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A Study on How Social Media Affects Virtual Women Entrepreneurs in Kerala

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Abstract

The success of virtual women entrepreneurs is a dynamic phenomenon in the sphere of virtual entrepreneurship, and it is important to identify the factors that influence their success. With more women in Kerala using the virtual platform to start and grow their businesses, it becomes pivotal to investigate how different demographic, educational and social variables affect their business performance. The paper examines the impacts of the major variables such as the place of residence, age, educational level, business field as well as the aspects of social capital in entrepreneurship with regard to virtual women entrepreneurs in Kerala. The researcher found that urban entrepreneurs, middle-aged individuals, those with higher secondary education, and those operating in certain sectors, such as jewellery boutiques, experience higher levels of success. The researcher used social capital theory for measuring entrepreneurial success. Social capital dimensions such as structural, relational, and cognitive play an important role in enhancing entrepreneurial outcomes, with network-based social capital emerging as the key impactful aspect for entrepreneurial success.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Success, Social Capital, Social Media, Women Entrepreneurs, Business, Virtual Entrepreneurs.

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Introduction

The emergence of social media has revolutionized different industries, including entrepreneurship (Hoseinnezhad,2016). Digital community hubs such as LinkedIn, Facebook, etc... are indispensable tools for entrepreneurs to interact with wider audiences, market the products, also engage with customers. With the advancement of digital technologies and the internet, a new breed of entrepreneurs known as virtual entrepreneurs has emerged (Sivaraman & Neriamparampil,2024). These people adopt online platforms and tools to establish, run and expand their businesses on an online platform. Virtual entrepreneurship describes the act of initiating and managing a business whose operations are predominantly virtual at least, as opposed to the real world. Brick and mortar style of enterprise has reached a new stage in the digital world today (Chakraborty, & Biswal, 2023; KS & Ponmalar, 2024). Business can be conducted without any infrastructures, and this has expanded the scope of operation to a global place.

Review of Literature

Virtual entrepreneurs leverage on online networks to interact with customers, manage business activities and transact business. Virtual entrepreneurship lies in the fact that it is based on digital technology and the internet, which offers unlimited opportunities of innovation, scalability, and efficiency (Alka et al., 2023).

Social media has become one of the revolutionizing tools of a virtual entrepreneur, with unmatched prospects of business development and growth of market share (Topalova et al., 2024; Arvinth, 2024). These sites offer businessmen with the cheapest marketing, networking, and business operations. The social media has been identified as a gamechanger in the contemporary world, providing wide accessibility with minimal interactions at a relatively low cost ((Sethuraman et al., 2023; Senjith et al., 2024; Chhabda & Saxena,2024). In the case of women entrepreneurs, especially, social media offers the means of breaking the old paradigm of barriers like the lack of access to capital and discrimination in the market (Iqbal et al., 2024; Minimol, 2020; Charles et al., 2020). The social media is a vibrant market where they can access a wider global market, interact with their customers directly and create brand loyalty by continuously and interactively communicating with them (Amiri et al., 2015). The real-time feedback and analytics available on social media allow entrepreneurs to take knowledgeable decisions by adapting the products to better align with customer requirements (Manoj et al., 2023; Kataria & Phukan,2022). The main purpose of the research intends to investigate specific influence of networking media pertaining to the entrepreneurial success relating to virtual women entrepreneurs in Kerala (Bonny et al., 2022; Aiswarya & Sangeetha, 2023; Kataria & Phukan, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

With virtual sites like Instagram and LinkedIn offering resource-effective marketing strategies, virtual media has evolved into a crucial resource favourable to entrepreneurs in the digital age, opening opportunities for market visibility, client engagement, addition to business growth. Although there are numerous benefits of social media, such factors as the changes of algorithms, the negative reviews of customers, cyber threats, and need to produce interesting content on a regular basis pose challenges to the entrepreneur.

