

Marketing Challenges and Strategic Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs in India

Shyamal Kishor Thakur

Research Scholar

Department of Commerce, Purnea University, Purnia

Abstract

Women entrepreneurs are increasingly becoming an important part of India's entrepreneurial and economic landscape. Their participation in business contributes not only to household income and employment generation but also to broader economic and social development. Despite their growing presence in entrepreneurship, women continue to face several personal, social, financial, technological, and marketing-related challenges. These difficulties can restrict their ability to expand their businesses and effectively utilise their entrepreneurial capabilities.

Marketing is one of the most important functions of any business because it connects products and services with consumers. It enables entrepreneurs to understand customer requirements, determine appropriate prices, promote products, select suitable distribution channels, and develop long-term customer relationships. However, women entrepreneurs often face difficulties in performing these activities because of limited financial resources, family responsibilities, restricted mobility, inadequate market information, dependence on intermediaries, weak professional networks, limited digital knowledge, and gender-related barriers.

The emergence of digital marketing has created new possibilities for women entrepreneurs to overcome some of these traditional marketing constraints. Digital platforms enable entrepreneurs to communicate directly with customers, promote products at relatively lower costs, access wider markets, receive customer feedback, build brand identity, and conduct business activities from different locations. These advantages can be particularly useful for women who have to balance entrepreneurial activities with household and family responsibilities.

Limited access to markets, inadequate financial resources, lack of marketing knowledge, technological barriers, restricted business networks, and difficulties in adopting modern marketing practices can adversely affect the growth and competitiveness of women-owned enterprises. Such challenges may prevent women entrepreneurs from fully utilizing their entrepreneurial capabilities and accessing emerging market opportunities.

The present study seeks to identify and examine the major marketing-related challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in India and to analyse how these constraints influence their marketing activities and business development. Furthermore, the study aims to explore suitable and practical marketing strategies that are compatible with the specific needs, capabilities, and constraints of women entrepreneurs. The study proposes that the effective adoption of digital marketing, social media, e-commerce, customer relationship management, branding, market networking, and other contemporary marketing approaches can provide women entrepreneurs with greater opportunities to expand their market reach and improve business performance. The findings are expected to contribute towards the development of an appropriate strategic marketing framework for strengthening the competitiveness, sustainability, and growth of women-owned enterprises in India.

Keywords:- Entrepreneurs, Marketing, Challenges, Digital, Strategies, Business Growth, Opportunities.

Introduction

Women entrepreneurs may broadly be described as women, either individually or collectively, who take the initiative to establish, plan, organise, manage, and operate a business venture. They are actively involved in the major managerial functions of the enterprise, including planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating, and controlling. In general, a venture may be considered women-owned when women possess more than 50% ownership or hold more than 50% of the voting rights in the enterprises.

According to the Government of India, a women-owned enterprise refers to an enterprise that is owned and controlled by women, with women holding a minimum financial interest of 51% in the capital of the enterprise and accounting for at least 51% of the employment generated by the enterprise.

In recent years, women's participation in entrepreneurial and economic activities has increased significantly across the world. Several factors encourage women to enter entrepreneurship and establish business ventures. Among these, knowledge, entrepreneurial capabilities, skills, confidence, and the ability to comply with changing business requirements are important factors that motivate women to participate actively in business activities. Women entrepreneurs are required to perform a wide range of business functions, among which marketing is one of the most crucial. Effective marketing enables entrepreneurs to identify customer requirements, determine suitable products and services, establish appropriate prices, select distribution channels, identify target markets, and decide the level and methods of promotional expenditure.

Consequently, sound marketing decisions are essential for the survival, growth, and competitiveness of an enterprise.

However, making effective marketing decisions can be challenging when entrepreneurs have limited and direct interaction with the market. Women entrepreneurs may face additional constraints arising from family responsibilities, limited mobility, inadequate business networks, financial limitations, and other operational difficulties. As a consequence, some women entrepreneurs become dependent on intermediaries or middlemen for activities such as product distribution, market access, and sales. Excessive dependence on intermediaries can reduce direct interaction between women entrepreneurs and consumers or markets. This may limit their ability to understand changing customer preferences, receive direct market feedback, build customer relationships, and utilise their own marketing capabilities effectively. Ultimately, such constraints can restrict market expansion and adversely affect the overall growth and development of women-owned enterprises.

