

Women Entrepreneurship and Commercial Viability of Pink Auto-Rickshaws: A Secondary Study of Raipur Division, Chhattisgarh

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Abstract

Women's participation in the commercial transport sector represents an important development in women's entrepreneurship and livelihood generation. Pink auto-rickshaws, operated by women or intended primarily for women passengers, have emerged as a visible example of women's entry into a traditionally male-dominated occupation. This paper examines the commercial viability, empowerment potential and operational challenges associated with Pink Auto-rickshaws with special reference to Raipur Division of Chhattisgarh. The study is based entirely on secondary data collected from research articles, government sources, institutional reports and published case studies. The analysis focuses on employment generation, financial independence, passenger safety, operating costs, social acceptance and institutional support. Existing studies indicate that women auto drivers can improve their economic independence and social status through self-employment. However, inadequate finance, maintenance costs, route restrictions, lack of proper stands, social resistance and safety concerns may limit sustainability. The paper argues that Pink Auto-rickshaws should be treated as women-led micro-enterprises rather than only as a welfare-based transport initiative. It recommends affordable credit, skill development, insurance, digital payments, designated stands, safety mechanisms and institutional monitoring for developing Pink Auto services in Raipur Division.

Keywords: Pink Auto-rickshaw, Women Entrepreneurship, Commercial Viability, Women Empowerment, Urban Transport, Self-employment, Raipur Division

1. Introduction

Urban transportation is an essential foundation of economic development, social inclusion and regional connectivity. It connects people with employment, education, healthcare, markets and public institutions. Although formal public transport systems are important, auto-rickshaws provide flexible and last-mile connectivity, particularly where fixed-route transport is unavailable or insufficient. The sector also provides self-employment to people with limited access to formal salaried work.

From a Commerce perspective, auto-rickshaw driving involves investment, revenue generation, cost management, customer service, route selection, vehicle maintenance and risk-bearing. A driver may own a vehicle, operate it on rent or obtain it through institutional finance. The sector can therefore be examined as an informal micro-enterprise. Its commercial performance depends on passenger demand, fares, fuel or electricity costs, repairs, insurance, permits and loan repayment.

For a long period, driving and public transport occupations were considered male-oriented. The entry of women into auto-rickshaw driving challenges occupational stereotypes and demonstrates that women can manage assets, interact with customers, bear business risks and provide public services. Pink Autos add a gender-sensitive dimension to urban transport. The term generally refers to auto-rickshaws operated by women, often intended for women passengers or promoted as a safer mobility option.

The economic importance of Pink Autos can be analysed at the individual, household and community levels. At the individual level, driving may provide income, experience and financial independence. At the household level, earnings may support food, education, healthcare and loan repayment. At the community level, women drivers become visible participants in the local economy and challenge the belief that transport work is exclusively meant for men.

However, social value does not automatically ensure commercial sustainability. Gross daily income cannot be treated as profit because fuel, electricity, maintenance, insurance, permits, parking and loan instalments must be deducted. Irregular passenger demand and competition from conventional autos, e-rickshaws and app-based services may also affect net income. A financially sustainable model therefore requires planning, route assessment, maintenance support and access to affordable credit.

The safety dimension is equally important. Women passengers may prefer women-operated autos because of concerns about harassment and uncomfortable travel. Nevertheless, safety requires driver verification, vehicle registration, emergency contacts, GPS tracking, proper lighting, designated stands and complaint mechanisms. Safety and commercial service quality should be planned together.

Existing research provides evidence that women auto drivers may achieve greater financial self-reliance and social confidence. Jithu's study of women auto-rickshaw drivers in Kerala connected employment with women's empowerment. Vesvikar and Watambale studied female auto drivers in Thane and identified financial need, self-reliance and occupational challenges as important themes. The Pink Auto initiative in Ranchi is a significant case. Vardhan and Mahato examined women driving Pink Autos with women passengers and presented the initiative as an example of self-employment, determination and social change. Mahato and Vardhan examined women's attitudes towards self-employment and occupational stereotypes in Jharkhand. The Pink City Rickshaw Company in Jaipur also demonstrates how training and organised social-enterprise models can create livelihood opportunities for women from low-income households. Raipur Division provides a relevant regional context. Official district information identifies the division as comprising Raipur, Dhamtari, Gariaband, Baloda Bazar and Mahasamund districts. The division includes the state capital as well as urban, semi-urban and rural areas. Transport requirements may differ according to educational institutions, employment centres, markets, hospitals and population distribution.

