

ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA IN THE RISE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

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Abstract

The main purpose of the research was to establish the role of digital media in the success of Pakistani business-women entrepreneurs. In spite of the adverse situation, Pakistani women are growing and flourishing owing to the digital revolution. The survey method was used to conduct this study. Information is collected through a survey of the sample size of 70 female business owners. To establish how digital media and other social media websites are helping women entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses during this digital era, the Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) were used. The discussion reveals how women entrepreneurs are being presented with many new opportunities by the digital media. The various social media platforms have also enabled the female company owners to run their businesses online as opposed to the traditional methods. Furthermore, it was also found out that Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp are the most commonly used social media sites by female entrepreneurs as a means of running their businesses. Women business people reported that digital media has helped them to conduct business with ease. Based on the statistics, social media positively impacts the lives of the female entrepreneurs, both in work and personal life.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is important in economic growth and prosperity as it is acknowledged globally (Meyer, 2019; Dvorsky, 2018; Zaki, 2016). Entrepreneurship means creating new businesses and finding ways to make money by using different resources to take advantage of market opportunities (Ireland, 2001). Women-owned businesses are expected to grow quickly and will help create wealth, reduce poverty, and promote economic and social development. This growth is driven by innovation, more

competition, a variety of businesses, and better use of talented people (Brush, 2012).

When women are given opportunities and the correct technology, families, countries, societies grow economically and socially. Women have broken through gender-based norms and obstacles by using current technology and digital media tools into their commercial operations. The adaptation of new technologies has not only empowered women, but has also provided them with financial assistance, allowing them to be self-

sufficient and support their families. Social media and digital technologies were first utilized for private purposes, but when platforms like Facebook and Twitter became popular, businesses and organizations saw the chance to reach and engage with more people. They realized they could market and advertise to a larger audience using online methods and mobile devices for very little cost.

Several scholars have become interested in the global phenomenon of female entrepreneurship throughout the years (Henry, 2016). Researching on this element of entrepreneurship does not only contribute to the formation of the economic information, but also contributes to emerging employment opportunities understanding. Despite several societal, cultural, and religious barriers, women in Pakistan have made major contributions to business over time. (Torres-Ortega, 2015). Women in underdeveloped nations, on the other hand, have not gotten the essential assistance in order to establish their own enterprises. Despite their significant achievements, they were unable to acquire international attention. (Roomi, 2008a, 2008b). Due to Pakistan's patriarchal and male-dominated culture, women have encountered several obstacles on the road to success. In the guise of tradition, religion, and culture, they deal with gender inequity and prejudice. In order to quantify the influence of digital media on the process of women entrepreneurship, the given research will be based on two theoretical approaches, which are Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT). The emerging trends in female entrepreneurs' motivations will be uncovered using these theoretical frameworks. This study will also examine how women are using digital media platforms to launch and expand their businesses.

2. Background

Prior research has been done on the connection between the entrepreneurial attitude, business success, and social media use. However, the majority of these studies weren't conducted in Pakistan, but rather in Malaysia and Nigeria (Abu

Amodu, 2016). Pakistan is a developing country, and as more and more women show interest in entrepreneurship, the situation of women entrepreneurs is improving. One of the biggest cities in Pakistan is Karachi, where many women have established their own businesses. This is made feasible by the cutting-edge technologies of digital media tools and social media networking system where women were able to start up and run their businesses with success (Hughes, 2012). But it's thought that there's a compelling need to research and analyze how women become entrepreneurs.

3. Purpose of the study

The major goal of this study is to find out the impact of social identity theory and uses and gratification theory on the entrepreneurial process through the lenses of women. These theoretical frameworks are used to figure out the motivation for women's interest in entrepreneurship and the most popular digital media platforms that these women entrepreneurs utilize to conduct business. In addition, I have firsthand knowledge in small business management in Pakistan. My background as an entrepreneur in Pakistan enables me to do research on this subject and analyses the experiences of other women entrepreneurs to further our knowledge of this topic. Due to societal factors, women entrepreneurs do not have the same opportunities that males have. However, the new era of technology has helped female business owners in realizing their aspirations and reducing societal inequalities. There is an increment in the percentage number of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. (Khan, 2020).

