The Development of Women in Unorganised Sector Using Social Media Platforms in India: A Study on Siliguri, West Bengal

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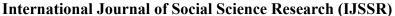
Abstract:

In present day society technology has been playing a significant role to widen up the space for everyone's participation in several sectors in the digital world. In this article, the main idea is the development of women in unorganised sector using social media platforms. Unorganised Sectors are not in the domain of government and used to deal with the informal sector. In a welfare state like India, women are engaged with many projects for changing their status and to promote their ideas in several ways. From engaging in micro and small sectors to become an entrepreneur is a long journey for women in India. Here, by this article I want to focus on women's engagement in many social media platforms by creating many jobs for themselves and others in the unorganised sector for their improvement in their everyday lifestyle. In this article, I did a small analysis of the women, engaged in social media platforms in Siliguri to understand the improvement of women in unorganised sector using social media platforms.

Keywords: Social Media, Women, Development, Unorganised Sector

Introduction:

Media is a major form of communication today and with the use of media, individual can perform many types of activities. From the older days to present, media evaluated in many ways and these different types of media helped to educate and influence people in a larger form. The journey from Press Media to social media is an important factor in the present mediated society. It also led to the development of a society as well as the overall development of a community. Now-a-days what we see that the benefits of media are overgrowing in all sectors of society.

The outreach of social media usage in the unorganised sector in India is one of the remarkable trends that has been noted for few years. Recently we have seen that the appearance of social media in the Indian society is increasing by leaps and bound. What significant social media in empowering and development of women is seen by many experts today in the field. But unfortunately, academicians focused mostly on the role of social media tools in the political arena, ignoring the other important uses of social media in every day routine inside India in different sectors. From the statistics and indicators, people understand that social media is a significant tool for many developmental occasions in women sector today. So it is more important in present day context to study about women and social media activism. Here in this study, I am focusing on 'Siliguri-the heart of North Bengal' and a tier-II city of West Bengal. This city is used for the study for better understanding and linking up the women with social media handlings. We have seen that bloggers and social media groups are increasing day by day in Siliguri. That is why, I choose Siliguri for my study.

Data and Methodology:

Some primary and secondary data is used for this study. Further, with the help of primary data collected from the women of Siliguri, the actual situation of social media and its usage among women is analysed. Also, with the help of social media how women have developed their livelihood and status is also there in this study. It is a qualitative study in nature. There is no control of the researcher on the opinions of the women respondents. The situation has been described only after the analysis of data. Here women have given their opinions on where they have used social media, for what purpose, and how. How social media brings opportunity for them to analyse their marketing skills is also there in my study. All these facts have come to light after the data analysis. Secondary resources like pamphlets, books, articles is also applied for this work. The theoretical framework is used for this study as well. Observation Method and telephonic interviews are taken for the sampling analysis. On the whole, the study is relating to the development of women in unorganised sector using social media platforms.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the utilisation of social media by women in pivotal fields.
2. To analyse how women are growing in unorganised sector with the help of social media in India.
3. To discuss the development of women through social media on the status of women in present contemporary scenario in Siliguri.

The outreach of social media in India:

Social media is an internet-based technology which gives users communication of documents videos, photos and access to all other information. It is a new form of media which helped people to interact with each other with the help of internet. The largest and popular social media networks are Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram Twitter, You Tube, LinkedIn etc. Social media enhances human networks and social connectivity which helped individual for social reach and outcomes.

