

Understanding the Role of Facebook Groups in Women Entrepreneurship Development: A case study of 'PULA'; (Facebook Group called as Pune Ladies)

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Abstract:

Understanding the role of Facebook groups in women entrepreneurship development: case study of 'PULA', the present paper aims to study the role of social media especially Facebook groups in the incremental development of women entrepreneurship of Pune city of Maharashtra state. For this, a pilot study with primary data was conducted and responses from 50 women entrepreneurs who are using PULA as a business platform are collated to draw conclusion.

The study examines the impact of social media on entrepreneurship development among users of Facebook group based in urban population of Pune' with reference to PULA Facebook group. Facebook groups have dominated entrepreneurs of Pune, Maharashtra. **There is wide use of different social platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp with increasing numbers of users.** The study has adopted survey research design and simple random sampling technique. The sample type is women entrepreneurs attached to PULA Group and sample size is 50. The findings reveal that social media impact significantly on entrepreneurship development among users in Pune city of Maharashtra state of India. **It has been observed that social media contributes significantly in terms of Facebook, WhatsApp and in realizing self-potential and entrepreneurship among women entrepreneurs of Pune. From the study it has also been observed that the business activities conducted through Facebook groups have created a new market for the entrepreneurs.** The study concludes that Twitter does not contribute to entrepreneurship development in terms of realizing self-potential and entrepreneurship among women entrepreneurs of Pune. The study, therefore, suggests that social media in terms of

ISBN: 978-93-83302-47-5

Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram should be government supported to make it mainstream media of entrepreneurship development. The study also suggests that Facebook groups can be realised as virtual self-help groups and with this approach support and necessary changes should be adopted in the policy to boost economic growth as well as motivating women entrepreneurship development.

Keywords: Self-potential, Entrepreneurship Development, Innovation, Social Media, economic growth, women entrepreneurship, 'PULA' (Facebook Group called as Pune Ladies), PULAItes (members of PULA)

Introduction:

Facebook is a social networking website that allows to connect the likeminded people and carry out activities of common interests. Facebook group is one such utility available on this social networking site where people come together and form a group to achieve certain predefined objectives. It has become an instrument for social entrepreneurship.

'PULA' is a Facebook group of Ladies from Pune. It has more than 2.5 lakh women members. It was started by Mrs. Sonia Agarwal-Konjeti in the year 2015. 'PULA' has a vision to 'create a Female-Family for fellow females in Pune to not only make genuine acquaintances but a space to feel belonged. PULAItes actively search for information of varied kinds, give and take suggestions, help fellow PULAItes, post opinions, promote their respective businesses under group rules and grand meets etc.' This group has a core team that monitors to maintain and sustain the purpose and it also has a group rule book to abide to. One of the prime advantages of this group is freedom of expression that women are normally deprived of when it comes to deciding how to earn livelihood. PULA facilitates such a platform for its female members where they do not have to worry what will the decision maker 'he' of the family will think or feel or react or the like if she decides to express or promote or advertise or market her skills and ideas. Along with freedom of expression the next comes experimenting with various business ideas with ready market research and latest trends of the business that is facilitated by the group activities. The other important advantage of this Facebook group is costless promotion of the business activity that is possible through this social media interface.

Entrepreneurship Development:

Entrepreneurship as a process is a way of putting entrepreneurial thinking into practice; that could be in the form of the profit business sector, the non-profit social structure, the political area or in the public service.

Entrepreneur and entrepreneurship play a very important role in the socio-economic development of a nation. Entrepreneurs set up enterprises and generate employment leading to the reduction in unemployment as well as the foreign exchange is earned through the export of the goods and thus the entrepreneur adds to national growth and prosperity.

Entrepreneurship through social media platforms:

One of the major challenges that every society at large is facing today, in the well-connected and the globalised world is to connect to the world of WWWs through different apps and means of networking. The challenge is how to connect to virtually connected and physically aloof from next door acquaintances! The challenge is to channelize the communication in socially glued societies and businesses. The answer is entrepreneurship through social media.

Women entrepreneurship in India:

Women usually have smaller networks and less geographical mobility than men apart from this, in case of young married women they have to devote sizable time for the families, particularly in the early years of upbringing of the children. Women face many constraints in managing enterprises and do take the support of others on specific areas of management.

Women entrepreneurs can be divided into three categories:

- Women with education qualifications who take initiative and manage the business at par with men.
- Women who do not have educational background or formal training but have developed practical skills required for small scale, household and handicraft industries and choose a product with which they are familiar. The skills may be hereditary or acquired through training programs organised in nearby places.
- Women with low levels of income, hardly any education or skills. They need support from government and non-government organisations in promoting ventures that suit their interests.