4. Literature Review

Due to the internet revolution, Pakistani women entrepreneurs are today thriving and prospering despite their challenging circumstances (Standing, 2018). It has been discovered that Pakistani women have struggled for their rights for more than 75 years. But things are progressively getting better now. Women business owners in this country are now capable of running their enterprises while adhering to their cultural and

societal beliefs(Yunis, 2020). Though it is yet unknown, their abilities have improved. One needs to have digital dynamic talents in order to succeed in the contemporary world's digital challenge. Due to consumer awareness of sustainability, women business owners have been compelled to create sustainable enterprises that can support both their companies and society as a whole.

It is the era of modern technology as it has transformed the traditional business by providing new opportunities through the assistance of the internet and digital media (Ramadani, 2013). The success of female entrepreneurs is largely due to the social media platforms and digital media tools whereby they give flexibility, as well as substituting the need to interact with people physically to the virtual environment (Barnes, 2012).

Social media usage has grown in Pakistan over the past few years, it has been observed. With almost 19 million users, Facebook is thought to be the most popular social network among Pakistanis (Melissa, 2015). Entrepreneurs can create websites where they can exchange information, post images, and keep their customers up to date on their products. It has given numerous small businesses the chance to introduce themselves. On the Facebook sites of various business owners, you can get company and product details.

Social engagement is made possible by social media. Everyone has the freedom to post anything electronically, communicate with anyone, receive and give real-time feedback, and make adjustments or corrections to the original material. People can now communicate in real time with anybody, anywhere, at any time, due to social media platforms(Kim, 2012). It is a platform that, by boosting traffic and providing market information, has greatly increased the prospects for the advancement of business-related operations.(Stelzner, 2012)

1.1. Social media and Women Entrepreneurs

A dramatic rise has been observed in the number of women entrepreneurs over the few years. This is due to the fact that they now have access to

many more and better opportunities than they did previously. This has allowed them to not only provide for and support their family financially, but also to fulfill their social and religious obligations(Melissa, 2015).

One important reason for this empowerment is that women entrepreneurs are using digital media and social media more. Social media gives them the flexibility they need to run their businesses well. It allows them to share information quickly and cheaply, show product images and videos for free, connect with many people, and send messages instantly (Genç, 2015). This helps them balance their personal and work lives, which leads to better productivity and less stress (Beninger, 2016).

E-commerce has grown in popularity in recent years, with China's Alibaba.com serving as a prime example. It is the largest online shopping site in the world (Renko, May 31, 2017). Amazon, AliExpress, and eBay are other examples of online retailers. These websites generate revenue by promoting their wares or products through social media platforms. Entrepreneurs must establish a strong connection with their target audience in order to be successful. Digital media tools and social media platforms enable information exchange and the discovery of better opportunities(Park, 2017). Business visionaries also make an effort to broaden their social networks and online interactions in order to discover new ideas.

4.1. Facebook

Facebook creator, Mark Zuckerberg had a vision of providing people with the power to share and make the world more open and broader (Arca, 2012). Facebook is an online social networking through which users can connect and share information with everyone. It enables you to share information, promote your products, and make new contacts.

4.2. LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the most popular professional networking site(Arca, 2012). It allows people to explore new possibilities, make new contacts, and develop professional relationships.

4.3. Twitter

Twitter offers microblogging as well as social networking services (Arca, 2012). Jack Dorsey found it in 2006. Since then, many entrepreneurs have used it for customer service, news broadcasting, and information gathering.

4.4. YouTube

YouTube is very much considered as the largest video sharing social site in the world (Arca, 2012). This platform facilitates business owners in raising brand awareness through the creation of videos and movies. With its user-friendly graphical and interactive interface, it can be used for advertising and marketing.

4.5. Instagram

Another social media platform, because of its amazing marketing tools and hash tagging # options, Instagram is now a very popular social media platform (Arca, 2012). Facebook's policies have changed, requiring users to pay for advertising. Many entrepreneurs found it difficult to capture the attention of the audience as a result of this. Instagram, on the other hand, is free of such issues. It offers marketing benefits at no cost, which is why it has become a very popular social site for conducting business.

