

Digital Marketing Strategies Adopted By Women Entrepreneurs and Its Impact on Business Performance (In the Context of Micro and Small Enterprises)

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Abstract

Purpose :- The purpose of this research study is to investigate how women entrepreneurs of micro and small enterprises are utilizing digital technologies for business marketing and what do they perceive about digitalization and adoption of digital marketing. The article aims at ascertaining the level of digital marketing adoption, DM channels, platforms and techniques employed by women entrepreneurs and how does digital marketing adoption affects their business performance and growth.

Design/Methodology/Approach :- Empirical findings are drawn based on primary data collection through a structured questionnaire survey from 138 women entrepreneurs of micro and small enterprises based in the state of Karnataka. Statistical tools were used to conduct descriptive and inferential data analysis to make valid inferences to achieve the objectives of the study.

Findings :- The findings revealed the popularity of few digital media channels and platforms among women entrepreneurs and majority of them showed low level of adoption. This indicated that digital marketing adoption is still in its early stage of adoption among women entrepreneurs of micro and small enterprises. The results also showed the positive relationship between the digital marketing adoption level and sales, thus impacting business performance of the

enterprises. Digital marketing strategies adopted by women entrepreneurs were identified from their pattern of usage of digital media and consequently the inferences were made regarding their lack of digital skills and expertise.

Research Limitations/Implications :- The data comes from one state with a limited sample size and thus the research context limits the generalizability of the results. Findings have important implications for policymakers, practitioners and entrepreneurs associations who are charged to develop women entrepreneurship in India to formulate specialized training programs to develop digital skills amongst women entrepreneurs especially in the case of micro enterprises where women entrepreneurs do their digital marketing by themselves.

Originality/Value :- This study is among the first to examine the digital marketing adoption strategies and its impact on business performance among the women entrepreneurs in the context of micro and small enterprises in Karnataka. The outcomes of the study bridges the research gaps and builds knowledge towards the emerging techniques of marketing.

Keywords :- Digital Marketing, Digital Media, DM Adoption Strategies, Business Performance, Women Entrepreneurs, Micro and Small Enterprises.

Statement of Intended Contribution

This research study provides major contribution in the field of marketing by adding valuable knowledge in the emerging techniques of marketing like digital marketing. Firstly, this study is unique in proposing the mathematical equation by the researcher in order to calculate the level of adoption of digital marketing on the basis of adoption score. This adoption score was calculated by considering two most important parameters namely number of digital media tools used by an enterprise multiplied by its percentage of marketing budget spent on digital marketing. This unique method fills the previous research gaps where there had been no specific method proposed yet to actually calculate the adoption level of digital marketing. One of previous research evaluated implementation level of E-marketing using direct questions in the survey, regarding percentage of their marketing activities done using digital marketing. This approach firstly lacks mathematical base to be used in future, secondly majority of respondent won't be able to calculate their level of adoption by themselves so this does not ideate in practical scenario. Another research examined on the basis of only number of digital channels used. Hence, this research study attempts to fill this critical gap in finding a more robust method to calculate the adoption level.

Secondly, this study contributes in evaluating the digital marketing adoption pattern and behaviour among women entrepreneurs from micro and small enterprises. As per the statistics,

India possessed 98% of women entrepreneurs as micro-enterprises and there had been no study examining this phenomenon for these micro-based women entrepreneurs. Majority of the studies either dealt with women entrepreneurs or MSMEs studies separately, only few studied both the concepts taken together, however no study examined the digital marketing adoption phenomena for this research population. Infact, in Karnataka there is no women entrepreneur under medium-scale category, so studying all enterprises together brings little relevance to the micro- enterprise based women entrepreneurs.

Thirdly, this study provides contribution in evaluating the impact of digital marketing adoption level on Sales growth thus proving and confirming the previous studies with respect to positive effect of digital marketing on business performance.

Thus conclusively, researcher proposes and recommends the women entrepreneurs to increase their adoption level of digital marketing by enhancing their digital skills and knowledge base to be able to effectively utilize the full potential of this emerging technique of marketing for their business growth. Researcher also provides suggestions to government authorities and entrepreneurs associations to devise and promote policies focused on imparting technical know-how and financial schemes to digitally enable women entrepreneurs.