Use of Social media; a case study of Facebook group of women ‘PULA’:

To understand the role that social media especially Facebook (which is a very commonly used social media platform) plays in the development and growth of women entrepreneurs' ventures and businesses. PULA is a Facebook group of women residing in Pune, a cosmopolitan city in Maharashtra state of India. It has more than 2.5lakh female members and more than 5000 ladies as verified sellers on the group who make use of this platform for their business promotion and transactions. Women entrepreneurs showcase their products every week and they reach their potential customers without any hassle. They even respond to customers who request for the availability of a product on the PULA Facebook group. As a pilot study 50 women entrepreneurs were contacted for this study and analysis of their response is summed as the outcome of this paper.

Literature Review:

Chen, S. (2001) in the paper, 'Assessing the impact of the Internet on brands', reviews the claim that e-commerce will spell the end of brand management. Evidence from market study is reviewed, and the paper identifies some key factors that make this scenario unlikely. First, the effect depends on several other factors, such as type of product and type of purchase. Brands serve a different role in each of these cases, and the impact of the Internet will vary according to the role that the brand plays. There are a variety of Internet technologies which affect the brands in a different way. The Internet leads to some secondary effects in the market structures that can impact the brands. The combination of these factors, far from leading to the end of brand management, may in many cases lead to an increased role for brand management. Corcoran, Cate et al (2009) in their paper 'Brands aim to adapt to the social media world: report on the use of social media by brands and retailers in the U.S.', states low to high brands and retailers are embracing social media to instigate sales and brand awareness. According to Scott Galloway, luxury brands build relationships through Facebook, user reviews and completing the transactions online. Dutta, Soumitra (2010) in the article on 'Social media strategy' in Harvard Business Review, stresses that social media is redefining the business methodology. Social Media provides a low-cost, highly accessible platform on where a personal brand can be built and create an identity within and outside the organisation. Social media helps the user to engage rapidly with peers, employees,

customers, and the broader public, in order to leverage relationships, show commitment to a cause, and demonstrate a capacity for reflection. Another important observation about social media is, it provides an opportunity to learn from instant information and feedback. Pekka Aula, in the article "Social media, reputation risk and ambient publicity management", focuses on the threat and risk of social media to the reputation of business companies. It illustrates the influence of social media and how publicity can give a negative impact to the reputation of a company. It highlights the most popular and interesting social media services based on the corporate perspective. However, it says social media expands the scope of reputation risks and boosts risk dynamics. Kristin Gunderson Hunt in his article, 'Finders keepers: social media strategies help find top talent', explores the important role of social media in the recruitment of employees amongst companies. It mentions that social media are not just for socialization as it could also be used in hiring and introducing some information about the companies. It has observed that the companies which do not embrace social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter as a recruitment tool might lose quality candidates. Tina P. Singh, Dr. Ratna Sinha in their research paper titled as 'The Impact of Social Media on Business Growth and Performance in India'(2017) have listed the major benefits of social media for business that includes; improved customer insights, better customer service, cost-efficient way to market and promote the business, facilitating connecting to the customers in terms of changing preferences, lifestyles and resources and adapt to the changing interest of the consumers , Establishing Brand Awareness and increasing sales. This study understands the benefits, impact, and importance of Social Media on business performance and growth. According to the theory of Social Norms, theory states that the likelihood that a person will respond to social influence will increase with:

- Strength: how important the influencing group of people are to you.
- Immediacy: how close the group is to you (in space and time) at the time of the influence attempt.
- Number: How many people there are in the group.

As the theory of Social Norms describes, the rules that a group uses for appropriate and inappropriate values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. These rules may be explicit or implicit.

Gap Analysis:

Internationally, there have been many studies conducted to understand the impact of Social Media on women entrepreneurship development however in India not much study has been conducted in this area, therefore this study will understand the impact of social media on business development and growth especially for women entrepreneurship development with Pune Ladies Facebook group as a case study.

Objectives of the Study:

- To understand the extent to which Women Entrepreneurs make use of social media for their business development and growth.
- To assess the potential and impact of social media on business development and growth of women entrepreneurs.

Hypotheses:

The hypotheses for this study are:

1. Women entrepreneurs make low to moderate use of social media for development and growth of their business
2. There is a large potential for the impact of social media for the business development and growth of women entrepreneurs.

Scope: The research paper covers the following scope,

- Entrepreneurship Development
- Innovation
- Social Media
- Economic growth
- Women entrepreneurship
- 'PULA' (Facebook Group called as Pune Ladies)
- PULAITES (members of PULA)

Limitations:

- Limitation as to sample type and size: sample covers 50 women entrepreneurs attached to PULA group on Facebook
- Limitation as to geographical area: study is limited to urban population from Pune city of Maharashtra state in India
- Limitation as to time: study is undertaken from January 2020 to March 2020

Research Methodology:

The paper aims to study the role of social media especially Facebook groups in the incremental development of women entrepreneurship of Pune city of Maharashtra state. For this a pilot study was conducted and responses from 50 women entrepreneurs who are using PULA as a business platform are collated to draw conclusions. The research is an exploratory research drawn mainly from primary data collected in the form of response to questionnaire along with personal interviews of the respondents.