5. Theoretical Framework

5.1. Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Social Identity Theory was initially named in 1979 in order to describe both social and psychological perceptions. It has been stated that cognitive and behavioral processes play a significant role in the formation of social groups. Members who share similar interests, values, and points of view are considered "in-group," while those who do not share these characteristics are considered "out-group" (Trepte, 2016). SIT concentrated primarily on social categorization, comparison, identification, and self-esteem. Even though everyone's definition of self-esteem differs, this theory assists individuals in assuming and comparing their own distinct sense of identity. It is also understood that people connect emotionally when they belong to a specific social group.

Even in today's corporate environment, the gender gap in entrepreneurship cannot be ignored (Dragusin, 2006). They found that women entrepreneurs adopt the strategy of becoming their own bosses and they enter into their venture as a reaction to a need and passively thus, but men enter their venture with the ultimate aim of becoming independent and in control. It was discovered that male entrepreneurs were happier and better able to handle stress than women, despite the fact that women were more likely to maintain a work-life balance (Carree, 2012). In this study SIT is employed in this study to find out the reasons why women identify themselves as women entrepreneurs along with how they sustain own venture by developing social identity and self-worth. In this study, SIT is used to determine the reason behind women identifying them as entrepreneurs, as well as how they sustain their own venture by developing social identity and self-worth.

5.2. Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) was presented in 1974 (Dainton, 2011). They implied the utilization of media and information by people in order to fulfill their needs and wants. The digital media through social media has an important role in creating social relationships. It is also asserted that in addition to creating new relationships and reinforcing existing ones, people utilize digital media for other purposes, such as amusement or gaining knowledge and information.

According to Kamberidou, to create successful online communities or businesses, it is important to use certain "feminine" communication skills like "listening" and "making connections" (Kamberidou, 2013). The skills are productive in making female entrepreneurs successful. The research paper shall use the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) to investigate the use of digital media tools and social media by female entrepreneurs in initiating, expanding, and developing their business ventures. Through the UGT framework, the researchers will be able to determine what social media platforms and

other digital tools can be used to assist women in developing their identities and feeling a sense of belonging among the female entrepreneurship.

6. Problem statement

The social media and the use of digital media has resulted in a revolution and also helped in the creation of a new modern and a digital entrepreneurial culture. However, there hasn't been enough research done in this area. How these social media platforms have assisted female entrepreneurs in terms of funding and technical support is not fully understood. However, it is clear that the success of the new generation of female entrepreneurs is highly dependent on social media and digital media platforms.

7. Research Objectives

The study is aimed at exploring how digital media can empower women by venturing into entrepreneurship. It seeks to comprehend the relationship that exists between women and online sites in terms of establishing and growing their businesses. In particular, the study aims at:

- Gather knowledge about the opportunities of digital media in the empowerment of women.
- To identify how Pakistani women entrepreneurs are effectively using digital technologies and other internet marketing resources to expand their business.

8. Research Questions

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

- What role does digital media play in empowering women?
- What influence does digital media have on female entrepreneurship?

9. Methodology

9.1. Purpose of the Research

This study aims at investigating the possibilities of using digital media as a catalyst to women empowerment. It focuses on revealing the contribution that online connections, marketing approaches, and technological access contribute to strengthening women's roles in

entrepreneurship and increasing their participation in the digital economy.

9.2. Research Design

This study utilized the cross section survey design. The design is suitable as it will enable the collection and analysis of data at single point in time, giving a picture of how female entrepreneurs are using digital media, currently to facilitate their business operations.

9.3. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study was the female entrepreneurs. All the participants are the representatives of one unit, as their experience and perception of digital media use in business are studied.

9.4. Target population

The population targeted comprises women who either are business people or run their own businesses. The research was not limited to any age or gender definition; nevertheless, it was focused on the experiences of women. The data were gathered using online data collection since they were accessible and reachable in various regions.

Sampling Technique

The research process was conducted through the convenience sampling to examine how the use of digital media affects the performance of female entrepreneurs.

9.5. Data Collection

The study area was limited to Karachi and a total of 70 respondents were requested to fill a questionnaire form consisting of 16 questions. The main aim of the research was to establish the details of how and on what social media platforms women use the most frequently to conduct business. The ethical consideration of the study meant that the participants had to be at least 18 years old, and all respondents were female entrepreneurs who were part-time or full-time entrepreneurs. Everyone agreed to complete the 16-question survey after being told they may stop or skip any questions at any moment.