Digital Marketing and Women Entrepreneurs

Digitalisation has brought a significant transformation to the field of marketing. Digital marketing can make marketing activities more convenient and manageable for women entrepreneurs by helping them balance business requirements with family and social responsibilities. Through digital technologies, women entrepreneurs can access various business resources, including financial services, marketing information, raw materials, customers, suppliers, and other business networks, often at relatively lower costs. Digital platforms have also increased women's awareness of market trends and encouraged them to participate more actively in marketing activities.

Digital marketing may be understood as the promotion of products and services through digital technologies and electronic communication channels. It includes both offline and online digital media. Offline digital media comprise channels such as radio, television, digital display advertising, and mobile-based communication, whereas online digital marketing includes internet-based tools and platforms such as Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), Search Engine Marketing (SEM), Social Media Marketing (SMM), websites, e-mail marketing, and social networking platforms such as LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter/X, Pinterest, and other digital platforms.

The rapid development of digital technology has moved the business environment beyond the earlier Web 2.0 framework towards emerging Web 3.0 technologies. Despite these technological developments, many women entrepreneurs continue to rely heavily on

conventional methods of marketing. Excessive dependence on traditional marketing practices can restrict their market reach and reduce their ability to respond effectively to changing consumer preferences. Family responsibilities, limited resources, lack of technological knowledge, inadequate market information, and other business constraints may further restrict their ability to adopt modern marketing methods. Therefore, the effective use of digital marketing has considerable potential to expand the market reach of women entrepreneurs and contribute to the growth and development of women-owned enterprises.

Review of Literature

Kumar and Rajeev (2019) highlighted the importance of developing a new strategic approach for marketing handicraft products. The study indicates that traditional marketing practices may not be sufficient for reaching a wider customer base and that modern approaches can provide new opportunities for product promotion.

Chandwani and Verma (2020) discussed the role of digital technologies for women entrepreneurs in India. Digital technology provides opportunities for women to communicate, promote their products, access information, and conduct business activities with greater flexibility.

Pushpam and Thirumal (2020) examined the role of women entrepreneurs in digital commerce. Their work highlights the importance of online marketing and e-commerce in enabling women entrepreneurs to reach customers beyond their immediate geographical markets. However, issues such as customer retention, market identification, trust, and customer service need to be addressed.

Chatterjee, S., & Kar, A. K. (2020). Why do small and medium enterprises use social media marketing and what is the impact: Empirical insights from India. The research examines factors influencing social-media marketing adoption among Indian SMEs and reports links between social-media use and business performance, sales, and customer contacts.

Singh, R. U., & Jha, C. (2024). An Analysis of Challenges and Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs Owning MSME in India. The paper examines the broader challenges and opportunities associated with women-owned MSMEs in India.

Mahendrakar, R., & Soundararajan, K. (2025). Marketing Opportunities and Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs in Small and Medium Enterprises in the North Karnataka Region. Based on 379 respondents, the study examines marketing opportunities, digital

platforms, government policies, financial resources, and socio-economic factors affecting women entrepreneurs.

Shetye, S., & Thaloor, S. (2025). Challenges and Triumphs of Women Entrepreneurs Thriving in the Digital Economy: A Qualitative Study. The study identifies funding constraints, gender discrimination, work–personal-life pressures, and digital-skill gaps while also examining digital marketing and networking opportunities.

Dale, P., Jasrotia, S. S., Sainy, R., et al. (2026). Digital Platform Ecosystems as Drivers of Innovation among Women Entrepreneurs in Informal Economies. The study examines how women entrepreneurs in Indian Tier-II cities use social-commerce platforms to develop and sustain digital ventures.