In January 2024, the population of India stood at 1.46 billion. From the data we see that India's population increased by 13 million (+0.9 percent) between early 2024 and the start of 2025. From the total population of India, 48.4 percent is female, while 51.6 percent is male. Till 2024, 37.1 percent of India's population lived in urban centres, while 62.9 percent lived in rural areas. In 2025, 806 million internet users are in India when internet penetration stood at 55.3 percent. India was home to 491 million social media users in January 2025, equating to 33.7 percent of the total population. A total of 1.12 billion cellular mobile connections were active in India which is equivalent to 76.6 percent of the total population.[1] Facebook had 384 million users in India in early 2025. Facebook's potential ad reach in India increased by 16.7 million (+4.5 percent) between January 2024 and January 2025. At the start of 2024, 26.4 percent of Facebook's ad audience in India was female, while 73.6 percent was male. Google's advertising resources indicate that YouTube had 491 million users in India in early 2025. Data published in Google's own ad planning tools show that YouTube's potential ad reach in India increased

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[1] https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-india

by 29.0 million (+6.3 percent) between the start of 2024 and early 2025. Meanwhile, the same data show that the number of users that marketers could reach with ads on YouTube in India remained unchanged between October 2024 and January 2025. 34.5 percent of YouTube's ad audience in India was female, while 65.5 percent was male.

Instagram had 414 million users in India in early 2025. Instagram's ad reach in India was equivalent to 28.4 percent of the total population at the start of the year. In early 2025, 29.2 percent of Instagram's ad audience in India was female, while 70.8 percent was male. Data also shows that Instagram's potential ad reach in India increased by 51.0 million (+14.0 percent) between January 2024 and January 2025. LinkedIn had 150 million "members" in India in early 2025. In early 2025, 30.2 percent of LinkedIn's ad audience in India was female, while 69.8 percent was male. Data published in LinkedIn's planning tools show that LinkedIn's potential ad reach in India increased by 30.0 million (+ 25.0 percent) between the start of 2024 and the beginning of 2025.[2]

Development of Women in Unorganised Sector using social media:

Development means the socio-economic growth of individuals in society. In this article, development used in connection with women. A society can be developed if the last person's improvement is there. Contribution of women in any sector has been creating a history in almost every field. Here women in this present era also indulge in unorganised sector for their empowerment which leads the development of women. Social media brings the opportunity for every woman to be self-independent in using marketing skills. With the basic understanding of technology, women are creating occupational exposure in various ways. Now-a-days, women used marketing and business skills in facebook for their economic growth. In Facebook, women are created groups for reaching the digital market through their marketing proficiency. They are selling their products in social media platforms by using business skills. You Tube and other social media platforms are also used for creating vlogs which helped the women to be self-dependent by earning money in this profession. LinkedIn also helped women to search for jobs and doing jobs in work from home basis.

Making start-ups and engagement of women in small sectors using social media networks is directly linked with access to skills like education and training, resources, technology, and support system. So, the demand of women entrepreneurship and basic employment generation is directly linked with technology and media in the tech-based world today. Place of women is not only a hallmark of the development of that society but also reflects the challenges before the society to be explored. Though many challenges women are facing in day-to-day life, but with an indomitable spirit women are doing far better for their employment generation using social media. In social, economic, political, and cultural arena, women have acquired greater positions in all walks of life. However, still there is a long way to go to achieve that much of development which helped all women to be placed in the mainstream society. Integrating the world through technology, market and business skills has bestowed mixed opportunities for the

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[2] Ibid

women. Those, who are equipped with proper skills and can generate ideas got new market and also deal with the challenges before them to be solved.

Literature Review:

Elihu Katz's The Uses and Gratification Theory stated the notion that individual uses different media sources for their benefits and to fulfill their needs, which lead to ultimate gratification. The theory helps explain the factors that persuade internet users for harnessing social media avenues. The birth of social media has led to the inception of a new research perspective about the use of social media and the distinctive gratifications involved in it. The theory is useful to assess different patterns of media exposure, which result in need gratifications. As per the theory, the audience chooses a media platform deliberately to gratify their particular needs. The theory provides insight into understanding the user motives internet dominated age. The social media users harness multiple social media platforms simultaneously, which reflect their distinctive motives concerning the different social media platform use. As a user-centric approach, the theory enables us to understand the underlying factors that persuade people to actively seek out certain needs. It stresses the power of an individual over the power of media. Particular media content is harnessed by the individuals to attain the specific outcomes, which satisfy the individual needs. The opinion of the individual is more powerful than what is being portrayed by media. The theory portrays the impact of media on individuals. It validates how people use media for their own needs and gets satisfied when their needs are fulfilled.

