

E-Commerce: Challenges and Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

Women play significant roles in our society but when it comes to business, traditional businesses in India are male dominated. Moreover, while taking care of home and hearth, fulfilling the dream of owning a business is a challenge for women entrepreneurs. E-commerce, which suits almost all types of businesses is becoming the biggest platform to fulfill their dreams. Information technology is giving women freedom to work from the comfort of their homes. The growth of e-commerce has helped women entrepreneurs to generate new ideas and work by setting their own work schedule. Therefore, to reap the benefits of new technology, it is important to analyze available opportunities and constraints in e-commerce for women entrepreneurs. This paper discusses various challenges faced by women who want to use online platforms to start, grow, and sustain their business. It also describes available opportunities to encourage women to use an online platform for writing their success story.

Keywords: Business, e-commerce, empowerment, women entrepreneurs

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Conservative Indian society expects women to take care of their families before their careers. The dichotomy of managing home and business is the biggest challenge for women entrepreneurs in India. After fulfilling the role of care giver, women are left with very less time for starting, managing, sustaining or expanding business. The internet has emerged as an equalizer in traditionally male-dominated business territory. Existing layer of invisibility in online retailing helps in removing gender bias. It also breaks socio-culture barrier prevalent in our society. Moreover, e-commerce gives women entrepreneurs a chance to generate new ideas, work by setting their own work schedule and freedom to work from the comfort of their home. E-commerce has opened doors of business opportunities for women within four walls.

E-commerce platforms are giving wings to women entrepreneurs. A large number of women are registering for online business. They are opting to sell diverse range of goods and services like home furnishing, jewellery, handicraft, fashion apparel, gem, beauty etc. on multiple online platforms. The most popular category for women sellers in Indian online platform is lifestyle (70%) with the major sub-categories being clothing and footwear (Menezes, 2017). Year on year women online sellers are also increasing in line with online startups by women.

Women Entrepreneurs

A woman who organizes and manages any enterprise is called a woman entrepreneur. According to the government of India, "An enterprise owned and controlled by women having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of the employment generated in the enterprise to women." is women entrepreneurship.

E-Commerce

E-commerce is doing business across telecommunication networks where buyers, seller or other parties involved

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interact electronically. It encompasses an entire range of conducting business. The term e-commerce was coined in the early 1990s when internet was commercialized by using the World Wide Web.

Successful Indian E-Commerce Women Entrepreneurs

Table 1 lists the remarkable e-commerce enterprises lead by women.

Table 1. E-Commerce Enterprises Lead by Women

E-Entrepreneur	Startup
Rashi Menda	Zapyle Fashion marketplace to discover, sell and buy pre-owned fashion attire.
Manisha Raisinghani	LogiNext Solution, logistic solution
Priyanka and Namrata Bostrom	Popxp.com Digital lifestyle magazine for women
Shradha Sharma	Yourstory Online Media Venture
Swati Bhargava with Rohan Bhargava	Cashkaro.com(2012) Coupon and cash back offering company
Fayyar	Nykaa A women centric ecommerce portal for beauty and wellness products
Neeru Sharma	Infibeam Online retailing portal
Arpita Ganesh	Buttercup A lingerie company help women with personalized fitting
Ankita Sheth	Vista Room Assuring quality of hotel rooms
Mamta Chhikara	Bizztor Connecting Indian entrepreneurs, start ups. and SMEs
Upasana Taku	Mobikwik Mobile wallet

Literature Review

Women entrepreneurs engage in business due to push and pull factors. Majority of women entrepreneurs in the Asian region are not drawn to entrepreneurship by “pull” factors, such as the need for a challenge, the urge to try something on their own, to be independent, to show others that they are capable of doing well in business, to be recognized by society (self-esteem), hobby, or to use spare time, but by “push” factors such as poverty, unemployment, the need to have more cash income to support (Tambunan, 2009).

