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Social media a tool for economic empowerment of women

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Abstract

Hands that rock the cradle rule the world is a proverb which expresses the calibre and the multitask activities that our womenfolk are capable of undertaking. Social Media has become the way of communication more over to exaggerate the way of survival. It provides powerful new ways to create and navigate social environments. More so ever, it is a miracle wonderful tool for women to source information and cross geographical boundaries with the click of a button. Becoming a part of everyday life Social Media has also evolved with technological solutions for entrepreneurial ventures for women.

Since the presence of Social Media is here to stay and transform the way business are carried out in more than one manner, this study aims to identify the role played by Social Media as a tool of bringing in economic empowerment for women.

The study is descriptive with women entrepreneurs within Chennai city as the sample (n=50). The tool of data collection is through an online questionnaire. The usage pattern and the outcomes in aspects of promoting their venture and the other related support systems and requirement of updating have been understood as a result of conducting the study.

Educate a women and an entire society transforms. This study would provide a new direction for enabling to provide the necessary technological education that this information era requires.

Keywords: Social media, women empowerment, economic empowerment, new media effect, new age entrepreneurship.

1. Introduction

Words expressed, songs sung patronizing women empowerment during the freedom struggle and social reformation period are all dreams turning true in this corporate world through legal machinery.

We were told that India is the original home of the Mother Goddess. In our ancient history, we have many instances of women scholars and women rulers. Stories from mythology and folklore are recounted to prove that women in India have always been honoured and respected. There isn't any history to earmark when women were pushed into this fold for a during Vedic period educated, independent women like Avvaiyar, Kakaipadinar, and later rulers like Raziya Begum, Jhansi Rani had their own prominence. But as society evolved and the task of safeguarding the life and honour of women became a priority the chains of discrimination silently wound them up into cocoons.

Women who enjoyed a prestigious status were gradually pushed down. Suppression and submissiveness caught on. Exploitation arose. The woeful trails of women were many over the ages. Now women are fighting their way out of the cocoon.

We are proud of the fact that India was one of the first countries in the world to give women the right to vote. The Indian constitution is one of the most progressive in the world and guarantees equal rights for men and women. All this is cited as evidence to support the contention that Indian women are free and equal members of society. The Economic Empowerment of women would be a boon to make her realise her potential power – the real Shakthi.

Women the fairer sex were treated unfairly by the society. The thoughts of revolution and protests have started to brighten the lives of women. It is here where technology lends a helping hand to lead them to light for those thriving in the darkness of ignorance. We need to help women in a manner that they would be able to help themselves and break free demanding their rights in this unjust and unequal world on their own. The concept of women, thou art frail, has to be rephrased. Latest Technology of Social Media is this helping hand.

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1.1 Conceptual background

Social media is the social interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Furthermore, social media depend on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. (H. Kietzmann, Jan; Kristopher Hermkens, 2011)

1.2 Classification of Social Media

Social media technologies take on many different forms including magazines, Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, social networks, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. Technologies include blogging, picture-sharing, vlogs, wall-posting, music-sharing, crowdsourcing and voice over IP, to name a few. Social network aggregation can integrate many of the platforms in use. (en.wikipedia.org)

1.3 Social Media – The latest technological tool for Economic Empowerment of Women

The concept of entrepreneurship has helped women to get rid of the tag of being a burden on others economically. Online presence in social media is providing women with new freedom, independence and control, liberty, and empowerment like never before. It helps them to try things that were impossible in the real scenario. Social networking offers more of an opportunity to network and get to know people and places. Women can no more be lost. Nor does she have to depend on others to carry out her requirements. Social Media answers every question that could raise and suggests solutions for every search of hers. It can really turnout to be a friend indeed that gives her both intellectual and emotional company without having to lose her identity. The more women use social media, the more she will benefit from it as well. Social media helps women to master with friends, followers and connections all over the country or even the world. She may start to like, tweet, share, follow, be linked to a new sort of Technological empowerment and dynamism.

