

The Role of Digital Platforms in Women Empowerment through micro-Entrepreneurship in Rajasthan

Priyanshu¹, Dr. Tulja Bhavani², Dr. Manoj Kumar Vanara³

¹Research Scholar, Centre for studies in Social Management, Central University of Gujarat

²Associate Professor, Centre for studies in Social Management Central University of Gujarat

³Associate professor Centre for studies in Science, Technology & Innovation Policy,
Central University of Gujarat

Abstract

Digital platforms have created new opportunities for women micro-entrepreneurs by improving access to customers and expanding business operations. This study examines the role of digital platforms in promoting business growth and women empowerment among women micro-entrepreneurs in Jaipur division of Rajasthan. A descriptive research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 100 respondents using structured questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, while the collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency and percentage. The analysis indicates that digital platforms have positively influenced business performance while supporting women's economic and social empowerment. Although respondents reported certain technological and operational challenges, the overall contribution of digital platforms was found to be beneficial. The study emphasizes the growing importance of digital entrepreneurship in strengthening women-owned micro-enterprise.

Keywords: Digital platforms, Women empowerment, Micro entrepreneurship, E- Commerce.

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed the entrepreneurial landscape by creating new opportunities for inclusive and sustainable economic development. In India, digital platforms have enabled individuals and small businesses to access wider markets, improve customer engagement, and conduct business operations more efficiently. For women entrepreneurs, particularly those operating micro-enterprises, digital technologies have emerged as valuable tools for overcoming traditional barriers related to mobility, market access, and financial resources.

In Rajasthan, where socio-cultural norms and limited employment opportunities have historically constrained women's economic participation, digital platforms have created new possibilities for entrepreneurship. Women-owned micro-enterprises are increasingly utilizing e-commerce marketplaces, social media applications, and digital payment systems to promote products, communicate with customers, and expand their businesses beyond local markets. The flexibility offered by these digital tools has encouraged many women to establish and manage enterprises while balancing household responsibilities.

Digital platforms such as **Amazon, Flipkart, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business** have significantly enhanced the visibility and accessibility of women-owned businesses. In addition, digital payment systems have simplified financial transactions, increased transparency, and strengthened financial inclusion. Government initiatives promoting Digital India, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship have further encouraged women to adopt digital technologies for business development.

Despite these opportunities, several challenges continue to affect the effective use of digital platforms. Limited digital literacy, inadequate internet connectivity, and socio-cultural barriers restrict the ability of many women entrepreneurs to fully benefit from digital technologies. These constraints highlight the need to examine both the opportunities and challenges associated with digital entrepreneurship among womenⁱ.

Against this background, the present study investigates the role of digital platforms in promoting business growth and women empowerment among women micro-entrepreneurs in the Jaipur division of Rajasthan. The study also examines the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs while adopting digital platforms for business activities and provides insights for strengthening digital entrepreneurship and inclusive economic development.

Review of Literature

Sharma and Singh (2023) examined the role of digital platforms in the growth of women-owned enterprises. The study found that the adoption of digital technologies enhanced customer reach, sales performance, and business visibility. Digital platforms also supported market expansion and improved overall business efficiency. The authors concluded that digital tools have become an important resource for strengthening the sustainability and competitiveness of women-led businessesⁱⁱ.

Som Chand and Rohan Sharma (2023) examined the digital technologies have expanded women's access to markets, information, and entrepreneurial opportunities, thereby enhancing business performance and financial independence. However, challenges such as limited digital skills, inadequate infrastructure, and the digital gender divide continue to affect women's entrepreneurial growth. Technology-driven entrepreneurship can significantly contribute to women's socio-economic empowerment and inclusive economic developmentⁱⁱⁱ.