Although the use of social media is common, there is the lack of deep research on the direct impact of the social media on the entrepreneurial success, sustainability of the business, and brand reputation. Businesspeople are unable to assess how their social media strategies are doing and get to know how the money will pay off in the long-term. Moreover, the fast-paced social media demands constant changes and this might be overwhelming especially to small business proprietors who have limited resources. This paper aims at exploring to what extent social media influences the development of entrepreneurship, the obstacles associated with using them, and the best measures to leverage them. When addressing these concerns, businesspeople will develop more informed digital marketing strategies, better communication with customers, and sustainable business growth.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify the categories of digital media channels accessed by virtual women entrepreneurs.
- To assess the population demographics of virtual women entrepreneurs throughout Kerala.
- Analyse the relationship between age, educational qualification on entrepreneurial success

Research Methodology

Researcher used descriptive research design as well as primary and secondary data. The data were obtained directly from entrepreneurs using online survey questionnaire for evaluating proposed research model. The researcher used social capital theory for measuring the virtual entrepreneurial success. The sample size is 116 entrepreneurs from central part of Kerala. The central part of Kerala consists of Thrissur, Ernakulum, and Kottayam. Secondary information's are derived from various articles, websites plus newspapers.

Sample Design

For the study, Stratified Random Sampling was adopted. This method ensured that different subgroups (strata) of virtual women entrepreneurs are adequately represented in the sample. The research focused on virtual women entrepreneurs from different districts in central Kerala (Thrissur, Ernakulam, and Kottayam) and considers various factors like age, education, income, area of business, and residence (urban vs. rural), stratified sampling allows for better representation of these diverse groups. The following were the groups of the population:

- Geographical Location: Thrissur, Ernakulam, Kottayam
- Age Groups: Less than 20, 20-35, 36-50, Above 50
- Educational Qualifications: SSLC, +2, Degree, PG
- Area of Business: Fashion boutiques, Jewellery boutiques, home furnishing, Footwear, Others
- Residence: Urban vs. Rural

Tools Used for the Study

- Online Survey Questionnaire: This is a questionnaire that will be used to gather primary data among the virtual entrepreneurs.
- Descriptive Statistics: This is the type that is applicable in the analysis of demographic data (age, education, income, business type, and area of residence).
- Independent Sample T-Test: Used to compare entrepreneurial success based on area of residence.
- ANOVA Test: Used to assess the impact of age, education, and business domain on entrepreneurial success.
- Regression Analysis: Used for quantifying the outcome of structural and relational on entrepreneurial success.

The researcher used Social Capital Theory to gauge the web-based media impact on entrepreneurial success by focusing on various parameters. This theory assumes that the intrinsic networks in addition to the resources they entail play a major role in the individual and group outcomes.

Proposed Research Framework

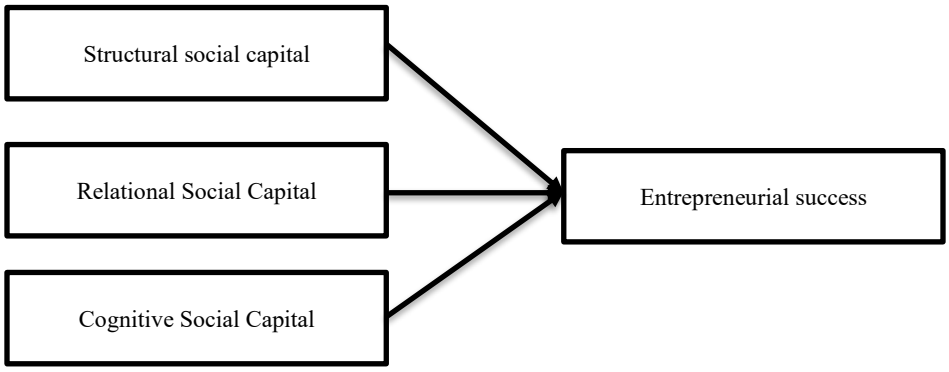


Fig. 1: Research Framework of Entrepreneurial Success among Virtual Women Entrepreneurs

Result and Discussions

Table 1: Kerala Virtual Women Entrepreneur's Demographics

Variables		Frequency	Percent
Age	Less than 20	25	21.60
	20-35	54	46.60
	36-50	26	22.40
	Above 50	11	9.50
Education	SSLC	11	9.50
	+2	39	33.60
	Degree	40	34.50
	PG	26	22.40
Income	Below 50,000	25	21.60
	50,001-60,000	40	34.50
	60,001-80,000	28	24.10
	80,001-100,000	23	19.80
Area of Business	Footwear Boutique	11	9.50
	Jewellery Boutiques	18	15.50
	Fashion Boutiques	51	44.00
	Home Furnishing Boutiques	22	19.00
	Others	14	12.10
Area of Residence	Urban	51	44.00
	Rural	65	56.00

(Source: Computed from Primary Data)

The researcher used social capital theory to examine the components of social capital in such context of online communities' effect on entrepreneurial success. In this study, the researcher used structural, relational, and cognitive capital as independent variables, while entrepreneurial success was treated as dependent variable. Structural social capital refers to the overall social media network ties and the configuration of social media networks. Relational social capital focuses on the quality of interaction among the social media components, such as reliance, social conventions, also obligations. Cognitive social capital signifies the mutual understandings among community members (Fig.1).