1.4 Review of Literature

Kanti nath Banerjee (2011-13) ^[3], Social media marketing is gaining a new trend and is progressing at a fast speed to tap the new normal opportunity. In addition, for businesses it allows direct connect eliminating the concept of middlemen. Customer acquisitions remain to be the prime goal of Indian marketers (59%). According to leading marketers of India, the top three online investment channels for 2011 are social media, Email marketing and Search marketing. 52% of the top marketers said that it is extremely important to integrate email marketing and social media. This is why nearly every business on the planet is exploring social media marketing initiatives. Marketers have started to learn to engage with the customers. This shift is helping to move away from traditional platforms to an integrated multi-channel approach and solves the challenge of new consumers expectations across many devices and channels.

Celestine Lugaye Ukpere and Andre D. Slabbert (2014) ^[1] Social Media has taken over the dwindling circulation of traditional media such as television, radio, newspapers and magazines. The practice of surfing the web 2.0 to obtain real time information instantly, has led to the rise of an ever more connected infrastructure atmosphere globally. E commerce is flourishing with the help of digital marketing. The study of

Social Media Platforms and their impact in unlocking the financial success of the women entrepreneurs globally has been widely observed and quite vital to the new generation of gender based ventures that are digitally driven through the use of technology. This is leading to a new revolution of women job seekers becoming job creators and curators.

Uma Rani and Sripriya (2013) ^[9] Entrepreneurship has changed the way of commerce by adding creativity. Social Media plays the significant role in creating such opportunities. By studying women entrepreneur in Kancheepuram District it shows that the growth of female owned businesses is growing along with increase in their standard of living, motivation, attitude and self-confidence, and ensures independence - a liberty of new form. Social media is becoming a women's info guide and empowering tool.

2. Materials and Methods

The study aims to understand the use and implications of Social Media as a tool for marketing business venture by women. The study undertaken was a descriptive one and the research tool applied was the online survey using questionnaire method. The source of data was primary. The sampling unit consisted of women online users who are engaging in a business venture through social media. The sample size was 50 so as to fit the constraints of time and resources. Purposive Respondents were chosen and Random sampling technique was used to collect data online using social media thus making the study more appropriate. The data has been analysed using simple frequency tables and represented with suitable illustrations.

3. Results and Discussions

The study is wholly represented by women as the study aims to find out their participation in social media for entrepreneurial ventures. The average age of the respondents was 18years. Social media has brought the age criteria down as technology learning starts happening at a very early age among generation Y.

The respondents were questioned on whether they had marketed for their products using social media for which 100% of the respondents have answered in the affirmative. The products are of varied stature from that of real estate plots to that of their own creations like accessories, fashion clothes, hand made eatables, art work and what not. When they were further questioned on the various types of online marketing practices 74% of the respondents mentioned Creating a Facebook page and interacting with clients and 84% have a web page or a blog as space for their online marketing. 80% are sure that they would not have progressed or ventured into such extent if not for social media. It is a promising trend that 89% of the respondents have been encouraged by their family members to carry out such entrepreneurial venture.

70% women entrepreneurs have been introduced to social media by other such women in similar venture. It is encouraging to note that 62% of the women online users are willing to develop and extend further if they receive proper training for that aspect.

14% of the respondents have faced technical difficulties which they overcame with the help of some known associates. But a whooping majority have been able to survive on their own. Business transactions have become speeded up and are more cost effective. Prior educational background and technical skills have been evidently an added advantage. They have also been able to multi task their other societal expectations and do not consider this online presence to be a burden. In fact, for

more than 90% of the respondent the online activity has changed from being a leisure time activity to full time priority. Technological advancement has really given them an edge over their other counterparts who might possess the skills but are not able to bring out effectively due to lack technological expertise.

