International Journal of Economic Practices and Theories (IJEPT)
ISSN: 2247-7225
Volume 2023, Issue 1

Women Entrepreneurship and Digital Transformation in Andhra Pradesh: A Theoretical Perspective

[1]Prof. V. Durga Bhavani

Department of Communication and Journalism

Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Tirupati.

Email id: profdurgabhavani@gmail.com

[1*]Prof. P. Vijaya Lakshmi

Department of Communication and Journalism

Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Tirupati.

Email id: vijaya.cj@gmail.com

Abstract

Women starting their own businesses have become very important for economic growth, creating jobs, and bringing about social change in India. At the same time, the use of digital technology like the internet, communication tools, financial technology, and online shopping has changed how entrepreneurs work and reach new customers. This article looks at how women entrepreneurs in Andhra Pradesh are dealing with these changes. Andhra Pradesh is a state that is actively working to improve digital governance and support businesses. The paper uses ideas from entrepreneurship studies, research on gender, and studies about digital change to create a framework that explains how digital tools affect how women start and grow their businesses. The study uses data from reports, government policies, and real-life examples from Andhra Pradesh to show what helps and what gets in the way when women use digital tools. It also shows how different factors in society and the economy influence how women adopt digital technologies. This article adds to existing knowledge by showing how digital entrepreneurship is affected by gender-related social and economic conditions, and it suggests areas for future research and policy action.

Keywords: Women entrepreneurship, digital transformation, gender, MSMEs, Andhra Pradesh, India

II. Introduction

It is commonly acknowledged that entrepreneurship stimulates innovation, economic expansion, and regional development. Women's entrepreneurship has been more well-known in recent years as a means of advancing sustainable livelihoods, financial inclusion, and gender equity. Women-owned businesses make a substantial contribution to micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in developing nations like India, especially in the manufacturing, services, agricultural, and informal sectors (Minniti & Nardone, 2007).

Concurrent with this development is the quick spread of digital technologies, which have drastically changed the way companies are founded, run, and grow. The term "digital transformation" describes how digital technologies are incorporated into every facet of corporate operations, changing organisational structures, value creation, and consumer involvement (Nambisan, 2017). Digital tools provide women entrepreneurs with previously unheard-of chances to get over obstacles, including knowledge asymmetries, restricted market access, and limited mobility.

An interesting backdrop for analysing this intersection is Andhra Pradesh. Digitally enabled women entrepreneurs can thrive in the region thanks to state-led programs in e-governance, digital literacy, women's self-help groups (SHGs), and MSME promotion. Disparities in digital access, skills, and institutional assistance, however, continue despite legislative support. This article answers the following query: How does Andhra Pradesh's female entrepreneurship change conceptually as a result of digital transformation?

Women Entrepreneurship: Conceptual Foundations

Meaning and Evolution of Women Entrepreneurship

The process by which women start, plan, run, and expand businesses is known as women's entrepreneurship. Self-employment, small firms, micro-enterprises, and growth-oriented ventures in both the formal and informal sectors are all included (Brush et al., 2009). Women's entrepreneurship is not just a business endeavor; it is strongly associated with social change, agency, and empowerment.

Prior studies frequently saw female entrepreneurs as a monolithic group or negatively contrasted them with male entrepreneurs. Recent research highlights the diversity of female entrepreneurs and acknowledges the significance of institutional, social, and cultural environments (Ahl, 2006; Jennings & Brush, 2013).

Digital Transformation and Entrepreneurship

Digital Transformation: Concept and Scope

The term "digital transformation" describes how digital technologies are incorporated into organisational, social, and economic processes, resulting in significant adjustments to the ways that value is produced, distributed, and captured (Vial, 2019). It entails a strategic reorganisation of business models, operational procedures, and organisational culture in addition to the simple adoption of digital tools. Traditional methods of production and consumption have been upended by technologies including the internet, mobile devices, cloud computing, big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and digital platforms. These developments force businesses to constantly adapt in order to stay competitive in ever-changing markets by enabling real-time connectivity, automation, and data-driven decision-making.

