

Women in Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship

Jyoti Prasad^{1*} | Gourav Mahor²

¹Assistant Professor, Maitreyi College, University of Delhi, India.

²Assistant Professor, Desh Bandhu College, University of Delhi, India.

*Corresponding Author: jyoti25prasad1993@gmail.com

*Citation: Prasad, J. & Mahor, G. (2026). Women in Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship. International Journal of Education, Modern Management, Applied Science & Social Science, 08(02(I)), 157–162.
[https://doi.org/10.62823/IJEMMASSS/8.2\(I\).9072](https://doi.org/10.62823/IJEMMASSS/8.2(I).9072)*

ABSTRACT

The digital economy presents emerging opportunities for entrepreneurial sector growth alongside greater financial inclusion and innovation. Digital platforms and the associated lowering of barriers and enhanced market reach for women stands to benefit women entrepreneurs. Still, women entrepreneurs may face other challenges like less funding access, low digital skills, and gender norms that limit entrepreneurial activity. This research will look into women in the digital economy to find major challenges and analyze current women entrepreneurship policies and programs. The study will use the mixed methods approach with women entrepreneurship success stories as cases to collect evidence-based recommendations for gender-responsive digital entrepreneurship. It will analyze women's engagement in digital entrepreneurship in the context of the Empowered India vision and the economy's digital growth. The results will pave the way for business leaders and policy and education reform to enable women's engagement in the digital economy through sustainable entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Digital Economy, Entrepreneurship, Women Entrepreneurs, Digital Growth, Business Leaders.

Introduction

The emergence of the digital economy has brought about a new global business environment. Such an environment provides women entrepreneurs with numerous opportunities including innovation, expansion into new markets, and involvement in economic growth. Despite all these opportunities, women continue to experience many difficulties in terms of using the advantages offered by the digital economy. Women encounter various obstacles that hinder their access to finances, technology, social norms, and other aspects that prevent their full involvement and success in digital business. Thus, the involvement of women in the digital economy and entrepreneurship has become one of the hotly debated topics of research. Thanks to the digital environment, women entrepreneurs managed to reach their customers all over the world, reduce their operating expenses, and implement innovative financial technologies (Kabeer, 2019; OECD, 2022). However, existing studies show that there are many inequalities between men and women that are often caused by lack of access to digital resources, difficulties in obtaining financing, and many other reasons (World Bank, 2021; UN Women, 2023). Although various attempts have been made in the provision of digital training to women as well as providing financial services, more has yet to be done to provide a level playing field for women in the digital economy (McKinsey Global Institute, 2021; GSMA, 2022). Despite all these challenges, however, the last couple of years have been very favorable for women entrepreneurs, in that various openings have presented themselves. Through e-commerce, social media marketing and financial services, women have been able to operate in a space where they can reach a wider customer base without being

constrained by the normal limits of business. Online platforms such as Amazon, Etsy, and Shopify allow women to set up and maintain their businesses beyond geographical borders and into greater economic independence.

Furthermore, digital learning and mentorship projects have actually helped women with the requisite skills to achieve the success of their careers in the growing digital economy.

Governments, corporations and non-governmental organisations around the world have acknowledged the importance of integrating women into the digital economy and have launched a number of initiatives to support women's entrepreneurial work. Financial inclusion, digital education and policies for a gender-sensitive business environment have helped to narrow the gender gap in entrepreneurship. However, achieving the much-desired equality in digital entrepreneurship will need continued efforts in policy promulgation, investment in women-centric digital infrastructure and cultural change that encourages women to take active roles in business leadership. The present study attempts to analyze the participation of women in the digital economy in the context of a changing scenario, the major hurdles they may face and the extent to which existing policies and initiatives have progressed. In addition, it will identify successful. Furthermore, it will identify successful case studies of women entrepreneurs making use of digital platforms to create thriving enterprises. Other than contributing towards recognizing the issue of gender inequality prevalent in the existing sphere of entrepreneurship, the research will also provide tangible recommendations towards further bridging the gender gap in digital entrepreneurship. Furthermore, it is a step forward with respect to the Self-Reliant India vision of growth through digital transformation and entrepreneurship. Active participation by women in the digital economy is instrumental in India's aspiration to become a developed nation through innovation, financial inclusion, and gender equality in digital businesses.

