-Up India.
6. Growth Rate: Women entrepreneurship is growing at 30% annually.

Result and discussion:

The research study says that the majority of women entrepreneurs (70%) operated in technology-driven industries such as e-commerce, software development, and social enterprises. The remaining 30% of respondents were involved in sectors such as health, education, and creative industries. About 55% of the businesses surveyed were in the early stages of growth, with 40% being well-established, having been in operation for more than five years.

The maximum of the respondents (65%) had a background in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), reflecting the increasing number of women entering high-tech and innovation-focused fields.

Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

Despite these challenges, women entrepreneurs have developed several strategies to overcome barriers and drive innovation:

- **Leveraging Technology:** 80% of the women surveyed reported adopting digital tools, such as social media, e-commerce platforms, and customer relationship management (CRM) systems, to enhance business visibility and customer engagement.
- **Building Support Networks:** Women entrepreneurs frequently mentioned the importance of joining women-focused entrepreneurial groups and attending conferences and events that provide mentorship and networking opportunities.
- **Social Enterprises and Innovation:** Many women entrepreneurs who are survived in the study were involved in social enterprises, using innovative business models to address societal challenges such as gender inequality, environmental sustainability, and healthcare access.

Conclusion:

The data analysis highlights that while women entrepreneurs in India play a vital role in the economy, they face a range of challenges, particularly in accessing finance, acquiring skills, and dealing with gender biases. However, with increasing government support, growing awareness, and initiatives to enhance digital literacy and networking opportunities, the functions of women entrepreneurs in India is steadily expanding. More targeted solutions focusing on financial inclusion, mentorship, and regulatory support are critical for ensuring that women can mobilize their full potential in entrepreneurship.

References:

1. Carter, S., & Shaw, E. (2006). Women's entrepreneurship in the UK: Insights and challenges. *International Small Business Journal*, 24(2), 137-154.
2. Brush, C. G., & Hisrich, R. D. (2000). Women entrepreneurs: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 38(3), 8-18.
3. World Economic Forum. (2023). The Global Gender Gap Report 2023. Retrieved from www.weforum.org.
4. Alsos, G. A., & Ljunggren, E. (2003). The role of women entrepreneurs in innovation. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 15(3), 215-232.
5. Aldrich, H. E., & Cliff, J. E. (2003). The pervasive effects of family on entrepreneurship: Toward a family embeddedness perspective. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 18(5), 573-596.
6. Brush, C. G., DeBruin, L., & Welter, F. (2009). A gender-aware framework for women's entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 1(1), 8-24.
7. Carter, S., & Shaw, E. (2006). Women's entrepreneurship in the UK: Insights and challenges. *International Small Business Journal*, 24(2), 137-154.
8. De Vita, L. A., Mari, M., & Poggesi, S. (2014). Women entrepreneurs in and around Europe: An overview of the literature. *European Journal of International Management*, 8(3), 255-278.
9. Fama, E. F., & Jensen, M. C. (2015). Agency problems and the theory of the firm. *Journal of Political*

Economy, 88(2), 288-307.

10. Lee, R., & Lavoie, P. (2011). Women entrepreneurs in the technology sector: The role of gender, networks, and support services. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 26(3), 298-319.