Sharma (2020) examined the role of technology in promoting women entrepreneurship in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan. The study found that digital tools, e-commerce platforms, and online payment systems enabled women entrepreneurs to improve business operations, marketing, and customer communication. However, inadequate digital skills, poor internet connectivity, and limited awareness were identified as major barriers to technology adoption. The study concluded that strengthening digital literacy and technological support can significantly enhance the growth and sustainability of women-owned enterprises^{iv}.

Jalan and Gupta (2019) examined the role of enabling technologies in promoting women entrepreneurship in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan. The study found that digital tools, e-commerce platforms, and online payment systems improved business operations, customer communication, and market outreach for women entrepreneurs. It also identified inadequate digital skills, poor internet connectivity, and limited technological awareness as key challenges affecting technology adoption. The authors concluded that enhancing digital literacy and expanding technological support can strengthen women-owned enterprises and contribute to sustainable entrepreneurial growth^v.

Thapliyal (2025) examined the increasing participation of women in entrepreneurship in India and identified education, digital technology, government support, and financial inclusion as major drivers of this growth. The study highlighted that women entrepreneurs are making significant contributions across various sectors despite facing challenges such as limited access to finance, gender bias, and socio-cultural barriers. It concluded that strengthening policy implementation, digital literacy, and institutional support is essential for promoting sustainable women entrepreneurship and inclusive economic development^{vi}.

Objectives of the study

1. to identify the digital platforms used by women micro-entrepreneurs.
2. to examine the role of digital platforms in the growth of women-led micro-enterprise.
3. to assess the contribution of digital platforms towards women empowerment.
4. to identify the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs while using digital platforms.

Methodology

Universe of the study

This study examines the role of digital platforms in promoting women empowerment through micro-entrepreneurship in the Jaipur division of Rajasthan. The target population include women micro-entrepreneurs who use digital platforms, social media and e-commerce platforms, to sale their product and services. To fulfil the objectives of the study two districts, namely Jaipur and Sikar have been chosen for the sampling process.

Selection of respondents

The study focuses on women micro-entrepreneurs engaged in various business activities and utilizing digital platforms marketing, promotion, or selling their products and services. The respondents include women entrepreneurs operating business such as handicrafts, boutiques, home-based food products, tailoring, beauty and wellness services, jewellery reselling and other micro enterprises through digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp business, Meesho, Amazon, and Flipkart.

A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select respondents who met the study criteria. For the purpose of data collection, 100 women micro-entrepreneurs were selected from the Jaipur and Sikar districts of Rajasthan. The collected data were used to examine the role of digital platforms in the growth of micro-enterprises, their contribution to women's empowerment, and the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in using platforms for business activities.

Tools and Analysis

Primary data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to collect data from women micro-entrepreneurs. The questionnaire comprised questions related to respondents' demographic profile the digital platforms used for business activities, the role of digital platforms in business growth, their contribution to women's empowerment, and the challenges encountered while using these platforms.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select 100 women micro-entrepreneurs from the Jaipur and Sikar districts of Rajasthan. The responses obtained through the questionnaire were systematically compiled, coded and analysed to achieve the objectives of the study.

Results and Discussions

Reliability analysis

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The instrument included 12 items measuring business growth, women empowerment, and challenges associated with digital platforms. The obtained Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ($\alpha=0.84$) indicated good reliability. Since the reliability coefficient exceeded the recommended value of 0.70, the questionnaire was considered appropriate for further statistical analysis.

Sr. No.	Particulars	Value
1.	Number of Items	12
2	Sum of Item Variance	11.2509
3	Total Variance	48.6986
4	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	0.84

Source- compiled by researcher based on primary data.