Online personal and professional networks were sent the survey form by email, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. After the data had been collected by using Google forms, a percentage analysis of the responses was done. Questionnaire is attached in Appendix which is taken from an existing research study(Tran, 2014).

industry, 28.26% were in the fashion, beauty, and retail industries, 11.4% were in communications, marketing, and public relations, 10% were in nutrition, wellness, and nutrition, and 10% were in the technology sector. Henna, home décor, art and craft, and administrative services-related enterprises each accounted for 1% of them.

10. Findings

Of the 70 women who started businesses, 31.4% were involved in the restaurant and food services

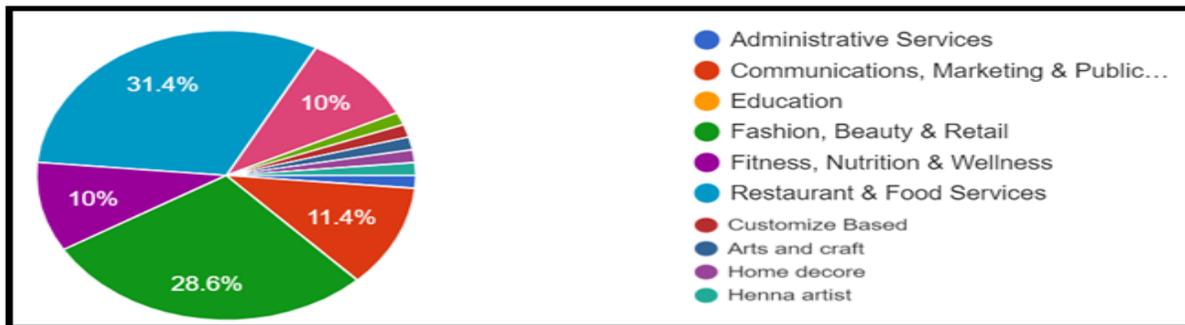


Figure 1. Types of Businesses and Industries

It was shown that 72.9% of female business owners used the internet and other digital media to run their operations mostly online. Only 2.9% of female entrepreneurs said they met with clients

in person to do business; in contrast, 24.3% of all respondents said they conducted business equally online and offline.

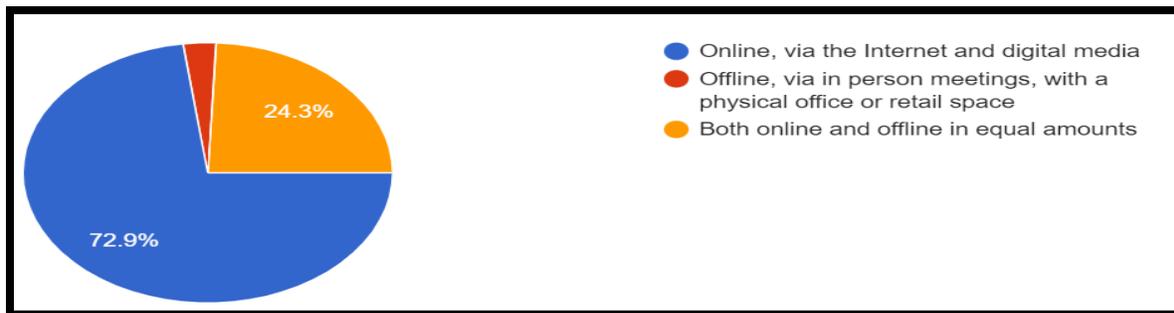


Figure 2. Primary Nature of Business Operations

Out of the 70 respondents, 70% of 100% participants said that the internet and other digital media helped them with critical financial, legal, and educational resources required in the start-up and growth of their business. Only 17.1%

said that sources like in-person networking events, meetings, trainings, or seminars had given them the majority of the resources for their enterprises, while 22.9% mentioned both online and offline in similar numbers.