Introduction

World has long past the Web 2.0 and has transitioned to Web 3.0 in this 'Decade of Digitalization' where thinking of a world without internet has become unimaginable. Digitization has become inseparable part of our daily lives where consumers are increasingly spending their time on an average of 6hours per day on digital media where half of that time is spent on mobile devices as per (Digital 2019 report) by Hootsuite and We Are Social. Digital population grew to 4.66 billion active internet users as per (Statista, 2020) which is encompassing 59 percent of the global population consuming digital information. Out of the total internet population, 91 percent of them use mobile phones making it handy to access digital information. India alone has 560 million online users molding the traditional ways in which consumers and businesses interact and engage with each other using digital media in some or other form.

Consequently, digital marketing became one of the emergent marketing strategies used for marketing communications and products promotion by connecting, creating leads and engaging with clients. Digital marketing adoption has shown better performance in terms of increased sales, market share and profitability (Onyango,2016) and found strong correlation between digital marketing and business performance. However the potential of this tool have remained unexploited to the full. Adoption of digital marketing have become a necessity for the businesses of all scaled, adoption is no more a choice especially in the case of small- scaled businesses

where marketing cost is the most limiting factor of operation.

Digital Marketing can be simply defined as the promotion of products and services using digital media (online and offline both) where online digital media comprises of internet based channels like websites, email, SEO, SEM, SMM and platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Pinterest, LinkedIn whereas offline digital media includes television, radio, digital display advertising, mobile phone (SMS, MMS, Callback, ringtones). This inclusion of offline channels differentiates digital marketing from online marketing. These digital media were developed primarily to be used for the personal reasons, however many harnessed its potential to turn hobbies, interests and their passion projects into highly profitable businesses and predominantly women embraced this opportunity that digital marketing media has opened up for them to pursue entrepreneurship. This resulted in the rise of new generation of women entrepreneurs who are ready to utilize the digital media for its flexibility, inexpensiveness, secured and easily accessible platforms to conduct marketing activities for their business. As per Government of India, a woman entrepreneur is defined as “an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman having a minimum financial interest of 51 per cent of the capital and giving at least 51 per cent of the employment generated in the enterprise to women”.

Even though there has been recent spurt in the women entrepreneurship in India, women constitute only 13.7 percent of total entrepreneurs in the country as per Sixth Economic Census of India (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation). Though, Bengaluru is one of the two Indian cities (Bengaluru and Delhi) featured on Dell's 2019 Women Entrepreneur Cities (WE) Index rated as global cities in terms of its ability to attract and support high potential women entrepreneurs, Karnataka stands at the sixth position in the country indicating huge disparity in the percentage of women entrepreneurship in the state. Moreover, 98 percent of businesses owned by women are micro-enterprises where 90 percent of them are operating in informal sector. It is also reported that not all Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) registered as women-owned are actually headed by women (MOSPI, 2016). The business environment challenges faced by women entrepreneurs affect their participation, impact the size, scale, level of formality, sectors and overall productivity of woman- enterprises.

This research study contributes to the understanding of women entrepreneurs' marketing practices with respect to digital marketing inclusion in the marketing mix of micro and small enterprises in the state of Karnataka. The study provides insights about the usage of digital marketing tools and techniques, factors that facilitate and inhibit the adoption, and its impact on business performance.

Review of Literature

This section reviews the extant of literature on the topics related to digital marketing (DM), DM channels and platforms, digital marketing strategies, business performance, women entrepreneurs, theoretical perspectives, enablers and barriers to adoption of digital marketing by women entrepreneurs of micro and small enterprises.

According to Onyango,(2016) Digital Marketing is one of most effective strategy for small businesses creating prospects for the enterprises, efficiently connecting and engaging with clients, impacting all elements of business performance by improving revenues, market share and increased profitability. The findings indicated that enterprises who harnessed the power of digital marketing showed better performance claiming better returns, more customers and increased sales than those who merely used conventional marketing strategies.