Role of Digital Technologies in Scalability and Business Growth:

Scalability and Cost-Effective Digital Infrastructure

Because digital transformation lessens reliance on fixed capital investments and physical infrastructure, it greatly increases the scalability of entrepreneurial endeavours. Businesses can grow without having to pay large upfront fees thanks to cloud computing, which gives businesses pay-as-you-use access to scalable computing resources. By enabling smooth financial transactions and giving access to both domestic and international markets, digital payment systems and e-commerce platforms also aid in the expansion of businesses. These technologies improve market reach and operational flexibility by enabling entrepreneurs to work effectively across global borders (Nambisan, Wright, & Feldman, 2019).

Analytics of Data and Enhancement of Performance

Data-driven technologies are essential for fostering operational effectiveness and company expansion. Entrepreneurs can estimate demand, track organisational performance, and examine consumer behaviour in real time with the use of big data analytics and digital dashboards. These insights assist businesses in creating individualised marketing plans, streamlining supply chains, and improving inventory management. Entrepreneurial endeavours can increase consumer satisfaction, make better decisions, and quickly adjust to shifting market conditions by utilising data analytics (Vial, 2019).

Network Effects and Platform-Based Business Models

The foundation of digitally enabled scalability and competitive advantage is platform-based business models. Value co-creation is made possible by digital platforms that link various players within a common ecosystem, including producers, consumers, and service providers. Network effects raise the platform's overall value as user numbers rise, hastening market expansion and penetration. Nambisan, Wright, and Feldman (2019) claim that by promoting innovation environments that facilitate quick scaling and cooperation, these platforms alter conventional entrepreneurial growth trajectories.

Digitalisation as a Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Because digital technologies provide ongoing innovation and strategic differentiation, they help ensure the long-term viability of businesses. Digital consumer engagement technologies, automation, and artificial intelligence enable firms to lower operating expenses while maintaining consistent quality. These skills aid in the development of robust company models that can endure market volatility and pressure from competitors. Accordingly, in contemporary entrepreneurial ecosystems, digital transformation is a major force behind competitive advantage and sustainable growth (Vial, 2019).

III. Barriers to Digital Transformation among Women Entrepreneurs

Notwithstanding the increasing prevalence of digital technology, women entrepreneurs still face several interconnected obstacles that restrict their ability to effectively adopt and use these tools. These obstacles are not just technological; they are also firmly ingrained in sociocultural, socioeconomic, educational, and infrastructure environments. These limitations are especially noticeable for micro and small women-owned businesses that operate in rural and semi-urban areas in places like Andhra Pradesh.

- **Gaps in Digital Literacy and Skill**

Despite the increasing prevalence of basic smartphone usage and social media application knowledge, women entrepreneurs still lack sophisticated digital competencies. Search engine optimisation (SEO), digital advertising algorithms, cybersecurity awareness, platform administration, and data analytics skills are frequently lacking. In contrast to deliberate digital transformation that might promote scalability and competitiveness, this limits female entrepreneurs to surface-level digital involvement, such as a basic web presence (Venkatesh & Morris, 2000; Nambisan & Baron, 2019).

According to a number of studies, female entrepreneurs typically depend on middlemen for their digital operations, such as family members, unofficial agents, or platform representatives. This makes it easier to access digital platforms, but it also makes people less independent, more dependent, and exposes businesses to dangers like financial fraud and data abuse (OECD, 2020; Marler & Parry, 2016). Women's capacity to manage customer data, evaluate statistics, and adapt quickly to evolving digital ecosystems is further limited by their lack of formal digital training.

Digital literacy programs in India frequently emphasise fundamental usage over sophisticated entrepreneurial applications, which causes a disconnect between training objectives and business needs. As a result, women entrepreneurs find it difficult to convert digital access into noticeable enhancements in business performance (Santos, Roomi, & Liñán, 2016).