76% of the respondents do indulge details of their online activities with their family members. This is one more area of encouragement as a sharing of happenings will provide a support system. It will help in strengthening the venture and also provide moral support and ensure spreading of the economic development even to extents of nation's progress.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents based on their Social Media Presence

| Social Media Presence | Percentage | | |
|---|------------|----|------------|
| | Yes | No | Don't know |
| Have you marketed your products through Social Media? | 100 | 00 | 00 |
| Have a Facebook page for interaction with clients? | 74 | 24 | 00 |
| Do you own a webpage/blog/other source online? | 84 | 16 | 00 |
| Would you have ventured into business if not for Social Media? | 08 | 80 | 12 |
| Do you have encouragement from family members for your venture? | 89 | 9 | 02 |
| Were you introduced to the venture by a friend already in venture | 70 | 30 | 00 |
| Are you willing to develop/expand if trained? | 62 | 20 | 18 |
| Have you faced technical difficulties in your online venture? | 14 | 64 | 22 |
| Is it a leisure time activity now? | 10 | 90 | 00 |
| Do you keep family members aware about your online activities? | 76 | 20 | 04 |

The virtual presence of being online is made all the more possible by the mobile devices evolution such as smartphones, ipad, tablets have made this online presence omnipresent (24*7). All social networking users among the respondents are regular in updating their events and are active participants in the circulation of messages and sharing links and none of the respondents mind following strangers or accepting requests to become friends. Diagram 1 shows that 64% respondents have connectivity to internet 24*7.

usage skills. Even SHGs can eventually use Social Media as a forum for marketing similar to individuals. This social media is a resource that could be tapped and made the optimum use out of it. Along with the technological advancement skills, that the today's Generation youngsters possess a great revolution could be made in the arena of cyber world in the promotion of the economic status of women and the nation at large.

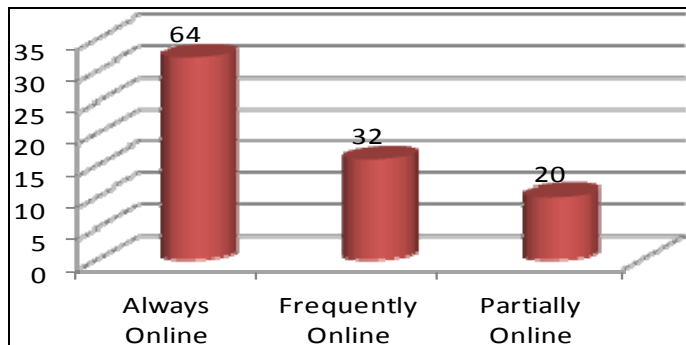


Diagram No.1: Distribution of respondents based on their Activeness in Online Marketing 24*7

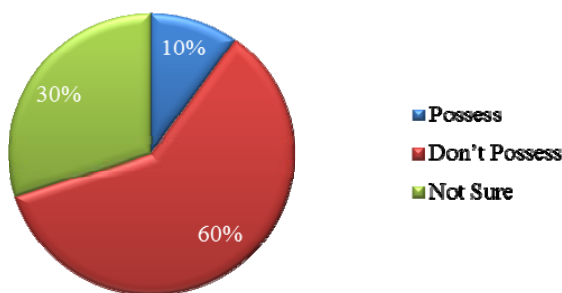


Diagram No. 2: Distribution of Respondents on the basis of Special skills and Training Undergone for coping with Online Marketing using Social Media

Social Media as an effective marketing tool can be promoted by becoming updated in the field and relevant communication and technological training. The lack of trained knowledge is a potential area for further research and policy implementation. The Government can also come up with vocational courses on technological advancement training to equip with social media

4. Conclusion

We cannot survive if we do not arm or equip ourselves with knowledge as it evolves.

Technology could have reached the highest saturation point, but unless people are made aware of advancements in social media they shall remain helpless. Hence the need of the hour is to educate women to cope and equip with the cyberworld so as to revolutionize Economic empowerment. This study reflects that to educate women would have the potential to educate others in return. And with the technological virtual presence of them it is all the more a miracle waiting to happen. As tech savvy women can share, like, tweet, follow, be online to know whatsapp.....

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