

Future of Sustainable Business: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities

Editors

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and access to capital. There is a need to understand the real-world experiences of these women to support their growth through targeted policies and digital literacy programs.

Importance of the Study

- Highlights the contribution of women-led online businesses to India's economy and sustainable development goals.
- Brings awareness to the challenges faced by digital women entrepreneurs in India.
- Provides insights for policymakers, NGOs, and platforms to create more inclusive digital business environments.
- Encourages more women to take up entrepreneurship by sharing success stories and trends.

Objectives of the Study

1. **To understand the key motivations behind Indian women starting online small businesses.**
2. **To identify the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in managing and marketing their businesses online.**
3. To study the effectiveness of online platforms in supporting the success of women-owned small businesses

Limitation of the Study

- Only 100 respondents were selected from different parts of Chennai City.
- Data is collected only from Chennai City.
- Results of this research will be confined with sampling data only.

Research Methodology

Meaning

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. The researcher is studying his research problem along with the logic behind them. It is necessary for the researcher to know not only the methods, techniques but also the methodology.

Data Collection

Data refers to information and facts. The task of data collection begins after the research problem has been defined and the research plan been decided.

There are two types of data collected

1. **Primary data**
2. **Secondary data**

Sample Size: Sample size refers to the number of respondents drawn out for the purpose of study. The sample size selected for this study is 100. Based on these respondents' answers, the rest of the study is conducted.

Statistical Tools: Statistical tools refer to the equipment that aid in conducting a research successfully. The statistical tools that aided in this research are charts like bar column, pie, cone, pyramid, line and cylinder

The other tools aided in this analysis are as follows;

- Percentage method

Review of Literature

1. Dangi & Narula (2020)

Title: Women Entrepreneurship in India: A Literature Review

Summary

This study highlights the increasing trend of women turning to entrepreneurship in India, especially in urban and semi-urban areas. It notes that digital tools and government initiatives like "Digital India" have opened new doors for women to start businesses from home. However, challenges such as limited capital, family responsibilities, and lack of digital awareness remain major obstacles.

2. Kabeer (2019)

Title: Empowerment, Citizenship and Gender Justice: A Contribution to Locating the Sustainable development goal

Summary:

Kabeer’s research connects women’s economic empowerment to broader development goals. It shows that when women earn through entrepreneurship, it enhances their decision-making power in both households and society. The study links empowerment through business to SDGs like Gender Equality and Decent Work.

3. Rani & Kumar (2021)

Title: Role of Social Media in Promoting Women Entrepreneurs in India

Summary: This study emphasizes how platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook have become powerful tools for marketing and customer engagement. Women use them to showcase products, interact with customers, and create brand identity—all without the need for physical stores.

4. Sharma & Goyal (2018)

Title: Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs in India

Summary

The study discusses major difficulties women face such as access to funding, lack of training, social constraints, and limited digital exposure. It stresses the importance of digital literacy and support networks in helping women sustain their businesses.

5. Meesho Business Report (2023)

Title: Empowering Digital Entrepreneurs: Growth of Women Sellers in India

Summary: This report by the e-commerce platform Meesho reveals that over 60% of its sellers are women from small towns. It highlights that platforms offering zero-commission selling, doorstep delivery, and vernacular language support have encouraged many women to become financially independent.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

TABLE 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	18–25 years	20	20
2	26–35 years	45	45
3	36–45 years	25	25
4	Above 45 years	15	15
Total	100	100	100
S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	High School	18	18
2	Undergraduate Degree	42	42
3	Postgraduate Degree	30	30
4	Skill-based Certification	10	10
Total	100	100	100
S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	Clothing/Fashion Accessories	35	35
2	Homemade Food/Bakery	25	25
3	Handicrafts/Art	20	20
4	Beauty & Wellness Products	20	20
Total	100	100	100

Percentage Analysis

Table:1 Reason for Starting Online Business

S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	To earn additional income	28	28
2	Financial independence	32	32
3	To support family income	25	25
4	To follow a personal passion	15	15
Total	100	100	100

Table :2 Reason for Choosing Online Over Offline Business

S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	Low investment cost	30	35
2	Wider customer reach	35	30
3	Work-from-home flexibility	25	25
4	Social media trend	10	10
	Total	100	100

Table :3 Source of Business Idea

S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	Social media	40	40
2	Friends or family	25	25
3	Training or workshop	15	15
4	Self-research	10	10
	Total	100	100

Table :4 Main Challenges in Running Online Business

S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	Low sales or demand	30	30
2	Handling marketing	25	25
3	Order and logistics	20	20
4	Lack of family support	25	25
Total	Total	100	100

Table :5 Barriers to Business Growth

S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	Lack of funds	35	35
2	Not enough time	30	30
3	Lack of technical skills	20	20
4	Fear of failure	15	15
	Total	100	100

Table: 6 Support Needed to Grow Business

S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	Digital marketing training	30	30
2	Easy funding/loans	35	35
3	Business mentorship	20	20
4	Logistic support	15	15
	Total	100	100

Table :7 Most Used Online Platform

S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	WhatsApp Business	25	25
2	Instagram	40	40
3	Facebook	20	20
4	Meesho	15	15
	Total	100	100

Table :8 Preferred Promotion Method

S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	Regular social media posts	40	40
2	Sharing in WhatsApp groups	30	30
3	Paid advertisements	20	20
4	Influencer marketing	10	10
	Total	100	100

Table :9 Effectiveness of Digital Platforms

S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	Very effective	35	35
2	Somewhat effective	40	40
3	Not very effective	20	20
4	Not effective at all	5	5
	Total	100	100

Findings of the Study

Based on the data analysis, the following key findings were observed:

1. Motivation for Entrepreneurship:

- Most women started online businesses to achieve **financial independence (32%)**, followed closely by those seeking **additional income (28%)**.
- A majority were **inspired by social media (40%)** and influenced by the ease of starting a business with **low investment and wider reach** online.