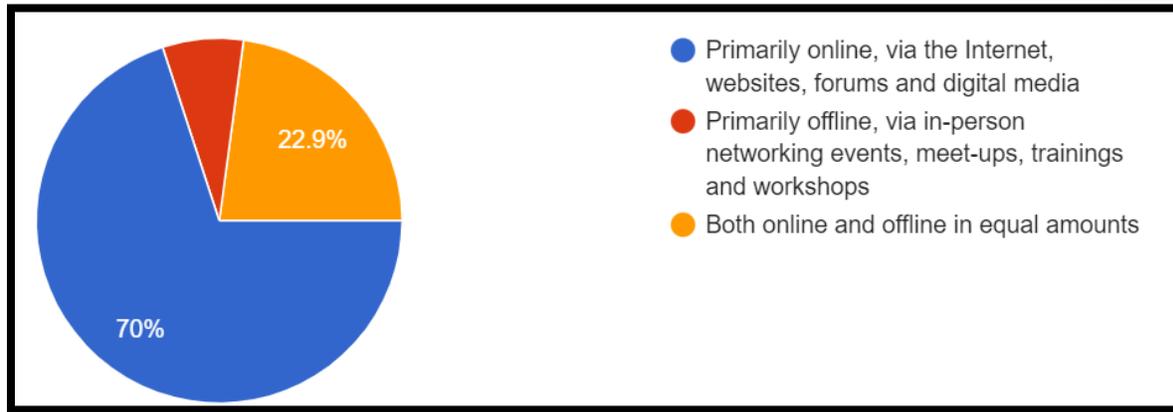


Figure 3. Primary Nature of Business Resources

According to research, women entrepreneurs most frequently and widely use Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to conduct business. Email and YouTube were also mentioned by several of the female business owners. Only 1% of the 70 respondents noted Snack video, Twitter, and LinkedIn as crucial social media platforms used in business; 35.7 percent and 10 percent of 70. They indicated that without the digital media and communication tools, it would be extremely hard and costly to start, develop and conduct their businesses. The most important result was that the cost and difficulty of setting

up and sustaining female entrepreneurship with no digital media tools had the average rating 25.7 and 37.1 percent of all the possible rating, respectively. If the digital media and digital communication tools are eliminated, participants reported that it was difficult and costly to launch, expand, and/or run their enterprises, respectively. 60% of the 70 female entrepreneurs said social media and communication technologies were Very Useful in running and expanding their businesses.

