

M-Commerce: The Stepping Stones for Growth of Women Entrepreneurs in India

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Abstract

Entrepreneurs play a vital role in the development of Indian economy. India has been witnessing an expeditious growth of women entrepreneurship. This article reviews about women entrepreneurship in India, with a specific focus on the challenges faced by the women entrepreneurs that hinder their growth and an attempt to develop a framework that builds a relationship between Mobile commerce and women entrepreneurs. Mobile commerce also abbreviated as M-commerce is said to be a part of e-commerce. With an increase in mobile phone users in India, M-commerce has become an emerging trend. M-commerce has various advantages that can help women entrepreneurs overcome their challenges and hence enhancing the growth of women entrepreneurs in India.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurs, M-Commerce, Secure Socket Layer (SSL), Security Hypertext Transfer Protocol (S-HTTP).

Introduction

Women entrepreneur may be defined as a woman or group of women who initiate, organize, and run a business enterprise. In recent years, women entrepreneurs have made a significant contribution to the economic development of a country. Women's role in their share in small business has been increasing. According to the Sixth Economic Census report by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, conducted for the year 2019, out of 58.5 million entrepreneurs, around 8.05 million constitutes of women entrepreneurs. It is thereby making 14 percent of total entrepreneur based in India. Interestingly, the major crowd relies on

M-commerce as it provides them with an opportunity to earn from home without compromising on their household activities.

The term Mobile Commerce (M-Commerce) was first coined in 1997 by Kevin Duffey in the launch of the Global Mobile Commerce Forum, to mean "the delivery of electronic commerce capabilities directly into the consumer's hand, anywhere, via wireless technology." Hence, M-commerce can be defined as buying and selling of goods and services with the help of wireless handheld devices such as smartphones. According to market research firm tech ARC, India had 502.2 million smartphone users as of December 2019, i.e., about 77 percent of Indians are now accessing wireless broadband through smartphones. Thus, hiking the usage of M-commerce in day-to-day life becomes indispensable.

Literature Review

The literature review provides a vivid explanation on the women entrepreneurs and m-commerce. A study conducted by Sharma in 2013 summarized the factors influencing women entrepreneurship, the problems faced by Indian women entrepreneurs and steps taken by the Government for upliftment of Indian women entrepreneurs. This is supported by the research study conducted by Fazalbhoy, which analyzed and described the growth of women entrepreneurs in India with respect to the financing factors which is one of the major problems faced by the women entrepreneurs. The author also describes the role of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and provides the insight of future policies of Government that aids the women entrepreneurs in India (Fazalbhoy, 2014).

Jahanshahi, Mirzaie and Asadollahi in 2011 described the basic fundamentals of e-commerce and m-commerce that would help the business managers, especially those with non IT background to understand the basic elements, issues and impact of m-commerce on current and future business. Niranjnamurthy et al. in 2013 described the term m-commerce as short for mobile commerce and recognizes that the transactions may be conducted using cell phones, personal digital assistants and other handheld devices that have to operate with Internet access.

Objectives

- To introduce the relativity of M-Commerce and the growth of women entrepreneurs
- To create awareness about the benefits of M-commerce towards empowering the women entrepreneurs

Methodology

This study is descriptive in nature. The secondary data and information have been collected from various articles published in different journals and periodicals by different scholars and researchers, conference proceedings and websites and substantially analyzed for achieving the aforementioned objectives.

Major Challenges Hindering the Growth of Women Entrepreneurs

Lack of Funding: Women's businesses are among the leading ventures that lack financial support. Some have to rely on credit cards or raise capital on their own. Women are commonly denied of loans due to gender and cultural biases.

Family Ties & Balancing Responsibilities: Women in India tend to be emotionally attached to their families. The family expects her to be the complete caretaker of the family, while the business requires her to be show commitment and leadership skills. This overburdens them with both personal and business commitments.