Literature Review

This literature review brings out the contribution of women in the digital economy, mainly entrepreneurial activities, with an evaluation of the major issues, opportunities, and progress in this aspect. This is achieved through in-depth research and analysis of reports and cases from valid sources such as journals, international organizations, and governments' publications. The review summarizes the outcomes of earlier studies on the topic to identify gaps and problems related to digital entrepreneurship with gender perspectives, with emphasis on the impact of technology on women's empowerment and the effectiveness of programs that support women entrepreneurs. The outcome of this literature review will be a platform for analyzing the present situation and future interventions towards achieving gender inclusiveness in the digital economy.

- **The Digital Economy and Gender Differences**

Women are greatly afflicted by the wide gender gap in digital entrepreneurship as their access to technology, financial resources, and digital literacy is very limited (Kabeer, 2019; McKinsey Global Institute, 2020). Research shows that women-owned businesses are less likely to get venture capital compared to male-owned firms, which, in turn, leads to slower growth (Brush et al., 2018; OECD, 2022).

Social and cultural norms most often discourage women from venturing into the field of digital entrepreneurship: this further limits their representation in technology-oriented businesses (Bardasi et al., 2020; World Bank, 2021). Also, there are the major challenges of digital skills and capacities for women entrepreneurs that hamper their business scaling up in the digital economy (UN Women, 2023; European Commission, 2021). To narrow this gender gap, gender is now being taken into consideration by government and private-sector initiatives in introducing digital financial inclusion programs and women-based entrepreneurial support schemes (World Economic Forum, 2022; GSMA, 2020). The COVID-19 era has hastened digital transformation, with both opportunities and challenges for women entrepreneurs to adjust to virtual business models (ILO, 2021; McKinsey & Company, 2021). Despite all this, much remains to be done for gender equality in digital entrepreneurship and, thus, full potential for women to thrive in the digital economy.

- **Women's Entrepreneurship in the Digital Era**

The startups represent an integral part of Zimbabwe's economic and social development, with women's entrepreneurial businesses crucially reliant on digital innovation: e-commerce, social media marketing, and fintech (Heeks & Arun, 2019; OECD, 2022). Startups led by women, using digital technologies, claim higher scalability and lower running costs enabled businesses to go global (Liu et al., 2020; UNCTAD, 2021). Online financial services through digital banking and microfinance enabled a far

wider access to funding capital for women entrepreneurs for better management of their businesses (Demirguc-Kunt et al., 2021; GSMA, 2021). Women entrepreneurs employ digital in their business so that they possess the flexibility to cater for work-life balance, which thereby gives them higher participation in economic activities (Kelley et al., 2020; Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2022). In spite of the benefits of digital entrepreneurship, women are facing several hurdles that include technology investment bias against them, cybersecurity concerns, and insufficient mentorship opportunities (Bertschek et al., 2021; European Investment Bank, 2022).

Governmental and corporate initiatives supporting digital skilling for women drive gender parity in the digital economy, but further actions are required to strengthen women's positions in the digital leadership renaissance (UN Women, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2023)

- **Technological Advancements and Women's Empowerment**

The rise of AI, blockchain, and big data has brought new economic opportunities for women entrepreneurs, especially in the tech and finance fields (Smith & Zook, 2021; OECD, 2023). Digital literacy programs have thus been pivotal for women to use tech for business progression and for economic gain (UNESCO, 2022; European Commission, 2023). Research highlighted that mobile banking and fintech innovations contribute significantly to the financial inclusion of women in developing countries, as efforts to promote economic participation reduce gender disparities (Demirguc-Kunt et al., 2021; GSMA, 2022). STEM initiatives toward women and mentorship programs have each contributed to breaking barriers for women in tech and complicated industries (Malhotra & Patel, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2022). Studies drew attention to the notion that gender-responsive policies in digital innovation could permit relative democratisation of access to resources and opportunities for long-term empowerment (Bertschek & Niebel, 2021; UN Women, 2023). Also, other government policies supporting women's entry into technological involvement, such as digital entrepreneurship grants and subsidies, are helping plug the gender gap in the sphere of digital rights (McKinsey Global Institute, 2021; World Bank, 2023).