Whereas another researcher (Afifah et al., 2018) found that entrepreneurs' knowledge positively affect the adoption of digital marketing which in turn positively impact the business performance. Knowledge of the entrepreneurs means the understanding and usage of internet and various digital media tool to perform marketing needs of the enterprise. (Cesaroni et al., 2017) study results emphasized the impact of use of social media by women entrepreneurs in emerging countries including India where women are marginalized, subordinated and poses cultural barriers in participation at the work place. In such countries, adoption of digital marketingstrategy can help budding women entrepreneurs to broaden their network, start and manage their business efficiently.

Social media marketing platforms if used appropriately can substantially reduce the marketing cost and improves the relationship with customers thus creating a positive impact on the business (Mokhtar et al., 2016). Another researcher (Icha, 2016) stated that digital marketing media is the fastest way to capture the attention of consumer. Digital media is considered to be the efficient marketing strategy to market products of MSMEs where (Mujiyana et al., 2012) mentioned that digital marketing adoption is one of the competitiveness that must be owned by SMEs. Digital marketing platform offers two-way communication between brands and target audience and strives to create new marketing models providing a potential medium for creating profitable business (Bhargava, 2016). Whereas, Sathya, (2017) emphasized on the technical advancement

in digital marketing techniques to be adopted by the entrepreneurs to create greater impact.

Digital media can be used to collect the customer feedback and worked upon for product and services improvement thus giving rise to high level of business outcome and customer satisfaction by the right adoption of digital marketing strategy. Hossain et al., (2018) indicated that the benefits of running a business using social media platforms have considerably contributed to the rise in women entrepreneurship in recent years. Pai, (2018) further stated that increasing number of women are now venturing into own businesses because of innovative thinking, risk taking ability and passion for achievement rather than push factors like poverty or for just additional income. Wahee et al.,(2016) found that cyber world play an important role in empowering women by providing various digital marketing platforms to market their business from the convenience of home. Babu, (2015) reported that India's startup is encouraging and attracting more women, investors have also started to show confidence in women-enterprises.

Digital media platforms are contributing greatly in the rise of women entrepreneurship and thus it is majorly happening in urban women population whereas women centric avenues are still lacking in rural women population. Jethwa et al.,(2016) described the features of digital media tool (global reach, cost saving, ease of communication etc.) to be the driving factors behind rising women entrepreneurship, They also discussed the issues and challenges faced by women in e-commerce sector.

Literature shows that digital marketing adoption is positively related to growth, performance and competitiveness of small businesses. Social media forms of digital marketing were found to increase efficiency and improve external communication (Barnes et al., 2012). Even the starting point of digitization access like broadband usage for business marketing shows significant opportunities to micro and small businesses by reaching target audience and improving performance efficiency (Shideler and Badasyan, 2012). Large- scaled enterprises had been successfully using digital marketing however the marketing reality is different in case of micro and small businesses where adoption is a challenge because of various factors like limited knowledge and awareness, willingness by the entrepreneur, lack of finances and guidance to outsource or hire a professional. Women entrepreneurs lack the expertise and have limited enterprise resources to adopt digital marketing appropriately for their enterprise. Small business marketing techniques are generally unplanned, informal and spontaneous based on market reaction (Gilmore et al.,2004).

The small businesses are generally sales focused and marketing activity is just focused on creating awareness about their enterprise and products (Reijonen, 2010). There have been previous studies related to adoption of new technologies in plenty, however there is limited

knowledge available regarding utilization of digital marketing channels and platforms in marketing strategies of the firm and thus this topic requires more in -depth study.

Digital marketing and platforms

Digital marketing has its own characteristics and dynamics which need to be understood by the businesses to select and apply effective digital media tools, tactics and strategies. It is a new approach to marketing rather than just boosting traditional marketing by digital elements (Jarvinen et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2011). According to Gartener, various digital marketing platforms in modern business are called as digital media tools that provide technology capabilities to conduct marketing for business. Adoption of these media tools effectively to achieve intended business goals forms the digital marketing strategy.