Dr. Binod Kumar (2020) examined the marketing-related difficulties experienced by artisans. The study reported that artisans face several constraints, including inadequate financial resources, small-scale operations, insufficient advertising and publicity, and limited awareness of modern marketing practices and government schemes. These limitations adversely affect their ability to access and expand into wider markets.

Renu and Anupama (2018) highlighted the considerable potential of handicraft products and emphasised the need to improve communication with artisans regarding the use of information technology and digital tools. The study suggested that greater awareness and utilisation of digital technologies could strengthen the marketing of handicraft products and provide artisans with access to broader markets.

Afsana Salam (2018) examined the role of perception and attitude in the adoption and upgradation of technology among women entrepreneurs. The study indicated that a growing number of women entrepreneurs recognise the importance of adopting modern technologies. Many respondents perceived technology as relatively easy to use, and their attitudes towards technological adoption had become increasingly positive. This changing perception can encourage women entrepreneurs to incorporate technology into different aspects of their business activities.

Research Methodology

The present paper is theoretical and exploratory in nature and is based entirely on secondary sources of information. Data and relevant information have been collected from research papers, academic articles, journals, reports, books, and previously published literature. The study attempts to understand the major marketing-related difficulties faced by women entrepreneurs and examine how these difficulties influence their marketing practices. Based on

the existing literature, the study further seeks to identify appropriate marketing strategies that are compatible with the specific circumstances, responsibilities, resources, and limitations of women entrepreneurs.

Research Gap

The literature has discussed women entrepreneurship, marketing problems, digitalisation, social media, and e-commerce from different perspectives. However, many studies have examined these areas separately.

There is comparatively greater scope for an integrated approach that connects:

Marketing Problems → Digital Adoption → Strategic Marketing Practices → Market Expansion → Business Performance

Women entrepreneurs require marketing strategies that are not only modern but also compatible with their financial resources, technological capabilities, mobility constraints, and family responsibilities.

Therefore, the present study attempts to bring these dimensions together and proposes an appropriate strategic marketing approach for women entrepreneurs.

Objectives of the Study

The study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To examine the concept and significance of women entrepreneurship.
2. To identify and analyse the major marketing problems faced by women entrepreneurs.
3. To examine the role and benefits of digital marketing in promoting women-owned businesses.
4. To explore suitable marketing strategies for improving the market reach and business performance of women entrepreneurs.

Major Marketing Problems Faced by Women Entrepreneurs **Male-Dominated Social Environment**

One of the significant barriers faced by women entrepreneurs is the influence of a predominantly male-oriented social and business environment. In some situations, women may face doubts regarding their managerial abilities, business knowledge, and decision-making capacity. Certain customers, employees, suppliers, or business associates may also be reluctant to work with women entrepreneurs or may place less confidence in their business capabilities. Such attitudes can create difficulties in areas such as personal selling, negotiation, customer relations, networking, and public relations.

Lack of Strong Brand Image

A strong brand image plays an important role in influencing consumers' purchasing decisions. However, many women entrepreneurs, particularly those operating small-scale businesses, may

face difficulties in developing and maintaining a distinct brand identity. Limited financial resources, inadequate marketing expertise, and insufficient promotional activities can prevent them from creating strong brand recognition. Consequently, their products may receive limited publicity and visibility, making it more difficult to attract new customers and compete with established brands.

Difficulty in Determining Appropriate Prices

Price determination is another important marketing challenge for women entrepreneurs. Due to intense competition, limited market information, and inadequate knowledge of modern pricing and production techniques, some women entrepreneurs may be compelled to sell their products at very low prices, sometimes close to the cost of production or even below it. Such pricing practices may help them retain customers and remain competitive in the short term, but they can reduce profit margins and affect the long-term sustainability of the business. Limited awareness of contemporary marketing methods, production costs, consumer preferences, and competitors' pricing can further make it difficult for women entrepreneurs to determine an appropriate and profitable price for their products. Marketing Problems and Benefits of Digital Marketing for Women Entrepreneurs

Inadequate Promotional Expenditure

Women entrepreneurs often operate with limited financial resources and may not be able to spend as much on advertising and promotional activities as larger or better-established competitors. Their relatively small scale of operation can also result in higher production and operating costs. At the same time, they may have to keep the prices of their products competitive with those offered by other businesses. As a result, limited profit margins and financial constraints leave fewer resources available for advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, and other marketing activities.