In table 1, we have given the demographic profile of virtual women entrepreneurs in Kerala in terms of age, education, income, area of business and area of residence. The respondent age indicates that the respondent is mostly young as 46.6 percent of respondents aged 20-35 years are the dynamic segment of the market that has the potential of being innovative. The 21.6 percent and 22.4 percent are also a good representation of new and old businessmen as most entrepreneurs in the 36-50 age bracket are at the age when they are starting their businesses and 21.6 percent, whose age range is below 20, represent the age when most people enter the business world. It is only 9.5 percent of the respondents aged more than 50 implying that entrepreneurial ventures are as well attractive to the older generation. According to the level of education, 34.5 percent of the respondents have degree qualification, 33.6 percent have +2, and 22.4 percent have postgraduate degrees and 9.5 percent hold education in SSLC.

Income distribution reveals that 34.5 percent of the entrepreneurs have incomes of between 50,001 and 60,000, a large number (24.1 percent) have incomes of between 60,001 and 80,000. This implies that most of the virtual women entrepreneurs are in a middle-income range, whereas 21.6 percent have income less than 50,000, and 19.8 percent have incomes between 80,001 and 100,000.

In terms of business field, 44 percent of the participants are involved in the business of fashion boutiques, and it is the most prevalent business field. Next came 19 percent in home furnishing boutiques and 15.5 percent in jewellery boutiques. Footwear shops, as well as other enterprises, make 9.5 percent and 12.1 percent respectively. The statistics show that virtual women entrepreneurs are almost equally spread in the urban (44 percent) and rural (56 percent) regions.

Table 2: Social Media Usage Distribution

Social media	Frequency	Percent
Instagram	37	31.90
WhatsApp	15	12.90
Facebook	27	23.30
YouTube	28	24.10
Other	9	7.80
Total	**116**	**100.00**

(Source: Primary Data)

Table 2 is the spread of the social media use by virtual women entrepreneurs in Kerala. The outcome that the most popular one is Instagram where 31.9 percent of the participants use it. Highly desirable to visual and interactive social media platforms (YouTube, 24.1 percent, and Facebook, 23.3 percent). WhatsApp, with 12.9 percent usage, is also significant but less popular compared to Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. The "Other" category like Twitter, etc., which includes less common platforms, accounts for 7.8 percent of the respondents.

Table 3: Reliability Statistics

Variables	Alpha Values	No of Items
Structural	0.759	4
Relational	0.845	4
Cognitive	0.923	4
Entrepreneurial success	0.891	5

(Source: Computed from Primary Data)

The reliability statistics indicate that all the measured variables have satisfactory to excellent cohesion of internal elements. Alpha Values of Cronbach's range from 0.759 to 0.923, demonstrating that the scales used in the study are reliable (Table 3).

$H0_1$: The Area of Residence Shows No Significant Variation of Virtual Women Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurial Success.

Table 4: Showing The Considerable Distinction Observed Among Virtual Women Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurial Success

Area of Residence		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Entrepreneurial Success	**Urban**	51	4.20	.574	3.103	**0.002**
	Rural	65	3.84	.669		

(Source: Computed from Primary Data)

Table 4 presents the outcomes of an independent t-test sample examining difference in entrepreneurial success between urban and rural virtual women entrepreneurs. This result shows that there is a significant difference in entrepreneurial success between urban and rural virtual women entrepreneurs. Urban entrepreneurs have higher reported levels of entrepreneurial success compared to their rural entrepreneurs. The result indicates that urban-related factors are related to increased entrepreneurial effectiveness, including, but not limited to resource exposure and networks, and opportunities that are more easily accessible in urban contexts.