- **Infrastructure and Financial Limitations**

One of the biggest obstacles to women-owned businesses' digital transformation is their limited financial resources. Uneven access is still present to cloud-based services, high-speed internet connectivity, reasonably priced digital devices, and paid digital marketing tools. In rural and isolated areas, where infrastructure deficiencies exacerbate financial exclusion, these limitations are more acute (Minniti & Nardone, 2007; World Bank, 2019).

The inability of female entrepreneurs to invest in cybersecurity solutions, professional digital services, or digital improvements is often due to their reliance on informal loan sources or personal funds. According to Brush, de Bruin, and Welter (2009), formal financial institutions frequently view women-led businesses as high-risk, which results in credit rationing and unfavorable loan terms. Consequently, rather than being strategic and long-term, digital adoption continues to be incremental and fragmented.

Digital company activities are further hampered by infrastructure issues such as erratic internet connectivity and an unstable electrical supply. According to Ghosh, Gupta, and Das (2020), these structural deficiencies deter female entrepreneurs from completely incorporating digital technologies into essential business operations and diminish trust in digital systems.

- **Cultural-Social Barriers**

Women's use of digital technologies is significantly shaped by sociocultural norms. Women's confidence and readiness to use digital tools are greatly influenced by gendered expectations around household duties, mobility limitations, and risk aversion (Ahl, 2006; Minniti, 2010). Research continuously demonstrates that women's entrepreneurial decision-making, especially in technology-intensive fields, is heavily influenced by household dynamics, spouse support, and family approval (Jennings & Brush, 2013; Santos et al., 2016).

Because digital business increases women's visibility, income control, and external interactions, it frequently disrupts traditional gender roles. Families and communities may become resistant as a result, which could limit digital engagement even in the face of opportunity. Women are further deterred from active digital engagement by their fear of online abuse, reputational damage, and technology misuse (OECD, 2020).

These sociocultural obstacles demonstrate that the process of digital transformation is not gender neutral. Digital projects run the risk of perpetuating current disparities if they do not address underlying power dynamics and normative restrictions.

IV. Research Methodology:

- **Research Design:**

In order to investigate the connection between women's entrepreneurship and digital transformation in Andhra Pradesh, the current study uses a theoretical and descriptive research design. Since the goals are exploratory in nature and the emphasis is on developing theories rather than testing hypotheses, a qualitative, secondary-data-based method is deemed suitable. A thorough grasp of how digital technologies affect women's entrepreneurial processes within certain socioeconomic and institutional contexts is made possible by this approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To provide a conceptual framework that explains women's digital adoption and entrepreneurial outcomes, the study incorporates viewpoints from the literature on digital transformation, gender studies, and entrepreneurship theory.

- **Objectives of the Study:**

The following goals serve as the study's guidelines:

1. To investigate how Andhra Pradesh's women entrepreneurs are influenced by digital technologies.
2. To determine the main factors influencing women entrepreneurs' adoption of digital technology.
3. To create a conceptual framework that connects the results of women's entrepreneurship and digital transformation.

These goals place more emphasis on theoretical synthesis and contextual analysis than on empirical measurement.

- **Sources of Data**

To ensure dependability and academic rigor, the study only uses secondary data that has been gathered from several reliable sources. These consist of:

• Peer-reviewed publications on gender studies, digital entrepreneurship, and women entrepreneurs

• Government policy papers about women's empowerment, digital governance, and MSMEs

• International organisations' reports on digital inclusion and gender

• Case studies and recorded instances of Andhra Pradesh's female entrepreneurs

• Statistics at the federal and state levels

Triangulation is made possible, and judgments are given more confidence when several data sources are used (Yin, 2018).

Objective1:

Understanding how digital technologies impact and shape the business endeavors of Andhra Pradesh's female entrepreneurs is the main goal of this purpose. By revolutionizing conventional methods of corporate management and operation, digital technologies have emerged as crucial enablers. E-commerce platforms, cloud-based accounting systems, mobile banking, and social media marketing are some of the tools that enable women entrepreneurs plan, carry out, and track business operations more effectively. Record-keeping, financial transactions, customer communication, and inventory management are all supported by these technologies, which enhance operational effectiveness and increase business control. By allowing them to advertise products, communicate with clients, and establish brand awareness outside of local and regional markets at a comparatively low cost, digital platforms further increase market access for female entrepreneurs, especially those running small and home-based businesses (Vial, 2019).