Figure 1: Digital Marketing Media Strategy



Source : Neher,2019 (smei.org)

Digital media are broadly classified under three categories based on the investment made in digital media marketing. However, in literature there is another classification based on which party control the communication, like one and two-way communication (Taiminen and Karjaluoto, 2015). However, this study chose the investment as the relevant basis of classification of digital media into paid, owned and earned media (Chaffey, 2020; Manaher, 2019).

Paid Media : It includes all marketing channels and platforms that require a business to invest money to get an audience, visitors or conversions. It is ideal for both new businesses as well established ones and preferred by new businesses to build its audience in the starting phase. Paid media includes both offline and online channels like SEM, PPC, Affiliate, Paid Influencers, Display Ads, SMM sponsored Ads on– Facebook, LikeldIn, Pinterest, YouTube, Twitter are all effective platforms of paid social media advertising.

Owned Media: It refers to those media which is owned and controlled by the brand. Though platforms are not necessarily owned by the brand but it is controlled by the brand with respect to their published content by the brands' team. These includes free social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube Channel, WhatsApp, Blogs (content marketing), company websites, apps and Emails.

Earned Media: It refer to any content or mention that comes from another entity. This media shows the loyalty and trust of a brand in the audience, boosting reach with credibility to draw more leads, sales and relevance in the market. These include reviews, social media, SEO, Influencers and Word-of-Mouth marketing.

Mobile Phone Advertising: Mobile has replaced desktop in almost every digital marketing channels, so mobile optimisation is extremely important for the businesses apart from using forMS or mass messaging or using WhatsApp. According to Ukpere et al., (2014) Micro entrepreneurs often prefer to use mobile technology for digital marketing because of its ease of use as compared to other devices like desktop, laptop etc. and the integration of these digital media with mobile phones have made it accessible even to those women entrepreneurs who are not tech savvy.

Significance of the Study/Research Gaps

Digital marketing is one of the emerging strategies used by enterprises for marketing communication and products promotion and contributes to the marketing mix by capturing wider audience, connecting with customers and creating leads to new business opportunities. However, the prospects of this marketing tool have remained unexploited to its full potential. The change in business ecosystem has led to the re-invention of marketing practices and businesses have no choice but to adopt to the emerging techniques of marketing. Increasing trend of consuming digital media as reported by Internet world Stats is 4.66 billion, this increased use of internet and technology advancements further opened up new platforms for women entrepreneurs. Drawing from the current body of knowledge in the field of digital marketing, it is evident that large scale businesses have been successfully using digital marketing however the scenario is different in case of women entrepreneurs of micro and small enterprises. The use of digital media enables every woman entrepreneur to be successful in their business by applying appropriate digital marketing strategy. Hence, there is a need for this study leading to the following objectives:

Objectives

- 1) To find out the pattern of the digital marketing media adoption by women entrepreneurs.
- 2) To examine the extent of digital marketing adoption amongst women entrepreneurs.
- 3) To examine the impact of digital marketing strategies on the business performance.
- 4) To understand the enablers and barriers to adoption of digital marketing strategy.

Hypotheses

- 1) There is no significant difference in the pattern of the digital marketing media adoption by women entrepreneurs.
- 2) There is no significant difference in the preferred digital media marketing tools accepted by women entrepreneurs.
- 3) There is no significant difference in the adoption level of digital marketing by women entrepreneurs.
- 4) There is no significant relationship between the adoption level and sales of the Enterprises.
- 5) There is no significant impact of digital marketing strategies on the business performance.

Methodology

This research study is based on primary and secondary data. The primary data required for the study was collected from 138 women entrepreneurs of micro and small enterprises based in Karnataka using a structured questionnaire survey. Secondary data was collected from books, journals and websites. Statistical tools were used to conduct descriptive and inferential data analysis to make valid inferences to achieve the objectives of the study. The section further discusses the digital marketing strategy adopted by the respondents based on the analysis of their utilization pattern of various digital media, budget allocated to digital marketing and finally evaluating the level of adoption of digital marketing by women entrepreneurs.