The Survey Design:

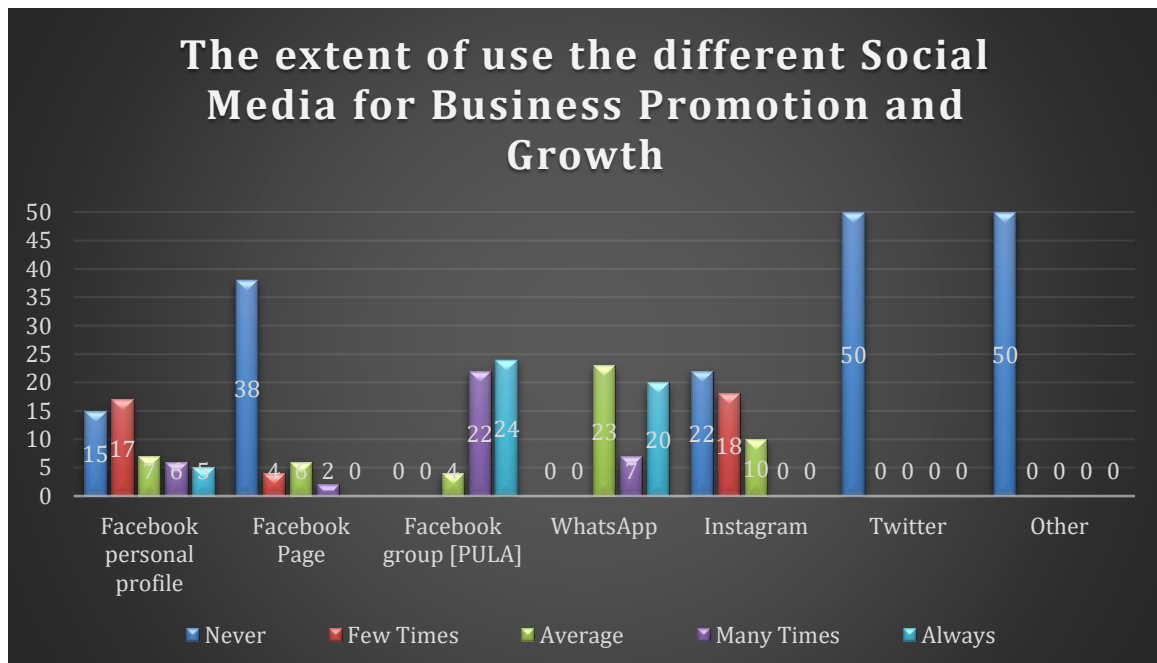
The survey design includes a questionnaire of 26 questions divided into three sections. First section of the questionnaire covered through the questions focused on the demographic information of the women entrepreneurs. Second section covering through the objective questions explored the responses on the use of Social media, preferred platform, level of expertise of handling social media platforms, extent of time spent on the social media for business purposes, role of PULA in business development and growth, potential for use of Social media, Impact of social media in terms of financial aspects While the third section of the questionnaire captured personalised responses through the questions that aimed to understand their experience of the PULA group as a mechanism for business development and growth.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Data table shows compilation of response received on the extent of use of different

The extent of use the different Social Media for Business Promotion and Growth						
		Never	Few Times	Average	Many Times	Always
A	Facebook personal profile	15	17	7	6	5
		30%	34%	14%	12%	10%