Limited Mobility: Though, we see a rise in women travelling for business needs, yet it still stands to be a bigger problem for women entrepreneurs belonging to rural and sub-urban parts of India. Women still fear travelling or staying a night alone for business needs as these are still seen with suspicious eyes and also the women fear of falling in wrong circumstances.

Gender Inequality: Though, the Indian constitution emphasizes on gender equality, yet women are not treated equally to men in various parts of India. Even today, women require permission from the head of the family to take any initiative in life and to run a business on their own.

Exploitation of Middlemen: As the mobility has been a major challenge for women, they tend to depend on middlemen for marketing, distribution and money collection. These middlemen add their own profit margin which in turn results in a lower profit or lesser sales.

Unfavourable Business Environment: The challenges that women entrepreneurs are most likely to experience are a less-established business, social networks and traditional constraints that restrict women's participation in business. In such situations, women may depend on a male partner to make deals, negotiate, and to be the face of the business.

Limited Access to Raw Materials: Women entrepreneurs despite having a broad idea on their business, tend to narrow them due to lack of access to raw materials. And instead, work with raw materials that are available in their locality or in the accessible limitation.

Merits of M-Commerce

Convenience: M-Commerce has made access to purchasing, selling, banking, advertising, marketing, auctions, brokerages and booking tickets very convenient. You can communicate a buyer/seller who sits miles away from you and yet do business deals from where you reside.

Flexible Accessibility: User can access various mobile messengers like Yahoo and GMeet and other networking platforms to enhance their business via mobile phones, or other handheld devices like tabs. The user may also choose to use the same applications simultaneously on a desktop without turning the mobile device off. Almost all e-commerce sites today have mobile apps which can be accessed from any location with internet connectivity.

Easy Connectivity: As long as there is access to network signal, all smartphones can connect to the internet and do commerce transactions, mobile to mobile and even mobile to other device transactions. Instead of complicating the connectivity process using a modem or Wi-Fi connectivity set up.

Personalization: Each mobile device and the application installed in it can be personalized. Every application has options using which a user can customize the app. The privacy setting is a significant factor which keeps a user safe from unknown people on social media, and also the user being a buyer/seller can restrict the visibility of his identity to the other party.

Time Efficient: Doing M-Commerce transactions do not require the user to wait for his personal computer or laptop to set up, connect and load, can instead with just a hit on the button of your mobile device and you are ready to go. A buyer and a seller can complete a deal in no time from their residence or office or even while they are travelling.

M-Commerce as a Growth Factor for Women Entrepreneurs

In India, most women entrepreneurs emerge from being a home-maker and have long struggled to start and expand their own business. As the internet becomes a part of people's lives around the world, what is required to start and successfully run a business is different. These setbacks were settled with the help of M-commerce as even micro-enterprises are starting to adopt digital platforms available to take their business online via social media and messaging apps, digital payments apps, online marketplaces and delivery services, in order to buy and sell goods and services. Most women look for work from home opportunities as these would help them balance their professional and personal responsibilities. Hence, women entrepreneurs can now have their business needs to be fulfilled with the use of social media platforms from their home while taking care of their personal responsibilities. The below figure 1 represents a report on the platforms used by

women entrepreneurs, the payments methods used in the respective platforms and the growth orientation in accordance with the platform used.