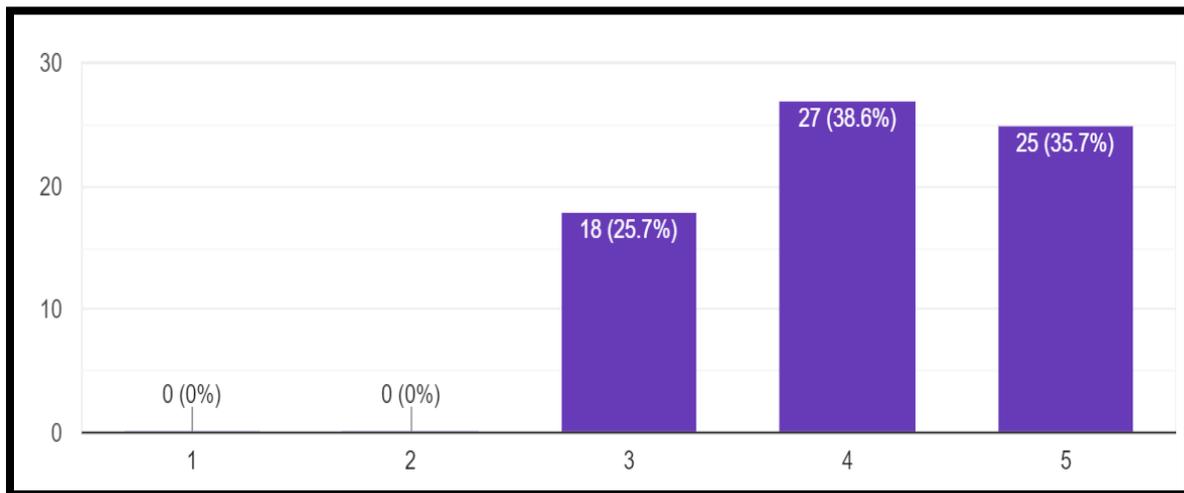


Figure 4a. The Effects of Digital Media on Female Entrepreneurship

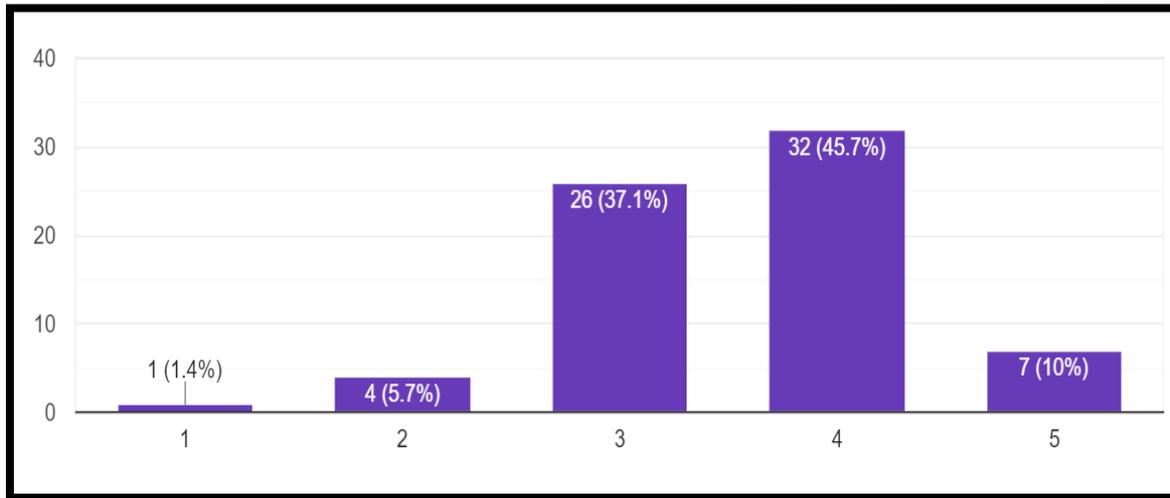


Figure 4b. The Effects of Digital Media on Female Entrepreneurship.

It was also discovered that 60% of the 70 participants were the first woman in their family to set up a business, that 35.7% of them were housewives, that 35.7% were jobless before starting their businesses, and that just 12% of them were employed. 64.3% of people had no formal education or training before beginning a business. When questioned about how social

media has influenced their business and how operating a business has influenced their social standing in society, it was discovered that 91.4% of them believe that their social image has improved and 62.9% claimed that social media has assisted them in developing their technical abilities.