DeFleur et al. (1989) by their 'Media Dependency Theory' explains the cross-level interaction among individuals, groups, individuals, interpersonal networks, and media systems. The media system is dependent on the Nation's political, economic, cultural, administrative, and cultural institutions. Media has always been a way to understand the world being its prominent part. The dependency of an individual on a medium is based upon the needs fulfilled and the dependency leads to make the particular media more important. The theory encompasses the audience-centric approach, which relevant to the use of the internet and social media by the individuals in the present scenario. However, it must be noted that social media's cover for anonymity and duplicity can pose a challenge in discovering the original creation and distribution of a story. In the present study, this theory has been accepted as the basis for the behaviour of women during the usage of social media, and its corresponding influence on them. The approach explains the multifaceted participation in reshaping society vanishing gender prejudices.

Gunther Kress and Van Leeuwen propounded the social semiotic approach on multimodality to present communication patterns. The theory provides a base for different modes of human communication in terms of texts, graphics, and audio due to emerging technologies and social patterns between man and machines. Multimodality is any kind of conversation that is not face-to face in terms of texting through gadgets like tweeting, emails, and all kinds of online chat services. Apart from language, still and moving images, sounds, gestures, icons, and performances are part of communication simultaneously. A clip of digital broadcast news video has multiple modalities like audio, video frames, closed captions (texts) as digital modes. The various social media avenues support the exchange of cultures with multiple languages and multi modes of transmission among a large number of people.

Chaudhuri et al. (2024) observes that watching various YouTube videos has become an integral part of people's everyday routines. YouTube serves as a powerful platform where creators actively produce, reproduce, and circulate hybrid cultural content. Among the most widely represented themes is food, which appears not only as a basic need but also as a rich symbol of culture, identity, emotion, and community. Food channels on YouTube showcase the physical act of cooking while also engaging in broader sociological discussions on identity formation, class structures, community belonging, transnational knowledge exchange, and the interplay of global and local ('glocal') cultures. The participatory nature of YouTube enables creators and audiences to interact and co-create a cultural dialogue, effectively institutionalizing digital food consumption. The author highlights the growth of a robust User Generated Content economy that revolves around food vlogging, recipe sharing, food photography on social media, blogging, restaurant and dish reviews, daily food journaling, and the development of online communities. These communities use food as a cultural and economic tool to build business models. This emerging institution is not only transforming current digital and cultural practices but also generating new financial opportunities. In this article, the authors aim to explore the rise, relevance, and socio-political dimensions of food vlogging. To do so, the author conducts a content analysis of videos from the top ten Indian food channels on YouTube and reviews relevant secondary literature related to the topic.

Madhumithaa et al. (2023) offers a comprehensive analysis of how social media has reshaped socio-economic dynamics by becoming an integral part of daily life, communication, and commerce. It emphasizes that platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are not just tools for social interaction, but powerful drivers of economic growth, entrepreneurship, and political engagement. By enabling individuals and businesses to reach wider audiences, social media fosters innovation, job creation, and community-building. However, the article also critically examines the challenges posed by digital inequality, cybercrime, and misinformation, highlighting the need for digital literacy and effective regulatory frameworks. It concludes that while social media presents immense opportunities for socio-economic development, its benefits can only be fully realized if society addresses its risks and ensures inclusive access and responsible usage.

Lepkowska et al. (2017) presents a nuanced analysis of how women food bloggers transform personal passion into professional success by blending authenticity, storytelling, and digital entrepreneurship. These bloggers construct authority through experiential knowledge and cultural narratives rather than formal training, using high-quality visuals, relatable content, and curated online personas to engage audiences and foster trust. They skillfully navigate the tension between commercial goals and authenticity, integrating monetization such as sponsored content and product collaborations into their content without compromising credibility. Leveraging multiple platforms and mastering digital tools like SEO and analytics, they position themselves as both creatives and entrepreneurs. Their blogs function as hybrid spaces that merge domestic identity with market strategy, supported by community networks and reciprocal engagement that enhance their visibility and legitimacy in a competitive digital landscape.