The present paper is significant for Commerce because it examines Pink Autos as women-led micro-enterprises rather than only as a welfare programme. It analyses women's role as service providers, income earners and small entrepreneurs. Since this is a secondary study, it does not claim to present actual survey results from Raipur Division. It provides a conceptual and policy-oriented foundation for future field research.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the concept and commercial significance of Pink Auto-rickshaws.
- To analyse the role of Pink Autos in women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment.
- To identify major operational and institutional challenges faced by women auto drivers.

- To examine the relevance of Pink Auto services in Raipur Division.
- To suggest measures for improving commercial sustainability.

3. Review of Literature

Baruah (2018)

Baruah examined the Women on Wheels training and employment programme in New Delhi. The study presented driving as an innovative employment opportunity for women and connected it with economic empowerment. It highlighted structured training, institutional support and employment linkages.

Jithu (2019)

Jithu studied empowerment through employment among women auto-rickshaw drivers in Ernakulam district of Kerala. The study linked income-generating employment with financial contribution, confidence and women's decision-making within the family.

Vardhan and Mahato (2019)

The authors conducted a case study of Pink Autos in Ranchi, Jharkhand. The study focused on women driving Pink Autos with women passengers and presented the initiative as an example of determination, self-employment and social transformation.

Mahato and Vardhan (2019)

The authors examined female attitudes towards self-employment and breaking occupational stereotypes in Jharkhand. Economic need, confidence, motivation and the desire for independence were important influences on occupational choice

ACCESS Development Services (2020)

The Sitaram Rao Livelihoods India Case Study Compendium documented the Pink City Rickshaw Company in Jaipur. The initiative provided training and livelihood opportunities to women from economically weaker households through an organised social-enterprise model.

Vesvikar and Watambale (2023)

The authors conducted an exploratory study of female auto drivers in Thane. The study identified financial instability, self-reliance, social awareness and government intervention as important themes.

Prasad (2025)

Prasad examined institutional barriers faced by Pink women auto drivers. The study highlighted barriers related to public facilities, social norms, safety and institutional support

ESCAP (2025)

The ESCAP development paper examined women's participation in transport, including working conditions, barriers, retention and progression. It placed women's transport employment within gender-inclusive labour and mobility policy.

3.1 Research Gap

Existing studies examine women auto drivers and Pink Auto initiatives in New Delhi, Kerala, Ranchi, Jaipur and Thane. However, limited research focuses on commercial viability and entrepreneurship potential in Raipur Division. District-wise transport requirements, business models, finance, passenger demand, safety and institutional support require further investigation. This paper addresses the gap through thematic analysis of published studies and institutional sources.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. It describes Pink Autos and analyses their entrepreneurial, financial, commercial, safety and institutional dimensions.

4.2 Nature of the Study

This is a qualitative, secondary-data-based study. It does not use fabricated primary survey data and does not calculate actual income or profitability for Raipur Division.

4.3 Study Area

The study focuses on Raipur Division, comprising Raipur, Dhamtari, Gariaband, Baloda Bazar and Mahasamund districts.

4.4 Sources of Data

Sources include research articles, government websites, institutional case studies, development reports and published academic material on women's employment, Pink Autos and gender-inclusive transport.

4.5 Data Collection Procedure

Sources were identified using keywords relating to Pink Auto-rickshaws, women auto drivers, women entrepreneurship, women's safety and urban transport. Each source was reviewed for author, year, location, objectives, findings and relevance.

4.6 Data Analysis Technique

The information was analysed through thematic content analysis under entrepreneurship, financial empowerment, commercial viability, passenger safety, occupational challenges and institutional support.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Published ideas have been acknowledged through citations and references. No personal information has been reproduced and no artificial respondent data have been included.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

The secondary evidence was organised into five analytical dimensions. Since the reviewed studies differ in location, sample and method, direct statistical comparison is not appropriate; findings are presented through thematic analysis.