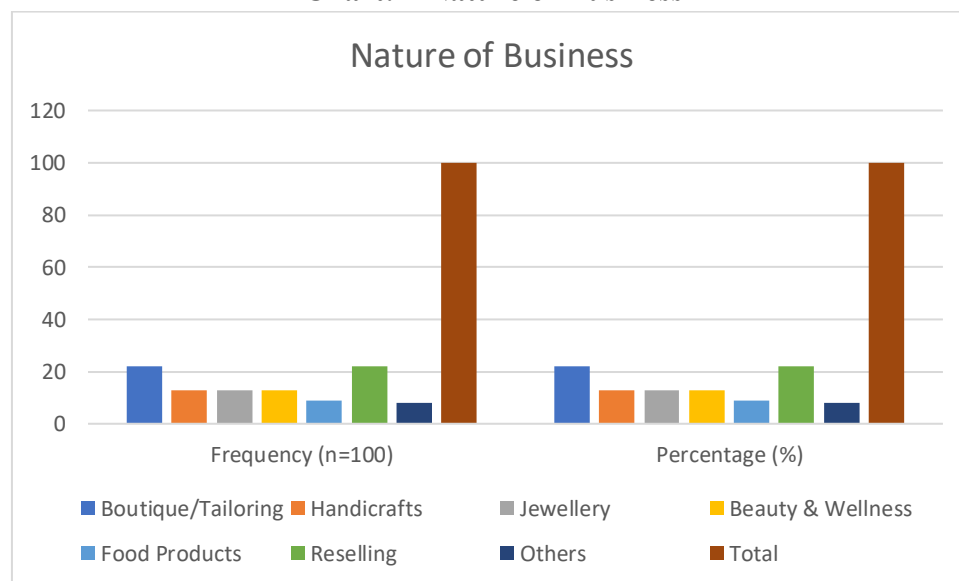
Table 1: Demographic profile of respondent n (100)

Sr. No.	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	District	Sikar	47	47
		Jaipur	53	53
2.	Age (years)	Below 25	15	15
		25-35	45	45
		36-45	30	30
		Above 45	10	10
3.	Educational Qualification	Up to secondary	5	5
		Higher secondary	16	16
		Graduate	23	23
		Post graduate and above	38	38
5.	Marital status	Single	16	16
		Married	71	71
		Divorced	7	7
		widowed	6	6
6.	Business experience	Less than 1 year	16	16
		1-3 years	43	43
		4-6 years	28	28
		More than 6 years	13	13

Source – compiled by the researcher based on primary survey data.

Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of the women micro-entrepreneurs who participated in the study. The sample was nearly evenly split between Jaipur (53%) and Sikar (47%) districts. Most participants belonged to the 25-35 years age group, indicating that women in their economically productive years were more actively engaged in entrepreneurial activities. The educational profile shows that a considerable proportion of respondents possessed higher educational qualifications, while the majority were married and had one to three years of business experience. These characteristics suggest that the sample primarily consisted of educated women entrepreneurs with initial entrepreneurial experience and active involvement in micro-enterprises.

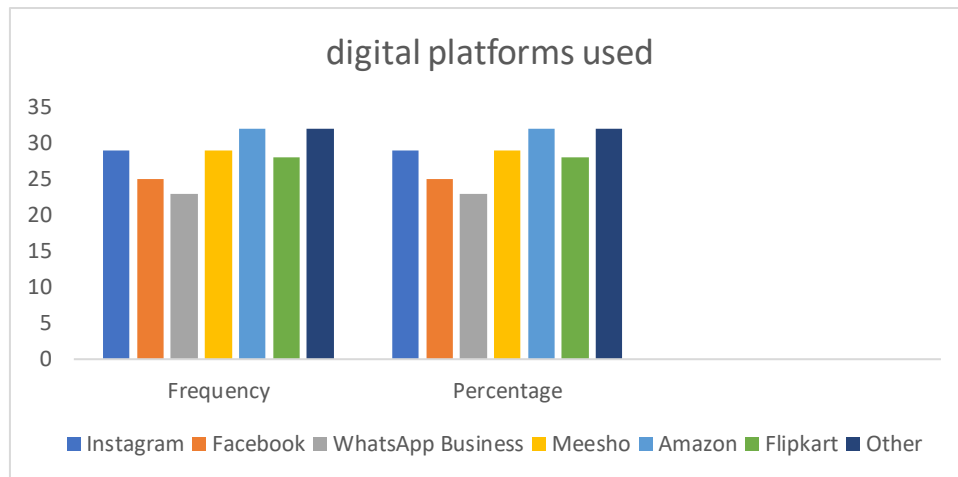
Chart: 1 Nature of Business



Source-prepared by the researcher based on primary data.