Limited Availability of Credit Sales

Credit facilities are an important source of working capital for many businesses. However, some wholesalers, retailers, suppliers, investors, and customers may have reservations about the professional capabilities and financial capacity of women entrepreneurs. Consequently, women-owned enterprises may experience difficulties in obtaining favourable credit terms and may have to conduct a greater proportion of their transactions on a cash basis. Limited access to credit can create working-capital constraints and reduce the amount available for promotional activities such as advertising and sales promotion.

Inadequate Financial Assistance

Access to finance remains an important concern for many women entrepreneurs. Financial institutions may sometimes perceive women-owned businesses as comparatively risky because of factors such as limited collateral, small business size, insufficient credit history, or uncertainty about business continuity. In some cases, stringent collateral requirements and other lending conditions may make institutional finance difficult to obtain. Limited access to affordable finance can consequently restrict women's ability to invest adequately in advertising, personal selling, market research, branding, and other marketing activities.

Family Responsibilities and Competing Priorities

Family responsibilities can have a substantial influence on the business activities of women entrepreneurs. Women may have to balance entrepreneurship with responsibilities related to childcare, household management, and the care of dependent family members. These responsibilities can limit the time and mobility available for business development, market visits, networking, and promotional activities. In addition, some business associates, suppliers, investors, or other stakeholders may hold stereotypical assumptions that women will eventually discontinue their businesses to focus on family responsibilities. Such perceptions can make it more difficult for women entrepreneurs to establish stable business relationships and gain the confidence of market participants.

Limited Managerial and Marketing Skills

Some women entrepreneurs face difficulties in managing different aspects of their businesses, particularly marketing and sales activities. Due to limited managerial experience, communication skills, or access to professional assistance, they may become dependent on employees, agents, intermediaries, or other third parties to perform marketing functions. Difficulties in communicating and negotiating effectively with customers, suppliers, distributors, and other stakeholders can also affect the development of strong professional relationships and public relations.

Limited Knowledge of Alternative Sources of Raw Materials and Markets

Inadequate information about alternative suppliers, sources of raw materials, distribution channels, and potential markets can increase the operating costs of women-owned enterprises. Without sufficient market information, entrepreneurs may miss opportunities to obtain raw materials at competitive prices or identify more efficient suppliers. Similarly, limited awareness of modern marketing channels can prevent them from taking advantage of

comparatively affordable methods such as social media marketing, e-commerce, digital advertising, and other online promotional tools.

Educational and Digital Literacy Constraints

Educational attainment and digital literacy can influence the ability of women entrepreneurs to adopt modern production and marketing practices. Women with limited access to education or training may find it difficult to understand new technologies, analyse market information, maintain digital records, use online payment systems, or implement contemporary marketing techniques. Therefore, appropriate education, digital-literacy programmes, and entrepreneurship training can play an important role in improving women's ability to use modern marketing tools effectively.

Limited Personal and Professional Networks

Developing personal and professional networks is important for business growth because networking can provide access to customers, suppliers, investors, market information, and business opportunities. However, some women entrepreneurs may face social or family-related restrictions that limit their ability to travel, attend business events, meet new people, or develop professional contacts. Limited networking opportunities can consequently affect personal selling, public relations, customer acquisition, and sales promotion.

Benefits of Digital Marketing for Women Entrepreneurs

Convenience and Flexibility

Digital marketing provides considerable convenience to women entrepreneurs by allowing them to communicate with customers, suppliers, wholesalers, retailers, and other business stakeholders from almost any location and at different times. Unlike many traditional marketing methods that require physical presence and travel, digital platforms enable entrepreneurs to perform several marketing activities remotely. This flexibility can be particularly useful for women who need to balance business activities with household and family responsibilities.