H02: There are no significant age differences with reference to virtual women entrepreneurs and their success.

Table 5: That Indicates the Significant Correlation Between the Age of Virtual Women Entrepreneurs and Their Success

Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Below 20	25	4.06	.539	31.445	.000
20-35	54	3.74	.504		
36-50	26	4.74	.378		
Above 50	11	3.36	.505		
Total	116	4.00	.652		

(Source: Primary Data)

Table 5 above shows the results of the testing of said relationship between the age groups and the entrepreneurial success through ANOVA. The findings indicate that the success of entrepreneurs is not the same in various age groups. The entrepreneurial success of entrepreneurs aged 36-50 is highest, and entrepreneurial success of entrepreneurs aged above 50 is the lowest. The finding indicates that age is a determinant of entrepreneurial success, where middle aged entrepreneurs are more successful than young and old entrepreneurs.

H03: The Educational Qualification of Virtual Women Entrepreneurs Vs Entrepreneurial Success is Not Significantly Correlated.

Table 6: The Significant Difference in the Educational Qualification of Virtual Women Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurial Success is Presented

Educational qualification	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
SSLC	11	3.36	0.615	10.330	.000
+ 2	39	4.35	0.505		
Degree	40	3.81	0.529		
PG	26	4.03	0.647		
Total	116	4	0.652		

(Source: Primary Data)

In the outcomes, it is demonstrated that there is a considerable difference in the level of entrepreneurial success between various educational levels. Particularly, secondary school educated entrepreneurs are the most successful entrepreneurs with reports on entrepreneurial success, whereas the least successful entrepreneurial success is registered by the entrepreneurs with SSCL education. The outcome indicates that the education level has a positive effect on entrepreneurial success, which may be explained by the improved skills, knowledge, and opportunities (Table 6).

H04: Type Of Business of Virtual Women Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurial Success Are Not Significantly Different.

Table 7: With the High Level of Difference in Type of Business of Virtual Women Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurial Success

Type of Business	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Footwear boutique	11	4.18	.764	31.445	.000
Jewellery boutiques	18	4.46	.420		
Fashion boutiques	51	3.74	.517		
Home furnishing boutiques	22	4.27	.827		
Others	14	3.79	.426		
Total	116	4.00	.652		

(Source: Computed from Primary Data)

The findings reveal that the success of entrepreneurship depends greatly depending on the business regions. More precisely, entrepreneurs of jewellery boutiques have the highest amount of successful entrepreneurship, and the least successful entrepreneurship is in fashion boutiques. The results indicate that the business field can influence the success of an entrepreneur to a significant extent. The success rates in the jewellery and home furnishing boutiques were higher due to the market demand, competition and customer preferences in the industries. This might be because the competitive intensity in this sector or market saturation is greater and hence the reduced success of the fashion boutiques (Table 7).

H05: Components Within Social Capital Have No Significant Effect on Entrepreneurial Success by Virtual Women Entrepreneurs in Kerala.

Table 8: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.884[a]	.781	.776	.309
a. Indicators: (Invariable), Cognitive SC, Relational SC, Structural SC				

(Source: Derived from Primary Data)

The result of regression is demonstrated in the model, and the value of R square is 0.781, which depicts that 78.1 percent of variance on the success in becoming an entrepreneur can be attributed to the three dimensions of social capital. The outcomes of the ANOVA indicate that there is statistical support of the model ($F = 133.488$, $p < 0.001$), which highlights such a combination of repercussion of elements on entrepreneurial success. The F-value together with the p-value is a clear indication that independent variables, taken as a whole, are strong predictors of entrepreneurial success in the case of virtual women entrepreneurs in Kerala (Table 8).

Table 9: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	38.204	3	12.735	133.488	.000[b]
	Residual	10.685	112	.095		
	Total	48.889	115			
a. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Success						
b. Determinants: (Steady), Cognitive SC, Relational SC, Structural SC						

(Source: Computed from Primary Data)

Table 10: Table of Coefficients

Model		Original Coefficients		Adjusted Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Invariable)	-.067	.208		-.322	.748
	Structural SC	.593	.071	.540	8.364	.000
	Relational SC	.237	.051	.267	4.630	.000
	Cognitive SC	.225	.070	.197	3.206	.002

(Source: Computed from Primary Data)

The findings indicate that the structural social capital has the best effect on entrepreneurial success compared to the other two dimensions. The standardized coefficient ($Beta = 0.540$, $p < 0.001$) is very high showing that the ability of virtual women entrepreneurs to capitalize on networks, resources, and connect with the relevant stakeholders is an essential factor of success (Table 9 and Table 10).