Chart 1 show how respondents are distributed by the type of business they run. Boutique and reselling emerge as the leading business types, followed by Handicrafts, jewellery, and beauty & wellness. Comparatively fewer respondents were engaged in food products and other business activities. The distribution reflects the diversity of women-owned micro-enterprises and indicates that retail and service-oriented businesses constitute the dominant entrepreneurial sectors among the respondents.

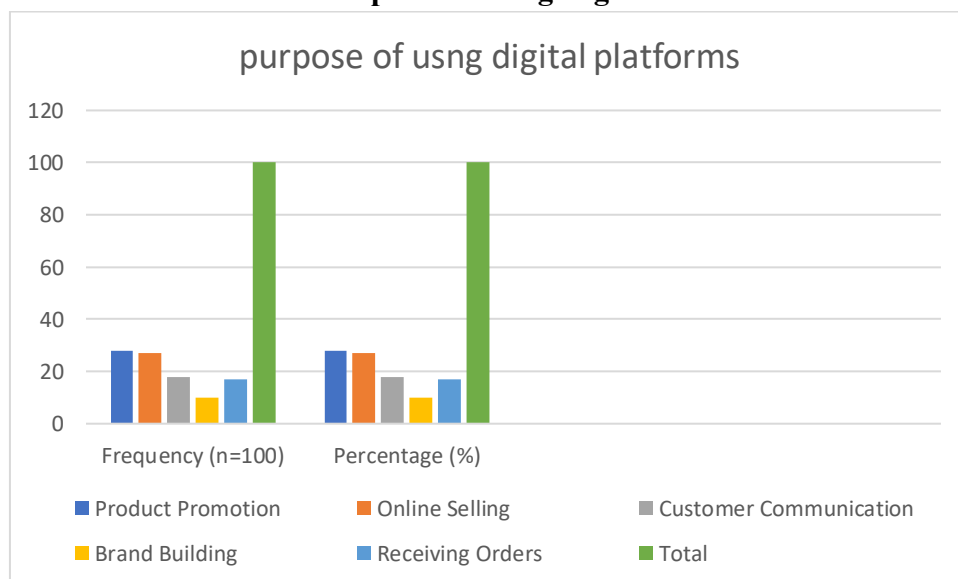
Chart 2: Digital Platforms Use



Source –prepared by the researcher based on primary data.

Chart 2 presents the digital platforms utilized by women micro-entrepreneurs to manage and expand their businesses. The results show greater usage of Amazon, Instagram, Meesho, and Flipkart, while Facebook and WhatsApp Business were used by comparatively fewer respondents. The pattern of platforms adoption suggests that women entrepreneurs combine social media applications with online marketplaces to promote products, interact with customers, and expand market opportunities through digital channels.

Chart: 3 Purpose of Using Digital Platform



Source- prepared by the researcher based on primary data.

Chart 3 describes the primary purpose for which women micro-entrepreneurs use digital platforms in their business activities. The findings indicate that product promotion and online selling were the leading reasons for adopting digital platforms, followed by customer communication and receiving customer orders. Comparatively fewer respondents reported using digital platforms primarily for brand building. These findings demonstrate that women entrepreneurs mainly utilize digital technologies to strengthen marketing and sales activities rather than focusing on long-term branding strategies.