Easy Market Access and Direct Communication

Traditional marketing often involves several intermediaries between producers and consumers. This may make communication slower and increase marketing costs. Digital marketing, on the other hand, enables women entrepreneurs to communicate directly with customers through websites, social media, messaging applications, e-commerce platforms, and other digital channels. Direct communication allows entrepreneurs to receive customer feedback, understand consumer preferences, respond to enquiries, and build stronger customer relationships without depending entirely on intermediaries.

Wider Geographical Reach

One of the major advantages of digital marketing is its ability to overcome geographical limitations. A small business that previously sold products only within its local area can use online platforms to reach customers in different cities, states, and, depending on its distribution capabilities, international markets. This provides women entrepreneurs with opportunities to expand their customer base without necessarily establishing physical outlets in every market.

Better Customer Engagement

Digital platforms facilitate continuous interaction between businesses and customers. Women entrepreneurs can use social media and messaging platforms to answer customer questions, collect feedback, announce new products, share offers, and maintain relationships with existing customers. Such interaction can contribute to customer engagement and help entrepreneurs understand changing market preferences.

Access to Market Information

Digital platforms provide women entrepreneurs with easier access to information about competitors, consumer preferences, prices, emerging trends, suppliers, and potential markets. Such information can assist them in making more informed decisions regarding product development, pricing, promotion, and distribution.

Improved Brand Visibility

Digital marketing provides opportunities for women entrepreneurs to create and strengthen their brand identity. Through social media, websites, online catalogues, videos, customer reviews, and other digital content, small businesses can communicate their products and unique value propositions to a broader audience. Consistent digital presence can improve product visibility and help businesses develop recognition among potential customers.

Flexible Business Operations

Digital tools allow several marketing activities—including product promotion, customer communication, order management, payment collection, and customer support—to be performed remotely. This flexibility can help women entrepreneurs manage business activities alongside their other responsibilities and reduce the need for frequent physical movement.

Overall, digital marketing can provide women entrepreneurs with opportunities to overcome several traditional marketing constraints. However, the effective utilisation of digital platforms depends on factors such as digital literacy, access to technology, reliable internet connectivity, financial resources, awareness, and the ability to develop appropriate digital marketing skills.

Direct Communication and Continuous Connectivity

Digital marketing enables women entrepreneurs to communicate directly with customers, suppliers, retailers, wholesalers, and other business stakeholders from almost any location and at any time. Online communication platforms allow information, ideas, enquiries, and feedback to be exchanged continuously, including beyond conventional business hours. This creates greater flexibility and enables women entrepreneurs to maintain regular contact with the market throughout the year.

Reduction in Cost and Saving of Time

Online marketing can reduce both the time and expenditure associated with several traditional marketing activities. Conventional advertising and promotion may require substantial expenditure on printing, transportation, physical meetings, and other promotional arrangements. In contrast, many digital marketing tools and platforms are available either free of cost or at comparatively low prices. Consequently, women entrepreneurs can promote their products and communicate with customers more efficiently while reducing marketing expenses and saving valuable time.

Wider Market Access

Digital marketing can help women entrepreneurs expand their businesses beyond their immediate local markets. Through internet-based platforms, a business can gradually extend its reach from the local or regional market to the state, national, and potentially international markets. Digital platforms also reduce the need for extensive physical infrastructure and frequent travel. However, entrepreneurs must comply with applicable legal, taxation, consumer-protection, payment, and other regulatory requirements when expanding into wider markets.

More Precise Target Market Identification

Under traditional marketing systems, women entrepreneurs may have limited direct interaction with consumers. This can make it difficult to obtain accurate information about customer preferences, purchasing behaviour, needs, and emerging market trends. Digital marketing provides opportunities for direct interaction and access to customer responses. Various online tools can also provide information about customer interests, engagement, and behaviour. Such information can assist women entrepreneurs in identifying appropriate target groups and developing more focused marketing strategies.

Potential for Increased Sales

Digital marketing can expand the geographical reach of products and services from local markets to national and international audiences. As the potential customer base becomes larger,

women entrepreneurs may have greater opportunities to generate enquiries, orders, and sales. Online product displays, social media promotion, e-commerce platforms, and digital advertising can therefore support market expansion and contribute to increased sales, subject to the quality of products, pricing, distribution capacity, and customer demand.