The most important motivating factor to start a business in India was to supplement family income (Rajani & Sarada, 2008). Though women have played a key role in the Indian society, their entrepreneurial ability has not been properly tapped due to the low status of women in society (Sharma, 2013). Pro-gender policies, family responsibilities, and lack of financial and personal support are the top-most challenges for woman entrepreneurs in India (Ansari, 2016; Sharma, 2013). Mental blocks are also common among Indian women. 48% feel that as a married woman with kids, it

is hardest to startup, and 42% feel that at all points of time it is difficult to start a business (Nair, 2015). Therefore, women entrepreneurs need to be highly motivated and self directed (Ansari, 2016). In addition to above, there is a need to enhance skill, knowledge, and adaptability to start a business venture (Sharma, 2013).

Women's entrepreneurship development in Asian developing countries has a tremendous potential in empowering women and transforming society in the region (Tambunan, 2009). Over the past few years, more and more women are pursuing their career in business. Searching a niche and finding a way to fill that gap is found to be one of the key characteristics of women entrepreneurs (Ansari, 2016). Even though the growth rate is exponential, it is still far behind the worldwide growth rate of women entrepreneurs. In India, about 8 million women have started or are running their businesses and only 10% of formal enterprises are being operated by women (Singh, 2018).

In India, government and online platforms have come forward with schemes, facilities, concessions, and incentives exclusively for women entrepreneurs. These will accelerate growth of women entrepreneurship in Indian e-commerce.

Objectives

- ❖ To find out major challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in e-commerce.
- ❖ To identify and describe the opportunities available to the woman who wants to use an online platform for growth and profitability of her business.

Research Methodology

The present paper is qualitative in nature. It is purely based on secondary data collected through published articles, journals, websites, newspapers etc.

Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs in E-Commerce

Entrepreneurial world is still male dominated as in the case of traditional businesses, the number of women in e-commerce is on the lower side. Woman entrepreneurs are taking a plunge to follow their dream to start online enterprises but they face some challenges which are discussed next.

Traditional Challenges

(1) Family Resistance

Women are making a foray in every field but when it comes to entrepreneurship, family resistance makes their journey more difficult. Lack of support from parents, husband, or in-laws is still the biggest constraint in putting ideas into practice. Even women with entrepreneurial skills are not approved by family.

(2) Undesirable Constant Pressure

Women entrepreneurs are constantly under pressure. First, due to the double burden of taking care of family and business, women entrepreneur are exhausted with workload. Sometimes, they are not able to allocate 100% of their time and energy toward business. Second, extra responsibilities for fulfilling the role of mother, wife, and daughter-in-law, and lack of family support sometimes leads to development of feeling of guilt in women for not giving required time to their families. Lastly, women face lot of criticism for failure, work under pressure to succeed which makes them less confident than their male counterparts. Lack of family support and undesirable pressure is the reason for high dropout rates among women entrepreneurs.

(3) Mental Block

As society is not open and supportive of women entrepreneurship, women themselves defer starting a business. Risk-averse tendency is common among women working as entrepreneurs. In a survey, 48% felt that as a married woman with kids, it is hardest to start a business, and 42% felt that at all points of time it is difficult to start business for women (Nair, 2015).

(4) More of Push Than Pull Factor

In society there is no positive attitude towards women entrepreneurship. Maximum number of women are into business for two reasons. First is economic reason like supporting their family, and earning extra money for family. The second is compelling reason because of family hardship like injury or death of husband. Pull factors are more important among educated young women. They are into business to prove themselves and earn profit, but the number of such women entrepreneurs is very less.

(5) Lack of Female Mentors and Role Models

Mentors or role models and are important for inspiration, knowledge, guidance, and confidence building. They are important for both personal and business growth. Women entrepreneurs lack mentors, and role model which skews their representation in the entrepreneur ecosystem. In 2016, out of 1021 funded start-up, only 25 had female-only founders (Sarkar, 2017). Role models to look upto and learn are very important in an entrepreneurial journey, especially during difficult times of decision-making like financial decisions, risk taking etc. women feel alone.