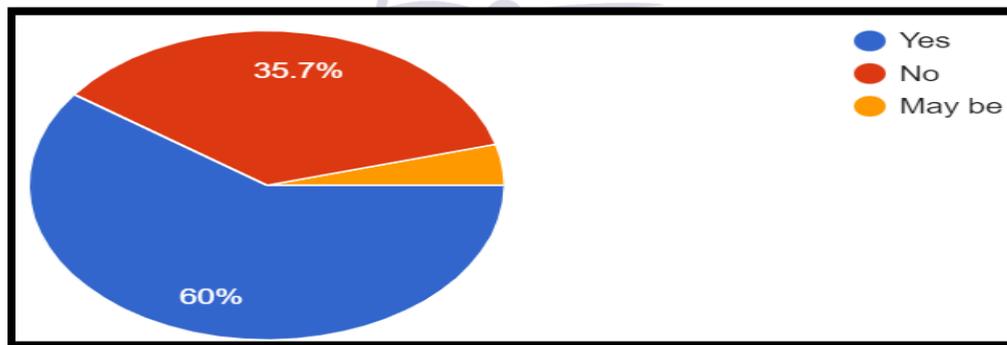


Figure 5. First Women Entrepreneurs in Family

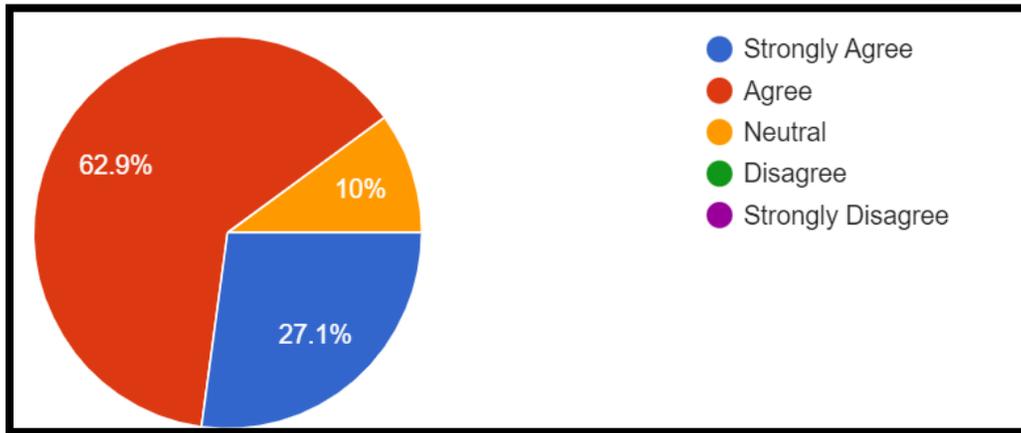


Figure 6. Impact of social media in enhancing technical abilities of women Entrepreneurs

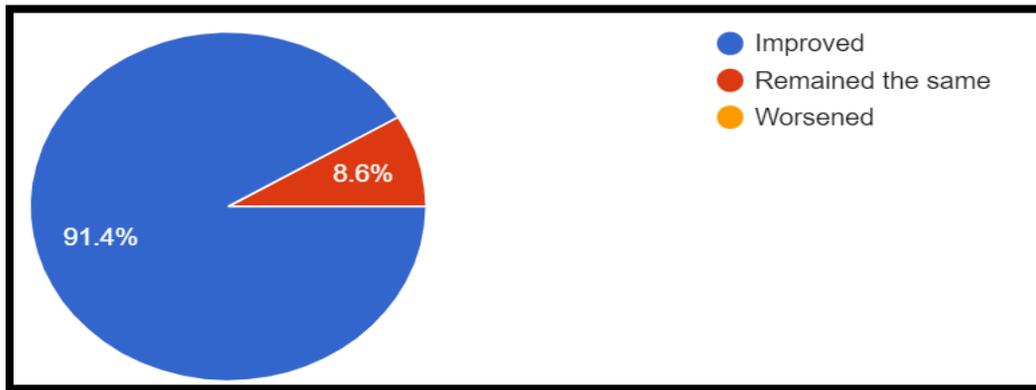


Figure 7. Social media has improved Women Entrepreneurs Social Image

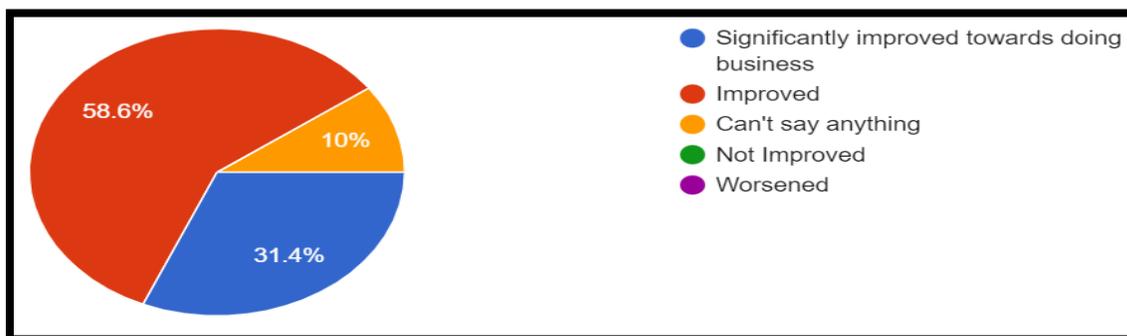


Figure 8. Attitude of society toward women entrepreneurs has changed

11. Discussion

The impact of technology on female entrepreneurs has also been documented in the literature. There are several reviews of the literature on how technology has aided female

entrepreneurs. Due to the fact that women in this century, including Pakistani women, have started to take vital positions in business, the 21st century is also known as the "Women Century" (Ukperere, 2014). Undoubtedly, this emergent

trend has given women entrepreneurs, an opportunity to transform how they conduct business and deal with their networks and communities. (Komunte, 2012 , September). In relation to SIT and UGT, The overall purpose of this study was to identify the role of social media on women entrepreneurs. These theories were chosen with the understanding that SIT may direct attention to what female entrepreneurs' motives are, whilst UGT assisted in establishing a link between female entrepreneurs' preferences for social media and digital media. A survey was conducted utilizing a Google form questionnaire. The percentage analysis was performed to analyze the success of entrepreneurial women based on the influence of social media.