Additionally, digital transformation offers cost and flexibility benefits that are particularly significant for female entrepreneurs juggling work and home duties. While cloud-based technologies allow for real-time financial monitoring and data-driven decision-making, mobile banking and digital payment systems eliminate the need for in-person visits to financial institutions, saving time and transaction costs. By facilitating speedy product customisation, increased cooperation through digital networks, and speedier answers to market changes, the adoption of digital technology also boosts productivity, innovation, and competitiveness in the marketplace. By utilizing technology-enabled scale and agility, digital entrepreneurship enables small women-led businesses to effectively compete with larger corporations, promoting business growth, resilience, and long-term sustainability (Namisan, 2017).

Objective 2:

The second goal is to identify the primary drivers of digital technology adoption by female entrepreneurs. Since greater levels of digital proficiency lower cognitive barriers and boost confidence when using online platforms, a substantial body of research indicates that digital literacy is fundamental in influencing technology adoption behaviors (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)'s core constructs of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use help to further explain adoption decisions. Women entrepreneurs are more likely to use digital tools when they think they will improve operational efficiency, market reach, and profitability (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). Uptake is also greatly impacted by access to dependable internet infrastructure, particularly in Andhra Pradesh's semi-urban and rural areas, where erratic connectivity may discourage regular use of online payment systems and cloud-based business solutions (World Bank, 2020). Additionally, the cost of devices and subscription services serves as a practical barrier, especially for microbusinesses with little operating capital, highlighting the relationship between financial capability and the use of technology (Heeks, 2018).

Women entrepreneurs' adoption of digital technology is significantly influenced by social and institutional contexts in addition to personal and financial considerations. Since women frequently rely on group learning and shared experiences to develop trust in new tools, peer influence and role modelling within entrepreneurial networks can promote uptake (Rogers, 2003). Since research indicates that women who take part in organised skill-building interventions are more likely to use e-commerce platforms and digital marketing, institutional support through focused training programs by governmental organisations and non-profits improves digital competencies and encourages adoption.

Objectives 3:

Creating a conceptual framework that explains the connection between women's entrepreneurial outcomes and digital transformation is the ultimate goal. According to Vial (2019) and Nambisan (2017), digital transformation is the process of incorporating digital technologies into entrepreneurial endeavors, which has an impact on revenue generation, market access, innovation, and corporate performance. The framework explains how digital technologies help women entrepreneurs become more efficient and competitive by taking into account important factors including digital adoption, institutional support, and socioeconomic situations.

The approach also takes into consideration moderating elements that may restrict the advantages of digital transformation, such as infrastructure limitations, gender norms, and societal hurdles. Women entrepreneurs have a higher chance of achieving favorable economic and empowerment outcomes when they are assisted by efficient institutional systems that promote digital literacy. The framework gives a structured understanding of the digital transformation in women entrepreneurs by combining theoretical and empirical observations. It also offers policy-relevant guidelines for supporting sustainable and equitable development (Heeks, 2018; UN Women, 2021).

V. Conclusion:

According to the article's conclusion, women's entrepreneurial outcomes are significantly shaped by digital transformation, which has an impact on their ability to access markets, run firms, and attain economic emancipation. The results pertaining to the first goal show that digital literacy, perceived utility and usability of technology, affordability, access to digital infrastructure, and the availability of peer and institutional support are the main drivers behind women entrepreneurs' adoption of digital technologies. The full use of digital technologies is nevertheless hampered by enduring issues with sociocultural norms, scarce resources, and regional connectivity discrepancies, despite the fact that these enablers greatly promote digital adoption.