(6) Lack of Resources

Women need financial assistance regularly to start and run business. Lack of funds at the right time is the biggest hurdle in starting or expanding an existing business. Raising funds from the market is a very big challenge for women entrepreneurs mainly because of two reasons. First, they have limited access to capital as most financial institutions doubt their credibility. They don't take them seriously and do not offer them financial assistance. Second, in the Indian society land, property, durable goods etc. are in the name of men. So, women don't have anything in their name to use as collateral to raise loan for starting or running business.

Virtual Startups Challenges

Along with traditional challenges, women wanting to start online business must be ready to face the following virtual startups challenges:

(1) Lack of Awareness About Virtual Startup Life

Virtual startups have some similarity and some difference when compared to brick and mortar businesses. Each business has its own system; likewise online businesses have their own processes.

❖ Coming up with an idea is very tough as e-commerce is full of e-tailers selling almost every product. Moreover, finding unoccupied niche in the market is not an easy task. Standing out among your competition is important to run successful business in the long run.

❖ Along with the business plan, hiring employees, advertising, and promoting online business, one must obtain a domain name, and create a website for which one must be technologically sound.

❖ Shipping can make or break online business in multiple ways. Figuring out right delivery partner is another challenge. Deciding logistic partner depends on the rates of shipping, geographical coverage, cash handling etc. Speed with security is important for better customer service. Along with this, it is important that logistic partner handles the

product with care to reduce damage-in-transit. Therefore, choosing a wrong shipping service provider can turn out to be disastrous.

❖ Packaging decision is also very tricky in online business. It is a trade-off between increasing customer satisfaction and saving cost. Good packaging gives a good first impression. Customer unboxing experience is very important to establish a brand and shows concern towards customer satisfaction. On the other hand, it adds cost to the balance sheet of retailers or sellers. Courier companies charge on the base of size and weight. Therefore, depending on the product line one must decide sizes and quality of packaging material.

❖ Online retailing manages many things in one go. Retailer must reduce costs like inventory storage costs, overhead charges, shipping costs, and control order returns to be competitive. Entrepreneurs who find it harder to manage will fail sooner or later.

❖ E-commerce rules and regulation are totally different from brick and mortar business. Understanding GST issues, privacy and data protection policies, and other e-commerce rules and regulations are important to learn online business.

Therefore, starting even a small online business requires a lot of knowledge and homework. So, in simple words it is very difficult for common women to start online business.

(2) Difficult to Survive in Highly Competitive Environment

Online entrepreneurship has almost no entry barrier, and this makes competition tougher. There is huge competition in almost all the product categories. Moreover, surviving against giants like Amazon, Snapdeal, Flipkart, Make My Trip, etc. is very difficult according to Business Matters magazine, 90% of online businesses fail (Mercer, n.d). Another problem of highly competitive virtual environment is squeezing of profit. In a bid to survive, online retailers are forced to reduce price when competitors sells at marginal profits. High competition and low profitability force business women to quit.

(3) Lack of Technology Expertise

Starting online business requires special skills like setting up website, marketing the business online etc. A woman who lacks such skills needs to employ specialized persons or take services of an internet marketing company. Precautions are to be taken for privacy and security. Investing in a reliable server and continuously upgrading the system is expensive but important. Online business is not a cup of tea for technologically challenged women.

(4) Difficulty in Building Credibility and Developing Relationships

Gaining trust of customers is one of the biggest challenges in starting online business. There are issues like privacy and security, quality of product and services, and buying based on online images and descriptions. The site needs to instill customer confidence by having contact information, privacy and security information, and quality customer service. In addition to gaining trust, developing relationship with customers is also very tough. Online business lacks personal touch as there is no face-to-face interaction. Building credibility and developing relationship with consumers is challenging in a virtual environment.