Dimension	Indicators
Women's entrepreneurship	Self-employment, ownership, decision-making and business management
Financial empowerment	Income, household contribution, savings and independence
Commercial viability	Passenger demand, fares, maintenance and operating costs
Passenger safety	Trust, comfort, verification and emergency support
Institutional support	Training, finance, permits, insurance, parking and grievance mechanisms

5.1 Women's Entrepreneurship

Women auto drivers invest time and resources, provide transport services, manage revenue, bear risk and interact with customers. Pink Autos can therefore be understood as informal women-led micro-enterprises requiring financial literacy, business planning and institutional credit.

5.2 Financial Empowerment

The main economic benefit is the possibility of independent income. Earnings may support household expenses, education, healthcare and loan repayment. However, gross revenue is not profit; fuel, maintenance, insurance, permits and instalments must be deducted. No numerical income claim is made because actual Raipur field data were not available.

5.3 Commercial Viability

Commercial viability depends on passenger demand, fares, distance, operating expenditure, vehicle ownership, loan repayment and competition. Training and vehicle access should be accompanied by route planning, demand assessment, maintenance support and marketing.

5.4 Passenger Safety and Service Quality

Pink Autos may enhance women passengers' confidence, but safety also requires driver verification, vehicle identification, GPS tracking, emergency helplines, illuminated stands, inspection and complaint facilities. Safety, punctuality, fair fares and professional behaviour determine repeat demand.

5.5 Institutional Barriers

Barriers include permits, parking, finance, restrooms, insurance, harassment and grievance systems. Prasad (2025) particularly emphasised institutional barriers affecting Pink women auto drivers. Empowerment should include the ability to operate safely, earn regularly and access public facilities.

5.6 Relevance to Raipur Division

Raipur city may require a model linked with colleges, hospitals, offices, markets, railway stations and bus terminals. Smaller towns may benefit from fixed-route or shared-auto services. District-wise demand assessment and a database of women drivers should precede expansion.

5.7 SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Creates women's employment	Irregular passenger demand
Promotes financial independence	High operating costs
Supports safer mobility	Limited formal finance
Challenges stereotypes	Lack of organised stands
Low formal qualification requirement	Limited social security
Opportunities	Threats
Expansion near colleges and hospitals	Competition from other services
Digital booking and payments	Unsafe working conditions
Self-help group ownership	Vehicle breakdown and income loss
Government entrepreneurship schemes	Social resistance
Cooperative business models	Rising costs

6. Findings of the Study

- Pink Autos provide women entry into a non-traditional commercial occupation.
- The occupation can contribute to income generation, financial independence and social confidence.
- Finance, training, licensing, maintenance and safety support are essential.
- Commercial viability depends on passenger demand and control of operating expenses.
- Organised stands, route planning and digital booking can improve reliability.
- Women's participation requires policy and infrastructure support, not only individual motivation.

- Raipur Division provides a relevant context for a district-wise women-led transport model.
- A primary survey is required to measure actual income, profitability and passenger perception.

7. Suggestions

- Provide low-interest loans and flexible repayment options.
- Simplify licensing, permit, insurance and registration procedures.
- Offer training in driving, maintenance, first aid, self-defence and digital payments.
- Create dedicated stands near colleges, hospitals, markets and transit points.
- Develop GPS-based verification and emergency support.
- Encourage self-help groups and cooperatives to own and manage vehicles.
- Provide maintenance subsidies or insurance support to weaker households.
- Maintain a district-wise database and conduct periodic evaluation.

8. Conclusion

Pink Auto-rickshaws have potential to promote women's entrepreneurship, financial independence and gender-inclusive mobility. Studies from New Delhi, Kerala, Ranchi, Jaipur and Thane indicate that women's participation in transport can generate income, improve confidence and challenge occupational stereotypes. [web:73][web:76][web:80][web:92] However, success depends on more than providing vehicles. Affordable finance, training, passenger demand, route access, safety facilities, insurance, maintenance support and monitoring are required. For Raipur Division, a district-wise and demand-based model is recommended. As this is a secondary study, future researchers should conduct a primary survey to measure actual income, expenses, profitability and passenger satisfaction.

9. Limitations of the Study

- The study does not contain primary field data from Raipur Division.
- The reviewed studies differ in location, sample and methodology.
- Findings from other cities cannot be directly generalised to Raipur Division.
- Actual profitability and passenger demand require a field survey.
- Some local initiatives may not have publicly available performance data.

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