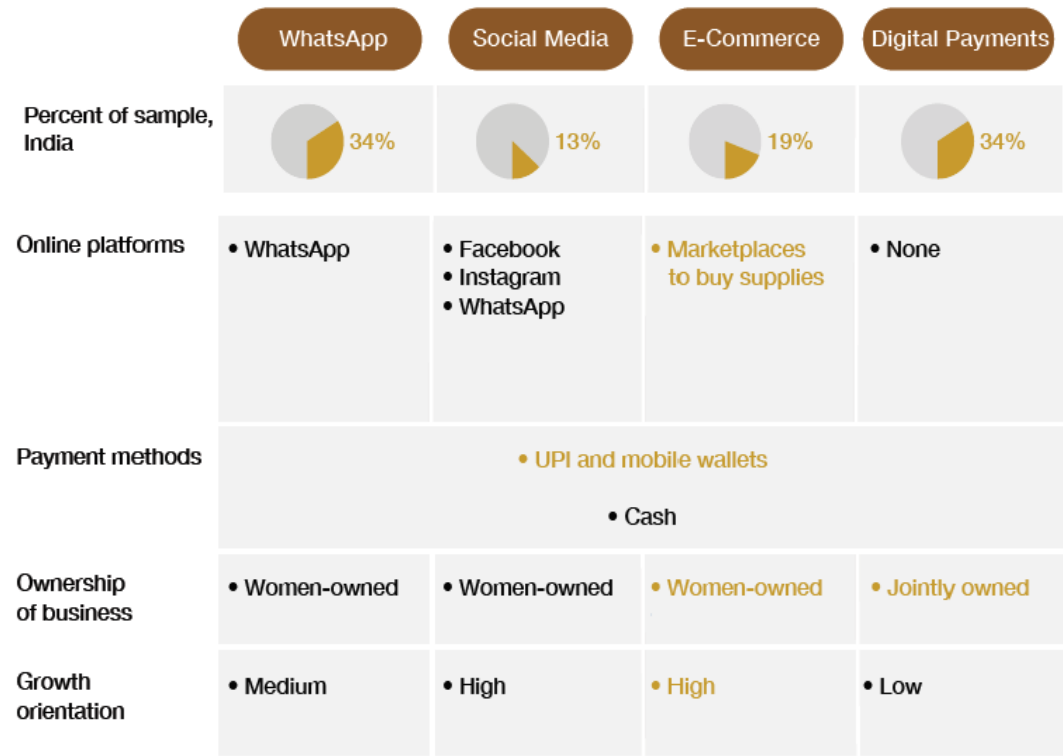


Fig. 1

Source: Secondary (Online)

Discussion

It is from the literature review, many research studies have been performed to enlighten about the Indian women entrepreneurs and their role in the development of the Indian Economy. The major challenges faced by them and the funding aids provided by the Government of India. There are also studies on M-commerce like its emergence, merits and demerits. Also, about the security factors correlated with payment using M-commerce. The observation is very clear that still women entrepreneurs face lot of problems. However, the merits of M-commerce can help resolve most of the problems and livelihoods of women entrepreneurs.

Implications & Suggestions

Women entrepreneurs shall use mobile application platforms to enhance their business. Moreover, they can generate leads via social networking and messenger

applications such as Instagram, Facebook and Whatsapp, which allows paid advertisements and business accounts, respectively. Furthermore, they can also have online access to raw materials for their business. All payments with regard to M-Commerce can be made using online payment, mobile payment and UPI payment methods, which are secured using appropriate security measures such as Secure Socket Layer (SSL), Security Hypertext Transfer Protocol (S-HTTP), etc. The awareness on M-Commerce applications, facilitative aspects and utility prospects needs to be created among women entrepreneurs by the concerned policy makers in government departments, facilitators and practitioners.

Conclusion

The M-Commerce has helped most women entrepreneurs in balancing their personal responsibilities without compromising their professional life. Though, the Government of India has introduced funding schemes such as Mudra Yojana Scheme, TREAD (Trade Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development) scheme and Mahila Udyam Nidhi Scheme to encourage the emerging women entrepreneurs, yet they tend to face challenges that hinder their growth. The future focus of the funding schemes should address these challenges as well and embrace women entrepreneurs towards M-Commerce. Moreover, the benefits of M-commerce have also invigorated women from both rural and urban parts of India to start their own business. The conceptual review in the present study clearly signifies that M-commerce has brought the buyers and sellers virtually close and also indicates the gaps. It is clear that proper awareness creation about M-Commerce using smartphone application becomes more essential in for fostering and promulgating women entrepreneurs' growth and development.

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