(5) Tricky Promotion

The real challenge lies in attracting customers. Online business owners can't rely on search engines alone to attract traffic to their online store. Moreover, there is always a danger of wasting marketing budget on people having no real interest in offerings. Crafting a cost-effective and targeted internet media campaign to promote a store is important to attract customers. It involves finding the right combination of different offline-online promotional tools like advertising, press releases, articles, blogs, email blitz, Google ads, Youtube, content marketing, social media etc.

Virtual Selling Challenges

Selling goods online seems to be very rewarding, but to make an impact by selling goods online, women should prepare themselves to face the following challenges:

(1) Choosing the Right Selling Partner

Choosing the right selling partner is a critical decision. Women entrepreneurs need to decide whether to list themselves on one or multiple portals. They need to understand the whole process from getting orders, closing the sale, and finally receiving payment. To avoid any future confusion and conflict they need to know about commission charged, delivery partners, packaging system, payment circle, customer base, geographical reach etc. of each market-space they decide to sell to. Aspiring woman entrepreneurs need to go through seller help guidelines in each marketplace to choose best selling partner(s).

(2) Pricing Adjustments

Pricing is very sensitive and complicated in a transparent competitive online environment. The first important thing is to decide the right selling price by taking into consideration costs like packaging, cataloging charges, handling and shipping, cost of average return etc. along with manufacturing, procurement, and inventory cost to earn profit. Failing to do so makes business unsustainable. Second, to remain competitive, price needs to be adjusted accordingly. Women entrepreneurs sometimes fail to understand the importance of pricing in online environment and do not give importance to it.

(3) Inventory Management

Balancing demand and supply of goods is very important. To avoid falling behind, women entrepreneurs must be aware of the latest trends. Trends keep changing, so regularly updating inventory is important. Adding products frequently is important to set themselves apart from competitors. In addition to this, sellers need to maintain proper inventory levels to avoid delay after receiving orders. Delay in shipping may force buyers to cancel orders. It is also important to forecast accurately so that products are always available. It is terrible for a customer to receive “out of stock” notice for selected products. Moreover, in an online environment, where a large number and variety of products are available on one click, customers move to another product rather than waiting. Special precautions are needed to manage inventory in online selling as mismanaged inventory causes substantial financial loss and also loss of reputation.

(4) High Rate of Returns

The most frustrating thing in online selling is returns. There are both genuine and fake buyers involved in returning products. According to Invesp Infographic online return rates statistics, at least 30% of all products ordered online are returned (Rudolph, 2016). Online goods are returned because of the following reasons:

- ❖ Breakage in transit either due to mishandling by courier partner or poor packaging by seller.
- ❖ Incorrect product or size ordered or shipped.
- ❖ Lack of standardization of products sold by women entrepreneurs.
- ❖ As there is no possibility to check a product before purchasing, sometimes it doesn't match the expectation of the consumer and looks different from photograph and description.
- ❖ COD is the preferred mode of payment in India. In COD, commitment of consumer to buy product is comparatively low. If a buyer changes his mind, he can easily cancel the order any time by sighting reasons like delay in delivery, found better deal, doesn't need product any more etc. (Gupta, 2017).

Whatever the reason of return, double expenses (one to deliver the product and the other to arrange return pick) eat retailer's profit. Charges levied on returns are too high and lead to blockage of working capital.

(5) Peer competition

Rising above the crowd is not an easy thing. Consumers shop from the desired marketplace, for a desired product, rather than from a desired seller. Brand creation in any marketplace is not an easy task. Moreover, just placing products for sale on a website isn't enough to obtain customers. Acquiring customers is a continuous process of implementing various tactics like use of special keywords, complete description of products, use of professional photographer etc. Gaining trust by selling quality and unique products is important to stand apart in the heavily crowded virtual space. In the absence of brand creation and interaction with customers, building repeat buying is very tough. Moreover, as most of the women entrepreneurs do online business as a side business, they do it more traditionally and therefore, lack essential professionalism.