- **Case Studies of Successful Women-Led Digital Businesses**

- **Nykaa (India):** Nykaa was established in India as a platform started by Falguni Nayar to use digital thereby improving e-commerce in beauty and wellness across India, with a focus on women entrepreneurship
- **Canva (Australia):** Co-founded by Melanie Perkins. Canva is a global platform in graphic designing that has benefited small businesses, some of them headed by women, by easing the design process.
- **She Leads Africa (Africa):** A digital platform regarding mentorship, funding, and networking opportunities for women entrepreneurs in Africa to help reduce the gender gap in entrepreneurship.
- **Riviter (USA):** A solution co-founded by Ewa Levenson using AI-powered image recognition in the analysis of the market, which explains contributions made by the women-led innovation in the digital economy, in the USA.

Women have generally been largely relinquished of entrepreneurial opportunities in discussions on the digital economy; however, some scholars have paid attention on digital entrepreneurship. Most studies related to women entrepreneurship have centred on traditional domains and provided limited concern regarding the digital spheres. Correspondingly, while research has offered perceptions of problems, it has not supplied corporeal data-related solutions for ameliorating the gender disparity in digital entrepreneurship. This research aims to fill these gaps by:

Exploring industry-specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the digital economy.
Analysing the role of government policies and corporate initiatives in fostering gender inclusivity in digital businesses.
Providing real-world case studies and strategic recommendations based on empirical evidence.
Investigating the impact of emerging digital tools, such as AI and blockchain, on women-led businesses.
Assessing how digital entrepreneurship by women aligns with India's Self-Reliant India vision.

Research Objectives

To study women's participation in the digital economy and highlight some of the important issues that the women face in digital markets.

- Study the effects of digital tools and platforms on women entrepreneurs.
- Study the government and private initiatives for women in digital space.
- Study the main challenges that women face in digital markets.
- Study the effects of gender biases in digital investment and funding.
- Study the influence of cultural and societal factors on women's participation.
- Study the effects of financial inclusion through digital means for women entrepreneurs.
- Study the effects of digital skills training on success of women entrepreneurs.
- Study the effects of mentorship and networking programs for women's empowerment.
- Suggest some strategies for women's digital entrepreneurship.
- Study some policy interventions for achieving gender equity in the digital economy.
- Study the contribution of women's digital entrepreneurship to India's vision 2047.

Scope of the Study

This research paper tries to examine those women who are part of the digital economy in various areas like e-commerce, fintech, digital marketing, and AI-based startups. In this research, there will be various geographical areas to analyze cultural, economic, and policy issues that affect women's digital entrepreneurship.

The findings of this research will help policymakers, business leaders, and academics to make sure that there is a digitally inclusive economy.

One more topic that will be examined in this research is how women's digital entrepreneurship contributes to the goal of India to become a self-reliant country.

Besides that, it gives a little insight into how women are becoming entrepreneurs in the digital age and what are the active heights of this phenomenon in the real world.

Research Methodology

The research is justifying its objective by making use of a qualitative approach in studying the involvement of women in the digital economy and entrepreneurship. The research will make use of secondary sources of information in form of journals, government papers, industry papers and case studies in order to study trends, challenges, and opportunities available to women entrepreneurs in the digital space.

Findings

- **Digital Skills Training:** Enabling women to acquire digital skills in coding, digital marketing, and e-commerce.
- **Development Funding and Knowledge Partnerships:** Giving women entrepreneurs access to development funding and partnerships such as incubation and acceleration centers.
- **Policies:** Making policies which can enhance women participation in the digital economy by enabling access to digital technologies.
- **Awareness and Colloquialism:** Raise the consciousness and sensitize the parties, such as the policymakers, the business class, and civil society organizations, on the need for promoting women's engagement in the digital.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Add more career networks and sector-wise communities for women entrepreneurs to meet for various collaborations.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Be sure that rural and semi-urban women have access to digital connections in infrastructure, including high-speed Internet and cheap technology.
- **Where Progress Is Made:** Support STEM education and careers for girls to ensure a pipeline of women entrepreneurs working in the digital space.

- **Tax Incentives and Financial Support:** The public sector should give tax incentives and availability of low-interest loans to startups led by women in the digital sector.
- **Corporate Partnerships:** A proper partnership between private companies and the public authority must be encouraged to develop funding opportunities and business protocols for female entrepreneurs.

Discussion

Women in earlier times had a hard entry into the entrepreneurial world due to a lack of financial independence, observance of societal norms, and limited access to resources. Old-fashioned business ventures and ventures needed enormous capital investment, physical presence, and networking, thus making it harder for women to get involved in such ventures. Women used to have no option but to start small home-based businesses that had little scope for development.

However, today, digital technology has made a significant difference in the situation. With the advent of digital market places, online financial services, and social media marketing, women have been able to find more avenues to create and develop their businesses.