Data Analysis

There were 138 completely filled-in responses received from women entrepreneurs of micro and small enterprises based in Karnataka. Out of which 2 responses were discarded for inconsistency, 34 respondents reported not to be using digital marketing for their business whereas 102 respondents reported to be using digital marketing in some or other forms. Therefore, it is exactly 75% of respondents were found to be using digital marketing and this (102 responses) forms the valid respondents for this study.

Digital marketing media utilization by women entrepreneurs

Table1. Adoption of Digital Marketing Channels by Enterprise Category

Enterprise Categories	Micro	Small	Medium	
	Mean Rank	Mean Rank	Mean Rank	All Mean
DM Channels				
Social Media Marketing	0.67	0.80	0.59	0.68
SEO	0.07	0.04	0.12	0.08
Content Marketing	0.05	0.04	0.03	0.04
Affiliate Marketing	0	0.04	0.03	0.02
Influencer Marketing	0.05	0.04	0.09	0.06
Email Marketing	0.23	0.40	0.53	0.37
Viral Marketing	0.02	0.16	0.35	0.17
Mobile Phone Advertising	0.28	0.64	0.35	0.39
SEM Pay-Per-Click Advertising	0	0	0.03	0.01

Source: Survey Data

As depicted in the above table 1, digital marketing channels used most often by women entrepreneurs were social media marketing amongst all the enterprise categories followed by mobile phone advertising and then Email marketing. Viral marketing is another channel which is popular amongst women entrepreneurs of small and medium enterprises. SEO, Viral marketing, Influencer and Pay-Per-click advertising are largely adopted by medium enterprises. Content and Affiliate marketing showed almost similar pattern of usage across all enterprises. Out of all, (67%) respondents were found to be using social media, followed by (39%) respondents using mobile phone advertising and (37%) were using Email marketing. There were (17%) of respondents using Viral marketing, whereas only (8%) of women entrepreneurs reported to use SEO, only (4%) used content marketing, another (6%) uses Influencer marketing, only (2%) uses Affiliate marketing and merely (1%) used Pay-Per-Click Advertising. The pattern of usage with different mean values reflects that there is significant difference in the preferred digital media adoption by women entrepreneurs. Thus, Null Hypothesis is rejected.

Table2. Distribution of Respondents by the Adoption Preference of Social Media Marketing Platforms

Social Media Marketing Platforms	Adoption Preference							
	Least 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Most 8
YouTube	35	2	6	1	2	2	3	14
Facebook	4	1	1	3	2	6	10	42
WhatsApp	1	1	2	1	3	4	9	48
Instagram	11	1	2	2	4	4	5	37
Twitter	24	8	5	7	0	1	2	17
LinkedIn	36	6	5	4	1	2	2	12
Pinterest	52	9	0	0	0	1	1	2
Others	62	2	1	0	0	0	1	1