Opportunities in Virtual Environment

Entrepreneurship and business in general have been male dominated for decades, but this has changed over the years. Nowadays, women empowerment has been increasing rapidly all over the world and women are starting their own businesses to seek greater control over their personal and professional lives (Mandipaka, 2014). In addition to the above, e-commerce is offering tremendous opportunities to women who want to start their online business or who want to expand their business by selling online. Today's women have not left any stone unturned and have completely bypassed the traditional culture of entrepreneurship due to the following advantages of the virtual space:

(1) Flexibility

The digital age has brought flexibility in deciding time and place of work. Flexible work schedule helps women entrepreneurs to manage their home and business more efficiently. Meeting personal obligations is much easier when women can work from their home. Women can set up their business from the comfort of their homes and need not spend too many hours away from home. They can work late night and give 100% to their business. Flexibility and being in control of their work schedule is the biggest opportunity e-commerce is giving. Women entrepreneurs are now free to show their full potential in starting, running, and expanding business.

(2) Minimum Setup Cost

As compared to brick and mortar business, investment is very less. E-commerce reduces cost of searching information, long distance travel to meet sellers and buyers. E-commerce doesn't have the overhead associated with operating a brick-and-mortar store like rent, maintenance of ambiance, electricity charges, salary of salesperson, cleaning staff etc. The start-up cost for virtual business includes cost of hiring CA, CS, professional to create a website, taking domain name, building a team, payment gateways, and shipping partners. Total starting costs range from ₹ 1,00,000 to ₹ 5,00,000. Women entrepreneurs selling through in-built platform need not invest in hiring web developer or marketing staff. Moreover, nowadays different e-commerce SaaS platforms have made it easier for anyone without any technical knowledge to open an online store.

(3) Huge Customer Base

Internet has no borders or geographies. Access to millions of new customers is automatic when women choose to become e-commerce entrepreneurs. Moreover, due to automation and data available about customer purchase behavior, they can win frequent and repeat purchases through tactics like cross-sell and up-sell. Reminding customers about their cart, sending discount coupons, reminding them about rate of products in their cart slash down, professional product images, automated emails etc. These tactics alongwith excellent services and fulfillment of promises along with are important in building trust in the new website.

Similarly, few channelized efforts like up-sell, cross-sell, reminder of price slash, adding new and unique products

etc. in pre-built e-commerce platforms can increase their customer base dramatically. Good quality products lead to good customer reviews and improved ranking in selected portals. Use of these tactics along with quality and unique products is important to beat peer competition and to increase customer base.

(4) Improvement in Support System

Exploring entrepreneurial opportunity depends on education, skills or knowledge acquired through formal or informal systems. Day by day support system for budding women entrepreneurs is improving in India. There are endless schemes, facilities, concessions, and incentives exclusively to promote women entrepreneurship like:

- ❖ Startup India Hub launched in 2017 is working on a new initiative to enable startups to apply for government scheme and venture funds directly from the platform (Khan, 2017).
- ❖ Start up India scheme facilitates bank loans of ₹ 10,00,000 to ₹ 1,00,00,000 to women.
- ❖ Support to training and employment programmes for women in India for skill up-gradation.
- ❖ SBI-Bharatiya Mahila bank started to cater to specialized need of women entrepreneurs.
- ❖ Loan schemes launched by various banks like Annapurna scheme, Stree Shakti Package for women entrepreneurs (State bank), Udyogini Scheme(Punjab and Sind Bank), and Mahila Udyam Nidhi Scheme(PNB).