2. Challenges Faced:

- The top challenge reported was **low sales or demand (30%)**, followed by **marketing difficulties and lack of family support (25% each)**.
- **Lack of funds (35%)** emerged as the major barrier to business growth, with a need for **digital marketing training (30%)** and **easy loan access (35%)** for scaling.

3. Use of Online Platforms:

- **Instagram (40%)** is the most used platform for promotion, while **WhatsApp (30%)** plays a strong role in direct selling and customer interaction.
- The most common promotional method is **organic posting on social media (40%)**, with limited reliance on paid ads or influencer marketing.
- A total of **75%** of the women found digital platforms either **very effective** or **somewhat effective** for growing their business.

Suggestions

To support the growth of online small businesses led by Indian women, several focused initiatives are recommended. Firstly, digital literacy and social media marketing training should be made accessible, especially for women in rural and semi-urban areas. Government and NGOs can collaborate to provide such programs for free or at a minimal cost. Secondly, easy access to microloans and low-interest financial support can help women overcome capital

challenges and expand their businesses. Platforms like Meesho, which already empower women sellers, should be promoted more widely. Additionally, mentorship programs connecting experienced entrepreneurs with new business owners can offer valuable guidance and motivation. Community and family awareness programs are also essential to encourage a supportive environment for women entrepreneurs. Finally, recognizing successful women-led ventures through awards or media stories can inspire others to start their journey, thereby strengthening women's role in India's digital economy and sustainable development.

Conclusion

The study clearly shows that online small businesses are emerging as a powerful tool for women's empowerment in India. Digital platforms have provided women—especially those balancing household responsibilities—a flexible, low-cost avenue to achieve financial independence and entrepreneurial success. Despite facing challenges such as limited funds, marketing difficulties, and technical barriers, Indian women are actively engaging in digital commerce.

Social media plays a dual role—as a source of business inspiration and as a marketing tool—highlighting the need for tailored digital skill training. The findings also suggest a growing trend of women leveraging platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp for personalized, direct-to-consumer selling, which aligns with sustainable development goals like **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)** and **SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth)**.

To support this momentum, institutions and policy-makers must ensure better access to digital education, funding, and mentorship. Strengthening these areas will help more Indian women entrepreneurs thrive in the digital economy and contribute to sustainable national development.

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CHAPTER 10

INDIA'S FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT SURGE: GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS, POLICY REFORMS, AND THE PATH TO GLOBAL MANUFACTURING LEADERSHIP

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I. Introduction

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has emerged as a cornerstone of India's economic growth, transforming the country into one of the world's most attractive investment destinations. In FY 2023-24, India recorded \$70.9 billion in FDI inflows, reinforcing its position as a preferred alternative to China amid shifting global supply chains. This surge is not accidental—it is the result of deliberate policy reforms, geopolitical realignments, and a thriving domestic market. The China+1 strategy, adopted by multinational corporations to reduce dependency on China, has significantly benefited India. Giants like Apple, Tesla, and Micron are expanding operations here, leveraging India's skilled workforce, cost efficiencies, and stable policies. Additionally, the Indian government's Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, liberalized FDI norms, and infrastructure push have further boosted investor confidence.

Geopolitical dynamics, including U.S.-China trade tensions and India's strategic partnerships (Quad, UAE-India FTA), have accelerated FDI inflows. Key sectors like semiconductors, renewable energy, electronics, and electric vehicles (EVs) are witnessing unprecedented investments. Singapore, the U.S., UAE, Mauritius, and Japan remain the top FDI contributors, fueling India's manufacturing and digital economy.

As India aims to become a \$5 trillion economy, FDI will play a pivotal role in job creation, infrastructure development, and technological advancement. However, challenges like bureaucratic delays and infrastructure gaps must be addressed to sustain this momentum. This article explores the drivers, trends, and future of FDI in India, analyzing how geopolitics, government policies, and global business shifts are reshaping the investment landscape.

FDI Data for the Financial Year 2024

- Total FDI Inflows: \$70.9 billion (slight dip from \$84.8B in 2022-23 due to global slowdown but still strong).
- Top Investing Countries: Singapore (27%), USA (18%), UAE (12%), Mauritius (10%), Japan (7%).
- Leading Sectors: Computer Hardware & Software (25%), Automobiles (15%), Renewable Energy (12%), Infrastructure (10%), Pharmaceuticals (8%).
- Major Deals:
 - Micron's \$2.7B semiconductor plant in Gujarat.
 - Foxconn's \$1.5B expansion for iPhone manufacturing.
 - Google's \$10B India Digitization Fund (ongoing investments).

II. Geopolitical Factors Driving FDI to India

India's FDI surge is inextricably linked to global geopolitical realignments, positioning the country as a strategic alternative to China. The "China+1" strategy—adopted by multinationals to de-risk supply chains—has catalysed massive investments in India. For instance, Apple shifted 7% of iPhone production to India in 2023 (targeting 25% by 2025), with suppliers like Foxconn establishing a \$1.5 billion plant in Tamil Nadu and Tata acquiring Wistron's Karnataka facility. Similarly, Samsung operates its world's largest mobile factory in Noida,