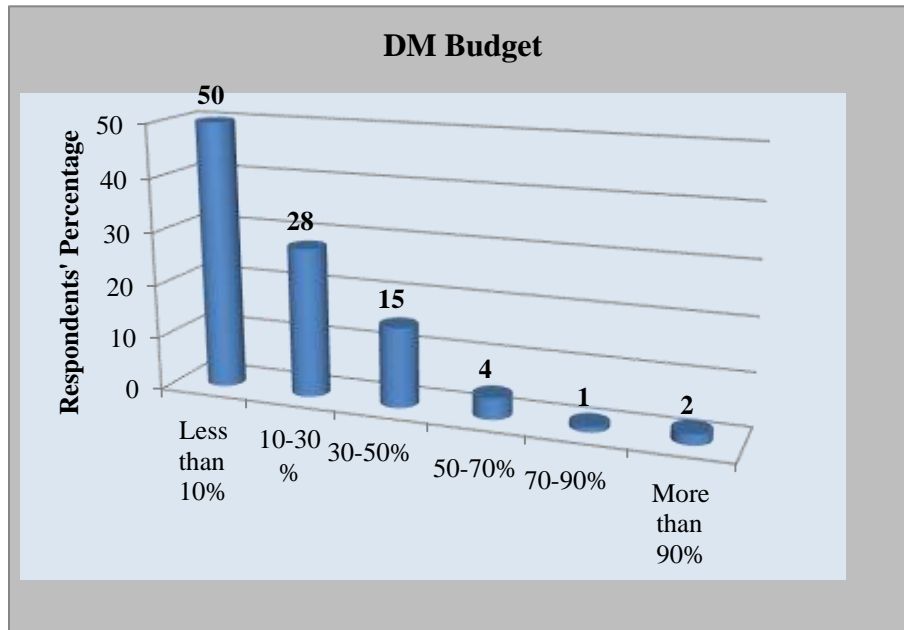
Source: Survey Data

The above table2, is the cumulative table presenting the usage preference of different social media marketing platforms by the women entrepreneurs who have adopted SMM channel for their marketing purposes. As stated earlier in the table1, Social Media Marketing was found to be the most popular digital channel. As evident from the above results, WhatsApp is the leading social media platform adopted by women entrepreneurs for marketing and communication activities followed by Facebook as the second most preferred platform. Instagram occupies the third ranking whereas Twitter emerged as the fourth preferred platform leaving behind YouTube known as a video marketing tool on a fifth ranking. LinkedIn occupied the sixth position whereas Pinterest was least preferred amongst all the choices given to respondents and all other social media platforms were bucketed in the 'Others' occupied the last rank.

The result shows that there is a difference in the adoption preference of social media platforms and it further re-instate the first objective. Thus, there is a significant difference in the preferred digital media marketing tools accepted by women entrepreneurs. Hence, Null Hypothesis is rejected.

Investment made in digital marketing by women entrepreneurs

Figure2. Respondents' distribution as per DM budget



Source: Survey Data

The figure2, illustrate the percentage distribution of respondents as per the investment made in digital marketing. As evident from the chart, majority 50% of women entrepreneurs are spending less than 10% marketing budget on digital marketing and 78% of women entrepreneurs spend less than 30% on DM. As per the literature and industry trend, the average DM budget should be atleast 30-50% or greater than this to ensure the benefits of digital marketing on business performance. However, in the study sample only 15% of respondents fall in the category of 30-50% range and only 4% are spending greater than 50% of marketing budget on digital marketing.

Levels of adoption of digital marketing by women entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs who were using digital marketing were categorized into three levels namely, low level, medium level and high level adopters where these levels of adoption were formed on the basis of adoption score calculated for each respondent. The calculation of adoption score is operationalized by the researcher as follows:

Adoption score = Digital media tools × Digital Marketing Budget

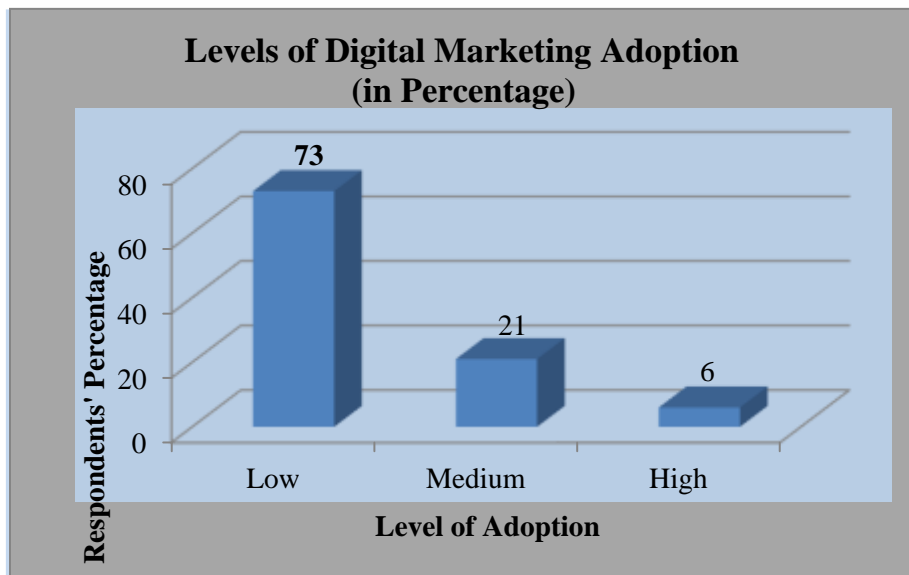
The table3 presents the distribution of respondents depending upon their individual adoption score and accordingly placed in different adoption levels. The figure3 illustrates the percentage of women entrepreneurs categorized into three adoption levels.