Understanding the increasing importance of e-commerce and power of women entrepreneurs in electronic retailing, government, and various institutions have started acting as catalysts in creating a new generation of women entrepreneurs. They are coming forward to help women entrepreneurs to use online platforms to start/expand their business:

- ❖ March 2010: To encourage women entrepreneurs on international woman day, Ebay celebrated women entrepreneurship with successful women entrepreneurs from across the country.
- ❖ July 2015 : To take advantage of e-commerce growth in the country, online marketplace eBay India launched a campaign titled #SheMeansBusiness (Tewari, 2015).
- ❖ March 2016: Paytm invited select women sellers from across India (Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi/NCR) to interact with their senior management to formulate a long term future roadmap for supporting women entrepreneurs in the country. They invested in encouraging women entrepreneurs who have taken a digital stride through their platform (ANI, 2016b).
- ❖ March 2016: The Central Government of India announced the launch of *Mahila E-Haat*, an online marketing platform to empower women. Women can register on the platform without paying any registrations cost (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2016)
- ❖ September 2016 : FICCI Ladies Organization (FLO), the industry body's women wing and online marketplace major Shopclues announced their tie-up to kick-start the 'Women Entrepreneurship (WE) in e-commerce' initiative. According to the Memorandum of Understanding, Shopclue will educate, enable, and empower women entrepreneurs to foray into online selling (ANI, 2016a).
- ❖ December 2016: Mobile payments and wallet player FreeCharge partnered with International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank group to help women entrepreneurs sell their products on Snapdeal. This partnership will support start-ups and early-stage women entrepreneurs to join the e-commerce platform for the first time (Pani, 2016).
- ❖ July 2017: The National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT), a body under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India has launched a unique initiative “Power of She” aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship among women under 'Digital India' (BWDIsrupt, 2017).
- ❖ November 2017: Amazon in collaboration with organizations likes self–employed Women association (SEVA) and Impulse Social Enterprise started 'Saheli store' to encourage woman entrepreneurs. It is a dedicated store for women entrepreneurs of India to sell their locally produced products like handicraft, apparel, handbags, home décor etc. to nationwide Amazon customers. Woman entrepreneurs have benefits such as subsidized referral fee, free imaging and cataloging during launch, account management, post launch support, logistic, and fulfillment facilities (Das, 2017).
- ❖ January 2018: The Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Bangalore announced the launch of Women Start-up Programme (WSP). India's first customized online and classroom initiative for aspiring female entrepreneurs. The

programme will offer in-depth training to foster managerial and entrepreneurial skills through mentoring, incubation, and financial support (Zee News, 2018).

❖ Amazon conducts extensive training and skill development workshops to develop necessary skills and capabilities to start and grow business. Special programs like women TES (Amazon Trained E-commerce Specialists), SPN (Service Provider Network), IHS (I Have Space), and Udaan have been designed to empower women (Malik, 2017). These include schemes like Technology Development Programme, Software Technology Park scheme, Support for International Patent Protection, Electronic Development Fund Policy, Bank Credit Facilitation, and Performance & Credit Rating Scheme etc. to help startups (Das, 2017).

Suggestions

(1) Developing Young Generation

Young people represent the future and are drivers of social change. Teaching and encouraging girls to be more assertive to speak and to stand up for themselves is a constructive approach to develop entrepreneurship qualities in women. Teaching importance of decision making at home and schools will encourage them to learn and take risk. It is important to develop young women generation in such a way that they become brave to take risk and follow their passion in future. We should encourage social startups that strive to educate girls about entrepreneurship. Articles, films, television, social media etc. should be used for sowing the seeds of entrepreneurship among young girls.

(2) Training for Removing Mental Blocks

Lack of support leads to women deferring starting business. Risk-averse tendency is common among women entrepreneurs. Special training and development programmes should be started to remove these mental blocks. We need to turn the table to empower them to become effective entrepreneurs. Feeling of self confidence to survive independently is very important. Encouraging women to start small online business just to follow their passion will bring substantial change in the mindset of women.

(3) Women for Women Mentorship

Starting and running a business is not an easy task. It involves lot of hardship and emotional setback. Women need to be mentally strong and hard working to overcome all the hardships. As Indian families are still not open to women entrepreneurship, successful women should come forward to guide aspiring women entrepreneurs. Sharing their stories of hardship and success will help in encouraging other women to follow their dreams.