Pawar (2017) provides an in-depth analysis of how digital platforms have significantly transformed the landscape for women in India, serving as tools for empowerment, self-expression, and activism. With the rapid spread of smartphones and affordable internet, more women are gaining access to online spaces, which were traditionally male-dominated. This increased connectivity has allowed women to share their stories, raise awareness on gender issues, and challenge social norms. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube have become arenas for women to voice opinions, mobilize support for social causes, and build professional and personal networks. Digital media has also played a crucial role in entrepreneurship, enabling women to launch small businesses, promote their work, and reach a global audience with minimal investment. Initiatives like digital campaigns, online education, and virtual communities have further fostered confidence and independence among women, especially in rural and marginalized sections of society. Despite the progress, many women still face barriers like digital illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, patriarchal restrictions, and the threat of online abuse and harassment. These issues can deter women from fully participating in digital spaces. The paper emphasizes that for digital media to be truly empowering, it must be supported by inclusive policies, digital literacy programs, legal frameworks to combat cyberviolence, and efforts to close the gender digital divide. Overall, the document underscores that while digital media holds immense promise for women's empowerment, this potential can only be realized through concerted and inclusive efforts.

Kanchi et al. (2023) highlights today's digital era that marked by cultural shifts and online influence, the convergence of women empowerment and social media presents a rich area for exploration, particularly through the lens of Women YouTubers. They examine how women content creators like Prajakta Koli (MOSTLYSANE), Kabita's Kitchen, Madhura'a Receipe on YouTube are harnessing the platform as a space for storytelling, advocacy, and personal expression, thereby contributing to broader empowerment narratives. Here the author uses case study method of different You Tubers to understand the social media handlings and their effect on women's empowerment. As YouTube continues to evolve into a global stage, women from varied backgrounds use it to share their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives, challenging conventional norms and fostering inclusive representation. By analysing the content, strategies, and social impact of these creators, the chapter highlights how they break down stereotypes, promote diversity, and redefine traditional roles associated with women. Moreover, it explores the economic opportunities that arise for these women, the obstacles they navigate, and the far-reaching influence they exert in shaping cultural perceptions. With a strong focus on Women YouTubers, this chapter adds to the ongoing conversation about digital empowerment, emphasizing how social media, especially YouTube, serves as a transformative force that elevates women's voices and drives progressive societal change.

Rai et al. (2019) examines that in today's world, social media has emerged as a captivating and influential trend in the realm of entrepreneurship. Broadly defined, it refers to digital platforms that enable users to create, share, and engage with diverse content across the internet. These platforms have revolutionized how people interact socially and have opened up vast opportunities for entrepreneurial ventures. Social media is now recognized as a significant force in stimulating economic growth, generating employment, and bridging generational and gender disparities in society. Since the 1991 liberalization of the Indian economy, conventional

jobs were seen as stable and secure means of livelihood. However, over time, even the service sector encountered challenges, prompting many, especially the youth, to explore alternative paths. Earlier, self-employment was mostly confined to agriculture and small-scale industries, but initiatives such as Digital India, make in India, and Start-Up India have expanded opportunities into innovative and technology-driven spaces. These initiatives have also provided a valuable platform for women, encouraging entrepreneurship and skill development. Women have long played an integral role in societal development, and in recent decades, their aspirations, roles, and contributions have evolved significantly. A notable example is Aditi Gupta, a woman entrepreneur from Jharkhand, who founded 'Menstrupedia' an initiative aimed at educating and empowering girls about menstruation through engaging and informative content. This study explores similar inspiring stories of women entrepreneurs who have successfully utilized social media to grow their ventures. Relying on secondary data, it aims to examine the deepening connection and reliance between social media and the rise of women-led enterprises.