Table3. Distribution of Respondents by the Adoption Score

Adoption Score	Level of Adoption	Valid Percentage
1 to 20	Low	73
21-40	Medium	21
41 & above	High	6
Total		100

Source: Survey Data

Figure3. Levels of Digital Marketing Adoption by the Respondents



Source: Survey Data

The figure3 illustrates the percentage of women entrepreneurs categorized into three adoption levels. It can be interpreted that maximum number (73%) of women entrepreneurs falls in the category of low level of adoption, whereas 21% of them shows medium level of adoption and only 6% of respondents belong to high level of adoption of digital marketing. This reflects the extent of digital media usage by women entrepreneurs for marketing and communication is quite low and unsatisfactory as per market standards. The result shows that there is significant difference in the level of adoption of digital marketing by women entrepreneurs. Thus, Null Hypothesis is rejected.

Impact of digital marketing strategies on business performance of the enterprise

Business performance in the organization is measured by various metrics, the most popular among the small business segment is financial measures like cost, sales, ROI, revenue growth because the small and micro businesses are primarily sales focused. Therefore, Sales metric is used in this study to measure the business performance.

Table4. Adoption Level * Sales due to DM Cross tabulation

		Sales due to DM						
		Less than 10%	10-30%	30-50%	50-70%	70-90%		More than 90%
DM Adoption Level	Low	38	18	15	1	1	1	74
	Medium	1	7	10	4	0	0	22
	High	0	0	0	5	1	0	6
Total		39	25	25	10	2	1	102

Source: Survey Data

The above table4 presents the cross tabulation between digital marketing adoption level and its corresponding impact on sales generated due to DM. As shown in the table, majority (74) women entrepreneurs are low category adopters and consequently for 51% of them sales achieved by

DM is below 10%, for another 24% of them sales contribution by DM is below 30%. However, in case of medium category adopters, average sales contribution by DM is in the range of 30-50% or even more than 50%. High category DM adopters showed none below 50% and mostly found in the range 50-70% sales achieved by digital marketing. The result shows that there is a positive impact of digital marketing adoption level on the sales achieved by the enterprise. Consequently, if women entrepreneurs increase their adoption level will result in increase in sales thereby increasing the business performance of the enterprise.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted between level of adoption and sales due to DM. There was a statistically significant association between digital marketing adoption level by the women entrepreneurs and the sales contribution made by digital marketing adoption, $\chi^2(10) = 65.28, p < .001$.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	65.288 ^a	10	.000
Likelihood Ratio	52.965	10	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	29.327	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	102		

- a. 11 cells (61.1%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.

In order to confirm the assumption, Somers' d was run to determine the association between DM adoption level and sales due to DM amongst 102 respondents. There was a strong, positive correlation between DM adoption level and sales due to DM is found, which was statistically significant at ($d = .645, p < .001$) within the respondents' sample of this study. The results are tabulated in the table6 given below.

Table6. Somers'D correlation between DM Adoption Level and Sales due to DM

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	.473	.067	5.602	.000
Somers'd Symmetric				
DM Adoption Level Dependent	.373	.065	5.602	.000
Sales due to DM Dependent	.645	.080	5.602	.000

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

The result shows that there is a positive impact of digital marketing adoption level on the sales achieved by the enterprise. Consequently, if a women entrepreneur increase their adoption level that will result in increase in sales thereby increasing the business performance (in terms of sales) of the enterprises.

This leads to the rejection of null hypothesis as there is significant impact of digital marketing strategies on the business performance.