Table: 2 The Role of Digital Platforms in Business Growth (100)

Sr. no.	Business Growth Statements	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)
1	Customer reach has increased	1(1.0)	3(3.0)	27(27.0)	38 (38.0)	31 (31.0)
2	Sales have increased	0 (0.0)	6 (6.0)	22 (22.0)	39 (39.0)	33 (33.0)
3	Business visibility has improved	1 (1.0)	7 (7.0)	17 (17.0)	44 (44.0)	31 (31.0)
4	Business profitability has increased	0 (0.0)	3 (3.0)	31 (31.0)	36 (36.0)	30 (30.0)

Source-compiled by the researcher based on primary data.

Table 2 shows that digital platforms have positively influenced the business performance of women micro-entrepreneurs. Most respondents reported improvements in customer reach, sales, business visibility, and profitability after adopting digital platforms. The highest level of positive responses was recorded for business visibility (75%), followed by sales (72%), customer reach (69%), and profitability (66%). These results demonstrate that digital platforms have become an effective means of expanding market reach and improving the overall performance of women-owned micro-enterprises.

Table: 3 Impacts of Digital Platforms on Women Empowerment (100)

Sr. No.	Women empowerment statements	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)
1.	Digital platforms have increased my financial independence	1 (1.0)	8 (8.0)	27 (27.0)	40 (40.0)	24 (24.0)
2.	Digital platforms have improved my confidence	2 (2.0)	9 (9.0)	19 (19.0)	38 (38.0)	32 (32.0)
3.	Digital platforms have enhanced my decision-making ability	0 (0.0)	13 (13.0)	24 (24.0)	34 (34.0)	29 (29.0)
4.	Digital platforms have improved my social recognition	2 (2.0)	16 (16.0)	22 (22.0)	30 (30.0)	30 (30.0)

Source- compiled by the researcher based on primary data.

Table 3 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of digital platforms on women empowerment. The responses reveal that digital platforms have strengthen financial independence, enhanced confidence, improved decision-making ability, and increased social recognition. Among these dimensions, improvement in confidence (70%) received the highest positive response, followed by financial independence (64%), decision-making ability (63%), and social recognition (60%). The

findings demonstrate that digital entrepreneurship contributes not only to business development but also to the economic and social empowerment of women.

Table 4: Challenges faced by Women Micro-Entrepreneurs in Using Digital Platforms n (100)

Sr. No.	Challenges statements	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)
1.	Lack of digital skills is a challenge.	8(8.0)	27(27.0)	32(32.0)	24(24.0)	9(9.0)
2.	Internet connectivity affects my business operations.	5(5.0)	26(26.0)	46(46.0)	19(19.0)	4(4.0)
3.	Competition on digital platforms is a challenge.	8(8.0)	23(23.0)	39(39.0)	23(23.0)	7(7.0)
4.	Delivery and payment-related issues affect my business	5	26	46	20	3(3.0)

Source-compiled by the researcher based on the primary data.

Table 4 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding the challenges encountered while using digital platforms for business activities. The findings indicate that respondents reported moderate levels of challenges in adopting and using digital platforms. A considerable proportion of respondents selected the neutral category for digital skills, internet connectivity, competition, and payment related issues, reflecting varied experiences among entrepreneurs. Although some respondents acknowledged these factors as barriers, the overall response pattern suggests that such challenges have not significantly restricted the adoption and use of digital platforms for business activities.

Conclusion

The study concludes that digital platforms have emerged as an important catalyst for the growth of women-owned micro-enterprises. The findings indicate that the adoption of digital technologies has enhanced customer reach, business visibility, sales performance, and overall profitability. In addition to supporting business growth, digital platforms have strengthened women's financial independence, confidence, decision-making ability, and social recognition. Although respondents reported challenges such as limited digital skills, internet connectivity, and operational issues these barriers were not perceived as major obstacles to digital adoption. The study highlights that digital platforms play a significant role in promoting sustainable business growth and socio-economic empowerment among women micro-entrepreneurs.

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