A Study on Siliguri: Siliguri is a major city in West Bengal known as the gateway of North-east India. It is in located on the banks of the Mahananda river and foothills of Himalayas. It spans in the areas of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri District of West Bengal. Also, Siliguri has its strategic importance as it is the entrance of the North-East India. Siliguri is also known for its significant transportation and business hub in North Bengal. For my work and sampling, I have done a study of the working women of siliguri engaged in social media platforms. For my study, I did some telephonic and face to face interviews with the bloggers and with some group members who are engaging in many day-to-day works for selling their products. I am also using observation method towards their work and activities.

Data Analysis:

The study explores how women in Siliguri are increasingly take advantage of social media platforms for blogging, entrepreneurship, and economic empowerment which lead to all-round improvement of them. Women are creating a space for themselves in the digital economy by engaging in group activities and individual initiatives, leading to broader socio-economic development and empowerment. By the content analysis of the vloggers and group activities in social media platforms, some themes are identified, those are:

Empowerment through Social Media Platforms:

One of the primary themes emerging from the study is the significant empowerment experienced by women through the use of social media platforms. Digital spaces like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have provided women from Siliguri with new professional avenues to express themselves, earn independently, and gain recognition. A notable example is Shubhecha Bhowmik, who manages the Instagram page 'foodie_delight_siliguri'. With a follower base of 49.4k, Shubhecha not only focuses on promoting food-related content but also diversifies into areas such as wellness centers for children, laptop care centers, and recommendations for interior design services in Siliguri. Her versatile content strategy highlights how social media can be utilized beyond a single niche, leading to multiple income streams and broader audience engagement. The financial independence gained through her

digital work has helped her carve a distinctive identity while contributing meaningfully to her family's economy. Similarly, Sweta Biswas, who runs 'food_stories_siliguri' with 23.5k followers, emphasizes the evolving nature of content entrepreneurship. Starting with food blogging, she expanded into event planning and wedding consultancy, earning substantial profits. Winning the Inspire Food Vlogger Award has further solidified her position and served as a motivational milestone, proving that dedication to digital entrepreneurship can lead to public recognition and prestige. These case studies underline how social media is a direct catalyst for women's empowerment and self-sufficiency.

Community Building and Networking:

Beyond individual achievements, social media enables women to build strong communities and foster valuable professional networks. In Siliguri, groups such as 'Showstoppers' and 'Dasabhuja (Decagon)' are prime examples of community-driven initiatives led exclusively by women. These Facebook groups create a collaborative digital space where women actively engage in selling a variety of products ranging from homemade food and jewellery to designer clothing and beauty products. The success of these groups lies in their ability to offer not just a platform for commerce, but also a support network where members share business tips, marketing strategies, and even emotional encouragement. The groups foster a sense of belonging, helping women who might otherwise remain isolated within traditional household roles emerge as entrepreneurs, marketers, and community leaders. This kind of collective social capital proves vital for scaling small ventures and building lasting professional relationships.

Entrepreneurship and Expanding the Informal Economy:

A significant feature observed through the study is the emergence of grassroots entrepreneurship in the informal economy. Many of these women-led businesses are home-based and digitally driven, operating without formal registration or large-scale infrastructure. For instance, Alisha Chettri, through her Instagram presence, uses fashion and beauty content to empower other women by boosting their confidence and personal style. With 26.1k followers, she creates tutorial videos, style guides, and beauty tips that inspire women to elevate their public appearances, helping them to gain self-assurance in both personal and professional spheres. By monetizing her digital content, she successfully integrates informal entrepreneurship with personal development services. A young woman runs a successful Facebook blogging page titled 'Taste of Siliguri', which has garnered an impressive 258k followers. For the past three years, she has pursued blogging professionally. Through her journey, she has found empowerment and purpose in content creation, which further inspired her to deepen her commitment to this path. Her success led her to launch her own start-up, 'Taste of Waffles'. With blogging as her primary source of income, she exemplifies how social media platforms can serve as powerful tools for personal growth and financial independence. Her story reflects a broader movement where women are leveraging digital spaces to uplift themselves, redefine success, and become icons of dignity and prosperity in today's evolving society. Operating largely within the informal sector, these women bypass traditional barriers such as high startup costs and societal restrictions. Instead, they leverage digital platforms to generate sustainable incomes, contributing to both household earnings and the local economy.