Findings and Conclusion

The study findings revealed that women entrepreneurs are aware of the importance of using digital marketing as 75% of respondents were found to be using digital marketing in some or other form for their business marketing and communications. Most of the women entrepreneurs (80%) were running either in small or micro business segment, and this finding is in line with latest report by (MSME, GOI) and other previous studies in the literature (Singh, 2012; MOSPI, 2016).

Social media marketing channel is the most preferred digital media adopted by most of the (67%) respondents followed by mobile phone advertisements and Email marketing respectively. This study found email marketing to be the third most preferred channel whereas previous studies Eriksson et al., (2008) found email marketing to be the top digital media. Amongst the proposed social media platforms, WhatsApp and Facebook are the two most preferred digital media tool followed by Instagram. More than 75% of the respondents spent less than 30% of their marketing budget on digital marketing. Digital marketing adoption level was found to be low among the majority (73%) of respondents.

Thus, it can be interpreted that women entrepreneurs are majorly using owned digital media but only the basic level without investing any money or keeping very low budget allocated for digital marketing purpose. They are not utilizing paid media, offering the advanced techniques and paid features of digital media tools and merely rely on free accounts and its restricted features. Therefore, they could not make use of the full potential of digital media. The same is reflected in the survey results showing very low percentage of women entrepreneurs adopting SEO, SEM-PPC, Content Marketing and Affiliate marketing. In social media platforms, only those platforms are used which are easy to use and does to require technical ability or skills to operate like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. YouTube being the popular video marketing tool however the adoption rate is lesser amongst women entrepreneurs as it requires video making skills. Therefore, knowledge and digital skills are the primary limiting factor for low adoption rate. Secondly, lack of funds is also one of the barriers to make proper utilization of digital marketing media. Financial assistance can enable women entrepreneurs to hire professionals for carrying out digital marketing effectively.

The survey results showed strong and positive association between digital marketing adoption level and sales due to DM. Thus, findings indicate that digital marketing strategies positively impact the business performance of the enterprises. The study results are in conformity to the literature findings about the positive impact of digital marketing strategy on all elements of business performance (Onyango, 2016) including market share, revenue growth and increased profitability.

The secondary research from the literature reviews highlighted the enablers and barriers to adoption of digital marketing. The major enablers includes ease of use and communication, greater flexibility in usage, global reach, cost effective, huge return on investment, providing accessibility and convenience to operate from anywhere and anytime. The major barriers includes lack of knowledge and technical skills of the entrepreneur, lack of monetary resources, unpredictable perceived usefulness, promotion strategy can be duplicated by competitors and access to technology.

This study makes a significant contribution in the field of digital marketing adoption by women entrepreneurs in the context of micro and small enterprises, providing an overview of the usage pattern and its effect on the business performance. Although digital media tools were not actively used but still respondents objective to gain online visibility from their limited online presence is achieved.

Implications and Recommendations

The study highlights the limiting factors so as to provide insights to the concerned authority to take necessary steps to improve the digital marketing usage. The study findings have important implications for women entrepreneurs, policymakers, practitioners and entrepreneurs associations who are charged to develop women entrepreneurship in India to formulate specialized training programs to develop digital skills amongst women entrepreneurs especially in the case of micro enterprises where women entrepreneurs do their digital marketing by themselves.

Women entrepreneurs should invest in learning digital skills to utilize digital marketing tools effectively and more actively to perform market needs. This will open avenues for businesses growth manifolds. Financial barrier is another limitation and there are multiple ways to provide solution for it, they must equip themselves with current market and industry information to help raise funds at lower cost from various financial institutions and government schemes. Consequently, they can hire professionals to look after their digital marketing activities. This can be achieved when they are willing to broaden their knowledge base. Micro and small businesses must include digital marketing as a part of their marketing strategy to harness its tremendous benefits.

This study is among the first to examine the digital marketing adoption strategies and its impact on business performance among the women entrepreneurs in the context of micro and small enterprises in Karnataka. The outcomes of the study bridges the research gaps and builds towards accumulated knowledge in the field.

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