Addressing the second and third goals, the study shows that digital adoption improves business performance, innovation, income generation, and decision-making power for female entrepreneurs when it is backed by strong institutional mechanisms and advantageous socioeconomic circumstances. In addition to highlighting moderating hurdles that lessen these impacts, the conceptual framework created in this article demonstrates the interrelated routes through which digital transformation translates into entrepreneurial and empowerment results. Overall, the paper highlights that in order to maximize the advantages of digital transformation and promote inclusive, sustainable women entrepreneurship, gender-sensitive support networks, inclusive legislative frameworks, and focused digital literacy initiatives are crucial.

VI. Limitations of the Study

The study does not include first-hand accounts or statistically significant associations because it is based on secondary data. The discussion of sector-specific variances and regional variations within Andhra Pradesh is conceptual rather than empirical. The methodology is suitable for contextual analysis and theory-building, despite these drawbacks.

- **Ethical Considerations**

All the study's data sources are openly accessible and appropriately referenced in compliance with APA ethical standards. No private or sensitive data is utilised.

References

1. Ahl, H. (2006). Why research on women entrepreneurs needs new directions. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 30*(5), 595–621.
2. Ahl, H., & Nelson, T. (2015). How policy positions women entrepreneurs. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship, 7*(3), 220–242.
3. Autio, E., Nambisan, S., Thomas, L. D. W., & Wright, M. (2018). Digital affordances and entrepreneurial ecosystems. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, 12*(1), 72–95.
4. Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management, 17*(1), 99–120.
5. Brush, C. G., de Bruin, A., & Welter, F. (2009). *Women and entrepreneurship: Contemporary classics*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
6. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
7. Ghosh, S., & Neogi, C. (2017). Women entrepreneurship in India. *International Journal of Applied Business and Economic Research, 15*(9), 345–356.
8. Ghosh, S., Gupta, R., & Das, A. (2020). Digital infrastructure and MSME performance in India. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 27*(6), 1011–1029.

9. GSMA. (2021). *The mobile gender gap report 2021*. GSMA.
10. Jennings, J. E., & Brush, C. G. (2013). Research on women entrepreneurs. *Academy of Management Annals, 7*(1), 663–715.
11. Kabeer, N. (2012). Women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth. *Journal of International Development, 24*(1), 1–15.
12. Kraus, S., Palmer, C., Kailer, N., Kallinger, F. L., & Spitzer, J. (2019). Digital entrepreneurship: A research agenda. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research, 25*(2), 353–375.
13. Marler, J. H., & Parry, E. (2016). Human resource management, strategic involvement, and e-HRM technology. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 27*(19), 2233–2253.
14. Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
15. Minniti, M. (2010). Female entrepreneurship and economic activity. *European Journal of Development Research, 22*(3), 294–312.
16. Minniti, M., & Nardone, C. (2007). Being in someone else's shoes. *Small Business Economics, 28*(2–3), 223–238.
17. Minniti, M., & Naudé, W. (2010). What do we know about the patterns and determinants of female entrepreneurship? *European Journal of Development Research, 22*(3), 277–293.
18. Nambisan, S. (2017). Digital entrepreneurship: Toward a digital technology perspective. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 41*(6), 1029–1055.
19. Nambisan, S., & Baron, R. A. (2019). On the costs of digital entrepreneurship. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, 13*(3), 331–355.
20. OECD. (2018). *Bridging the digital gender divide*. OECD Publishing.
21. OECD. (2020). *Women entrepreneurs in the digital economy*. OECD Publishing.
22. Santos, F. J., Roomi, M. A., & Liñán, F. (2016). About gender differences and the social environment. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal, 12*(2), 379–409.
23. UN Women. (2020). *Gender equality and women's empowerment in the digital economy*. UN Women.
24. Venkatesh, V., & Morris, M. G. (2000). Gender differences in technology adoption. *MIS Quarterly, 24*(1), 115–139.
25. Vial, G. (2019). Understanding digital transformation. *Journal of Strategic Information Systems, 28*(2), 118–144.
26. World Bank. (2019). *Profiting from parity: Unlocking the potential of women's businesses in Africa*. World Bank Publications.
27. Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.