The leading three industries that women entrepreneurs opted in this survey have been identified to include: restaurant and food services (31.4%), fashion, beauty and retail (28.26%), communications, marketing and Public relations (11.4%) and technology (10%). As it is well known that the fashion, beauty, and restaurant sectors are generally considered feminine, women have begun to show an interest in communication, marketing, and technology, which are typically considered male-dominated areas. However, digital media has allowed female entrepreneurs to discover new prospects in these industries. The results indicate that there is a strong influence of digital media in the success of female entrepreneurs. It was found out that over-50-percent of the women in this study are doing their business online and 35% of them indicated that without digital media tools and social media platforms they would have found it very difficult to establish their business and believed it to be of great help. 60% of female entrepreneurs stated that social media had a significant influence in their business's development and that they considered it extremely beneficial.

When discussing which social media platform women entrepreneurs use more, it was found that Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram are utilized more frequently by them than more conventional internet resources like email and webpages. It may be because these platforms enable percentage sharing and two-way audio-

video conversation. In contrast to a more static, constrictive platform like a standard corporate website or email, these platforms are both social and visually focused, with the former giving a private messaging component as well.

Despite difficult circumstances, the internet revolution has enabled Pakistani women business owners to thrive. The social media has increased significantly in Pakistan over the past few years. However, social and cultural constraints must be considered. Due to the traditional culture of Pakistan, women do not have equal chances as males. Nonetheless, the circumstances are getting better and female entrepreneurs are already using a few of the opportunities provided by social media. It was discovered that 60% of the 70 women entrepreneurs were the first female member of their family to establish a business. And it has had a great impact on their family life. While starting a business, 31.4% of respondents said their family were extremely supportive, while 57.1% said their families were supportive. Only 1.4% said they faced obstacles in beginning of their businesses from their families, and their families responded negatively. This demonstrates that Pakistani people's attitudes are changing, and the potential of women is being acknowledged by many. Relatively, the use of social media in Pakistan has increased tremendously over the past few years.

12. Conclusion

Based on the study findings, it can be concluded in response to the research questions:

- **What role does digital media play in empowering women?**

Majority of survey participants claimed that digital media has a very positive impact on running their business. It has enabled them to start, grow and operate their businesses smoothly. They also indicated that digital media has allowed them to pursue their business without being worried about financial constraints. Most of them were of the opinion that it would have been extremely challenging and costly to them to establish business in the absence of social media sites. Therefore, it may be concluded that the

success of women entrepreneurs is influenced by the digital media tools and social media in a very positive way.

• **What influence does digital media have on female entrepreneurship?**

Since women entrepreneurs play various roles and have to multitask such as running their business along with managing their houses. It may be concluded that the adoption of digital media tools and social media platforms has helped them to operate their businesses even when at home and have no time constraints. It has given them the luxury of managing their ventures along with their houses and family. It has observed that women entrepreneurs who use digital media possess an advantage over those who are not proactive in learning and using modern technologies.

Most of the people participating in the study reported that they operate businesses extensively over the internet through the different social networking sites. The participants reported that in recent years digital media tools and social media platforms had helped them to improve their social image and technical proficiency. These digital tools have enabled women to venture in entrepreneurship with less difficulty and without fear of being restricted by financial or social constraints. Most of them claimed that it has helped them run their own business even when they are home and not bound by time since they are a woman entrepreneur; they explained how women entrepreneurs use social media and digital media have transformed the perception of women entrepreneurs and made them more free and flexible in running their businesses than they were in the past utilizing the traditional means. This shows how views are changing in Pakistan and how many people are recognizing the potential of women.

This study not only has a number of important findings, but it is not free of limitations, either. The success of female entrepreneurs can be explained by the findings of the given research. The biggest limitation of this research is that it was conducted only in Karachi and it cannot be extrapolated to the other parts of Pakistan. Moreover, the information obtained with the

help of the sample size of 70 females might have not been enough to make generalizations. The other weakness is that this research does not present any demographic details of the respondents, including race or age. It may also be considered in future studies of how racial and age diversity may play out among female entrepreneurs that would add critical knowledge and information to the existing unexplored area of female entrepreneurship.

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