Reliance, mutual exchange, and mutual obligations are also examples of network based social capital that significantly contributes to the success of entrepreneurship ($Beta = 0.267$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that the quality of relationships in the network of an entrepreneur is as significant as the shape of the same. Confidence and mutual relationships can improve cooperation, decrease the cost of transactions, and information and resource flows that are necessary to maintain a successful virtual business.

Cognitive social capital is not as impactful as the other dimensions ($Beta = 0.197$, $p = 0.002$), but still, it is a meaningful predictor of entrepreneurial success. Cognitive social capital entails common values, norms, understandings that allow coordinated activities in a network. The importance of this dimension implies that when the virtual women entrepreneurs can have similar goals, language, and cultural norms with their network, it would increase their capacity to collaborate successfully and reach business goals.

Findings

1. Demographics: The age of the majority of virtual entrepreneurs in Kerala is young (46.6 percent aged 20-35), but 34.5 percent of them have a degree. Most of them earn 50,001-60,000 and work in fashion boutiques (44 percent).
2. Social Media Usage: The most used is Instagram (31.9 percent), then there is YouTube (24.1percent) and Facebook (23.3percent).
3. Entrepreneurial Success Factors:
4. Urban entrepreneurs report to be more successful, compared to rural entrepreneurs.
5. Entrepreneurs between 36-50 years old have the most success with the over 50 years having the least success.
6. The relationship between entrepreneurial success and the educational level is such that a higher educational level is more likely to be successful in entrepreneurship, and higher secondary education has the strongest effect.
7. Entrepreneurs in jewellery boutiques have been reported to be more successful compared to the ones in fashion boutiques.

8. Social Capital counts a lot in determining success, structural social capital (networking, access to resources) has the highest influence then relational and cognitive social capital.

Suggestions

- Create training centres and e-markets in the rural setting to fill the urban-rural divide.
- That is, provide workshops to develop social media marketing.
- Hold industry-focused networking forums and mentorship among peers.
- Promote joint ventures and projects between entrepreneurs.
- Provide equal opportunities to the urban and rural entrepreneur to achieve a balanced growth.

Conclusion

In the continuously changing environment of the virtual world of entrepreneurship, the analysis of the success factors of virtual women entrepreneurs is important. With increasingly more women in Kerala using virtual sites to start and expand their business. The study aimed at exploring several variables that define entrepreneurial success of virtual women entrepreneurs in Kerala by examining how the area of residence, age, education level, field of business, and social capital aspects influence entrepreneurial success. The levels of success are high in the urban entrepreneurs, middle people, individuals with higher secondary education, and those in some of the business fields such as jewellery boutiques. Community Relations, especially the relational and structural terms are a critical factor in improving entrepreneurial performance. The research findings indicate that virtual women entrepreneurs in Kerala have a high likelihood of success based on diverse factors such as the place of residence, age, education level, line of business, and the dimension of social capital. Through the findings, the researcher proposes that to make available resources, training and networking opportunities on the specific population, rural women entrepreneurs, digital and physical hubs in rural areas should be established. The primary aim of these hubs should be enhancing digital literacy, access to online markets and linking with urban markets and entrepreneurs. Virtual women entrepreneurs can also go to networking events, peer-to-peer mentorship programs and forums on the internet to develop strong, industry-specific relationships. It is critical to foster trust-based and two-sided relationships through collaborative projects, joint ventures, and community-based projects. The disparities between the rural and urban entrepreneurs should be bridged by developing infrastructure that enables the rural entrepreneurs to enjoy the same resources that their urban counterparts enjoy so that they are able to achieve the same equitable entrepreneurial success.

Future Research Outlook

The sample composed of virtual women entrepreneurs in Kerala may restrict the applicability of the results to other places or population. Further studies might be conducted on how the dimensions of social capital affect various kinds of entrepreneurs, including some that are in other cultural or economic environments. A longitudinal study can be more informative regarding the development depicted by the aspects of social capital that have evolved over time and their impact on entrepreneurial performance in the long run.

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