Role models and interaction between role models and aspiring women entrepreneurs will bridge the gap between dreams and reality. Panel of experts comprising women entrepreneurs should come up with structured mentorship programmes to guide women entrepreneurs in their entrepreneurial journey. Even independent women entrepreneurs can guide budding women entrepreneurs through their blogs, Youtube channels etc.

(4) Social Startups for Helping e-Commerce Women Entrepreneurs

Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs are different from those faced by men entrepreneurs. Women need emotional, financial, and business support at each level. Incubators should help women in preparing better business plans, doing feasibility study, and finally launching their businesses. Combination of marketplace trends, venture capital firms, and angel investors with female leadership team will increase the opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Special training sessions to foster managerial and industry relevant skills are important.

Special incubators to make her understand virtual world is the need of the hour. Such incubators should train women in use of technology for expanding business. This is important to reduce women drop outs from business. Special attention should be given to imparting technological knowledge and use of technology to stay ahead of competition. It is important to understand various dimensions of virtual environment like:

- ❖ Capacity building and skill development in areas of Information Technology (IT), electronics, communication technologies, hardware, cyber law, cyber security, cloud computing, e-waste, e-governance, and related verticals.
- ❖ Help to developing quick expertise in selected niche.
- ❖ Creating product descriptions that include everything a potential customer needs to know when buying online.
- ❖ Use of professional photographs.
- ❖ Proper inventory management through integrated inventory management system software.
- ❖ Use of analytics to calculate and track sales.
- ❖ Use of online marketing for increasing presence and sales.
- ❖ Strategies to convert email leads and website visitors into customers.
- ❖ Use of social network to interact with customers.

(5) Virtual Incubation

India is the seventh-largest country by area and the second-most populous country. Opening physical incubators which can efficiently cater to the need of such a large area and population is very difficult. We need virtual connectivity to accelerate the growth of aspiring female entrepreneurs. Interactive sessions in virtual class rooms will enhance women entrepreneurial skills at their place of convenience. Use of technology for spreading technological awareness is the cheapest and the quickest way to pick up the pace of e-commerce women entrepreneurs in India.

(6) Better Capital Access

Finance is the life blood of business. Getting funds from the market is a big challenge for women entrepreneurs. Making women aware about various government schemes and how to avail them will help women raise capital. Providing information about various venture-capital firms and angel investors will improve the chances of raising funds. Government should provide seed capital to women. As women in India don't have inheritance property in their name, therefore, there should be relaxation in collateral security norms to raise loan. Lastly, legal obligation to spend 2% of net profit on CSR activities by listed companies can be mobilized towards helping women to start business.

Conclusion

Women have an inborn trait towards an entrepreneurship as they have been managing everything within the four walls for their families. Role of women has gained considerable importance in the virtual environment. Armed with self-conviction, women want to become more than just being good homemakers. Digital economy enables women to remove deep rooted gender difference in business. Low investment and empowerment that comes in the form of financial independence are the primary reasons for the emergence of marketplace as a favorable platform for women entrepreneurs.

Women entrepreneurs must be trained and molded to sustain and strive for excellence in the entrepreneurial arena. Support system for women entrepreneurs is gradually improving in India. Still, we need more role models in business to overcome traditional and technologic based challenges. Exquisite support and good advisors are needed within the industry to help capable women reach their potential.

Increasing participation of women in digital economy will have multiplier effect in the form of increase in family income, huge increase in GDP, increase in job opportunities, and benefit to the society at large in the form of gender equality and women empowerment. In online entrepreneurship, female founders and sellers are still few. However, internet is the golden age for women in entrepreneurship.

Limitations and Scope for Future Research

Like other studies, interpretation of this qualitative research is also limited. Observations and conclusions of current research are influenced by limited understanding and knowledge of the researcher. Moreover, it is difficult to

investigate the causality between different research phenomena as qualitative data cannot be mathematically analyzed. Future research may be quantitative in nature to check the causality between factors studied under present research.

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