In today’s world, women have been able to run their businesses from their homes, access global markets, and make payments through the digital system, with little to invest in the process.

Also, the government has been better positioned in terms of its policies in today’s age. In older times, there were very few specific policies concerning women entrepreneurs, but today there are numerous initiatives introduced in the form of financial assistance, digital training, and mentorship. Organisations such as UN Women, the World Bank, and national governments have run programs to enhance digital literacy and finance women-owned businesses.

To illustrate the growth of women’s participation in the digital economy, the following table presents a comparison between past and present trends:

Aspect	Past Scenario (Before 2010)	Present Scenario (2020-Present)
Access to Digital Tools	Limited, expensive	Widely available, affordable
Market Reach	Local, small-scale	Global, large-scale
Financial Inclusion	Difficult to access funding	Digital banking, microfinance
Training & Education	Minimal, lack of resources	Online courses, mentorship programs
Government Policies	Few initiatives	Numerous support schemes
Social Perception	Restrictive norms	Increasing acceptance

However, there are still hindrances that remain. Barriers for women to engage in digital entrepreneurship may include illiteracy in technology, the issue of funding, and gender discrimination in the corporate environment. Although there have been options created for all women through digital transformation, not all will have the chance to take advantage of these possibilities because of the presence of different infrastructural, economic, and social barriers in different parts of the world.

Indeed, this indicates the importance of making more efforts to overcome the gender inequality in the area of digital entrepreneurship. By analyzing the past and present scenarios, it has become evident that although efforts are being made, it is only through more systematic policies and programs that equality in terms of opportunities can be provided to women in the field of digital entrepreneurship around the globe.

Conclusion

Thus, the inclusion of women in the policies related to the digital economy goes beyond merely ensuring gender inclusiveness – it is authoritative from the standpoint of sustaining economic development and encouraging innovation. The current research has identified several barriers preventing women from engaging in digital entrepreneurship: financial problems, socio-cultural norms and low digital literacy. By considering those barriers along with the opportunities provided by the digital platform, it is evident that specific interventions are required.

The research objective includes the analysis of the involvement of women in the digital marketplace, the identification of challenges and the development of recommendations for policymakers. As a result, the findings have indicated that programs aimed at fostering digital skills and providing the necessary funding are needed to enable women entrepreneurs. Thus, minimizing the gender gap in the digital economy will become crucial for fostering the entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Moreover, the presented study is relevant for making India Self-Reliant as the empowerment of women through digital entrepreneurship corresponds to the Indian long-term economic vision. Through the provision of recommendations and the discussion of the positive experience of particular case studies, the current research has offered an integrated framework which will help in building an equal and sustainable digital economy for women.

References

1. Salamzadeh, A., Dana, L. P., Ghaffari Feyzabadi, J., Hadizadeh, M., & Eslahi Fatmesari, H. (2024). Digital technology as a disentangling force for women entrepreneurs. *World*, 5(2), 346-364.
2. Kamberidou, I. (2020). "Distinguished" women entrepreneurs in the digital economy and the multitasking whirlpool. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 9(1), 3.
3. Hull, C. E., Tang, J., Donbesuur, F., & Adomako, S. (2023). Specific innovativeness, digital entrepreneurship, and female entrepreneurs. *Journal of the International Council for Small Business*, 4(4), 387-412.
4. Suseno, Y., & Abbott, L. (2021). Women entrepreneurs' digital social innovation: Linking gender, entrepreneurship, social innovation and information systems. *Information Systems Journal*, 31(5), 717-744.
5. Aayog, N. I. T. I. (2024). Vision for Self-Reliant India@ 2047: An Approach Paper. NITI Aayog.
6. World Bank. (2021). Women and Digital Entrepreneurship. Retrieved from www.worldbank.org
7. Mahadew, B. (2024). Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) Guidance for Development Partners—A Critical Assessment of Its Relevance to Combat Entrenched Gender Bias. In *From Entrenched Gender Bias to Economic Empowerment: Undermining the Patriarchy* (pp. 71-88). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
8. Kabeer, N., & Natali, L. (2013). Gender equality and economic growth: Is there a win-win? *IDS Working Papers*, 2013(417), 1-58.
9. Guan, C., Jiang, Z., & Ding, D. (2020). The Power of Digital Inclusion. In *The Emerging Business Models* (pp. 185-200).