Creation and Improvement of Brand Image

Online marketplaces and digital platforms provide women entrepreneurs with opportunities to establish and strengthen their brand identity. Platforms such as Amazon, Snapdeal, Flipkart, Meesho, and other e-commerce channels can provide businesses with greater product visibility and access to established digital marketplaces. Customer reviews, product information, visual presentation, ratings, and regular online engagement can further influence consumers' perceptions of a brand. With consistent quality and effective digital communication, women entrepreneurs can gradually develop greater brand recognition and customer trust.

Limitations of the Study

The study is conceptual and based on secondary sources. It does not include primary data collected directly from women entrepreneurs. Therefore, the findings represent an interpretation of existing literature rather than statistical conclusions based on a specific sample. The experiences of women entrepreneurs may also differ according to geographical location, education, enterprise size, sector, age, access to finance, and level of digital literacy. Therefore, the proposed strategic framework may require modification according to the specific circumstances of individual enterprises. Statistical techniques such as correlation, regression, factor analysis, ANOVA, t-test, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) used where appropriate.

Conclusion

The study indicates that marketing is an essential function for the success and growth of any business because it helps consumers become familiar with a product and provides information about important attributes such as price, design, quality, size, colour, availability, and other features. Effective marketing also enables entrepreneurs to understand customer requirements and respond to changing market conditions.

Women entrepreneurs possess valuable knowledge, skills, and entrepreneurial capabilities; however, their ability to utilise these capabilities fully may be affected by various personal, social, financial, and professional constraints. Family responsibilities, limited access

to finance, restricted mobility, inadequate market information, technological barriers, and gender-related challenges can limit their participation in conventional marketing activities and restrict the geographical scope of their businesses.

Digital marketing should therefore be viewed as an important complementary alternative to conventional marketing practices for women-owned enterprises. However, successful adoption requires adequate digital literacy, technological access, awareness, training, reliable internet connectivity, financial resources, and knowledge of online business practices. Appropriate training and institutional support can further help women entrepreneurs make effective use of digital platforms.

Overall, the effective adoption of digital marketing can help women entrepreneurs overcome some of the limitations associated with traditional marketing, expand their customer base, improve brand visibility, establish direct market relationships, and explore wider business opportunities. Thus, greater awareness and strategic use of digital marketing can contribute significantly to the growth, competitiveness, and sustainability of women-owned enterprises.

References

- Akhila, P. H. (2018). Digital startups and women entrepreneurs: A study on the status of women entrepreneurs in India. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 5(4), 655–659.
- Bhagat, R., Soundara Rajan, R., & Sambargi, S. (2021). Digital marketing strategies adopted by women entrepreneurs and its impact on business performance: In the context of micro and small enterprises. *International Journal of Management, IT and Engineering*, 11(4), 56–77.
- Chandwani, J., & Verma, S. (2020). Role of digital technologies for women entrepreneurs in India. *Perspectives on Business Management and Economics*, 2, 62–71.
- Chhetia, K. (2021). Social media usage by entrepreneurs: A review paper. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government*, 27(2), 5385–5395.
- Gomathi, V. V., & Muthulakshmi, R. (2020). A study on the problems faced by women entrepreneurs in India. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(61), 14232–14238.
- Gupta, S., & Aggarwal, A. (2015). Opportunities and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in India. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 17(8), 69–73.
- Kumar, D., & Rajeev, P. V. (2019). A new strategic approach for marketing of handicraft products. *International Journal of Applied Marketing Perspectives*, 2(3), 540–543.

Pushpam, K., & Thirumal, S. (2020). Role of women entrepreneurs in digital commerce. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 7(1), 280–285.

Salam, A. (2018). Impact of digitization on women entrepreneurs. *International Journal of Recent Trends in Business and Tourism*, 2(4), 1–4.

Satpal, Rathee, R., & Rajain, P. (2014). Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the present technological era. *International Journal of Advanced Industrial Engineering*, 2(2), 54–57.