This shift shows how the informal economy, when coupled with technology, can offer new pathways for women's financial independence.

Increasing Digital Literacy and Skill Development:

Another critical theme emerging from the study is the development of digital skills and literacy among women entrepreneurs and bloggers. Engaging in social media business or content creation necessitates learning skills such as video editing, digital marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), graphic design, and online customer relationship management. A fitting example is Neha Agarwal Goyal, the creator behind the Instagram page 'kaira_4pure'. Through her vibrant posts showcasing fashion trends, lifestyle tips, and product endorsements, Neha not only builds her brand but also motivates other women to explore the digital landscape. Her consistent and professional content demonstrates expertise in visual storytelling, audience engagement strategies, and influencer marketing-key components of digital literacy today. Through practical experience, women like Neha and others build competencies that are crucial in the modern job market. Thus, digital engagement not only serves their immediate entrepreneurial goals but also equips them with transferrable skills, opening doors to broader career opportunities in the future.

Improving Social Status and Identity Formation:

Participation in social media-based activities has profound implications for women's social identity and status. It enables them to gain not just economic independence but also a newfound respect in both familial and community contexts. For instance, bloggers such as Sweta Biswas and Shubhecha Bhowmik have transitioned from ordinary social media users to local influencers whose recommendations are valued and whose opinions shape public perception. Receiving awards, achieving a large follower base, and being recognized as local celebrities uplifts their social standing considerably. Moreover, figures like Mountain Girl Subarna and Alisha Chettri illustrate how lifestyle, travel, and beauty blogging allow women to challenge traditional gender norms by presenting alternative narratives of success ones rooted in independence, visibility, and digital prowess. In doing so, these women create new models of female aspiration for younger generations, reinforcing the idea that empowerment can be achieved through creative and professional engagement in digital spaces.

Technology as a Tool for Development of Women:

Finally, technology, especially through the medium of social media, acts as a transformative developmental tool. It democratizes access to markets, networks, and audiences, bypassing many of the traditional socio-economic barriers that historically constrained women's participation in public life. By using platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, women from Siliguri are reaching not just local but also regional and sometimes national audiences. They are able to showcase talents, sell products, offer services, and build brands from the comfort of their homes all enabled by affordable internet connectivity and basic digital devices. The success stories of women-led groups like Showstoppers and individual creators like Neha Agarwal Goyal, Shubhecha Bhowmik, and Sweta Biswas testify to the far-reaching impact that technology can have when it is accessible, inclusive, and community-oriented. Thus, social

media becomes more than a tool for communication it becomes a vehicle for gender equity, economic inclusion, and holistic empowerment.

The thematic analysis reveals that social media networks play a pivotal role in fostering women's empowerment, economic participation, skill development, and social mobility in Siliguri. Female bloggers and entrepreneurs are not just improving their personal lives but are also contributing to community development and the informal economy. Thus, social media and digital engagement represent critical vehicles for achieving gender equity and sustainable development in local contexts.

Conclusion:

With the development of Artificial Intelligence and Information Technology, the use of social media platforms for digital working has become a global phenomenon. The increasing accessibility of technology and the use of social media has developed women which created a new dimension of integration of women with development (Boserup,1970). Globalisation has created many opportunities for employment generation for all segment of people. But for women it is creating a lot of advantages for them by using social media networks. In an era, where everything is digitalised, women are using social media for generating employment. It is realised that women themselves are capable to become a part of solution of their problems by creating wealth of their own and also for the development of their life. Women are no longer confined with household works and dependent on man in all the spheres. By using technology and media, they are now engaged in business activities with the household works also. Women have established themselves in all the spheres in social media platforms. The exposure of globalisation, technology revolution in India helps women to do works with equal footing with men. In the era of globalisation, women have used social media to advance their collective interests and created a significantly momentous more balanced society.

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