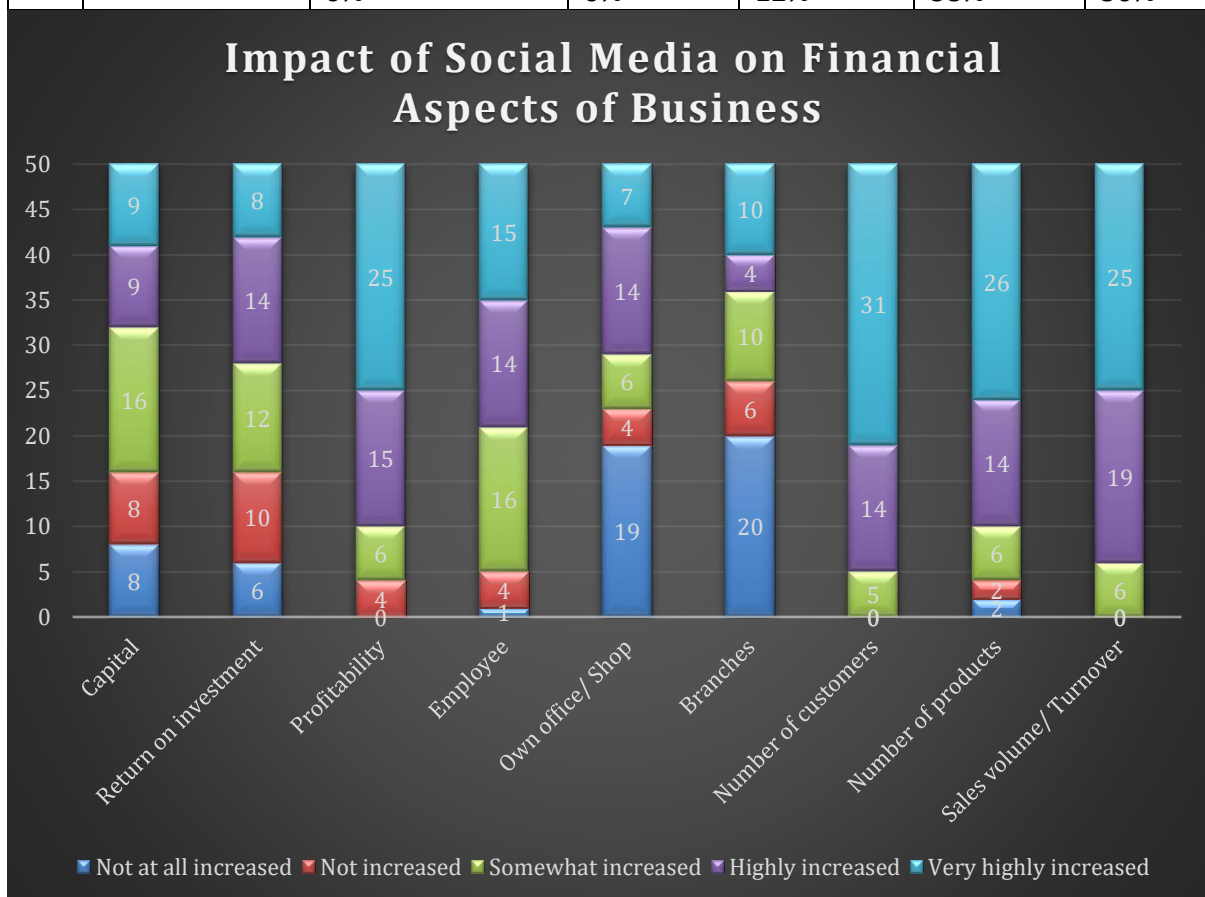
B	Facebook Page	38	4	6	2	0
		76	8%	12%	4%	0%
C	Facebook group [PULA]	0	0	4	22	24
		0%	0%	8%	44%	48%
D	WhatsApp	0	0	23	7	20
		0%	0%	46%	14%	40%
E	Instagram	22	18	10	0	0
		44%	36%	20%	0%	0%
F	Twitter	50	0	0	0	0
		100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
G	Other	50	0	0	0	0
		100%	0%	0%	0%	0%



It has been observed from the above data that 100 % women entrepreneurs of PULA prefer to use Facebook groups for their communication purpose. It is peculiar to note that they avoid making use of Twitter and not preferred by any of the 50 respondents. They make average use of Instagram as only 20% responded that they make use of Instagram for business purposes. These women do not prefer using their personal Facebook profiles for business purposes. Majority of them prefer transactions on Facebook groups. Another observation is WhatsApp is emerging as one of the business communication media.

The next response was sought to understand the impact of Social Media on Financial Aspects of Business:

Data showing: Impact of Social Media on Financial Aspects of Business						
		Not at all increased	Not increased	Somewhat increased	Highly increased	Very highly increased
A	Capital	8	8	16	9	9
		16.00%	16%	32%	18.00%	18%
B	Return on investment	6	10	12	14	8
		12.00%	20.00%	24%	28%	16%
C	Profitability	0	4	6	15	25
		0%	8%	12.00%	30%	50.00%
D	Employee	1	4	16	14	15
		2.00%	8.00%	32.00%	28.00%	30.00%
E	Own office/ Shop	19	4	6	14	7
		38.00%	3.33%	20%	13.33%	0%
F	Branches	20	6	10	4	10
		40.00%	12%	20%	8.00%	20%
G	Number of customers	0	0	5	14	31
		0%	0%	10.00%	28.00%	62%
H	Number of products	2	2	6	14	26
		4%	4%	12%	28.00%	52.00%
I	Sales volume/ Turnover	0	0	6	19	25
		0%	0%	12%	38%	50%

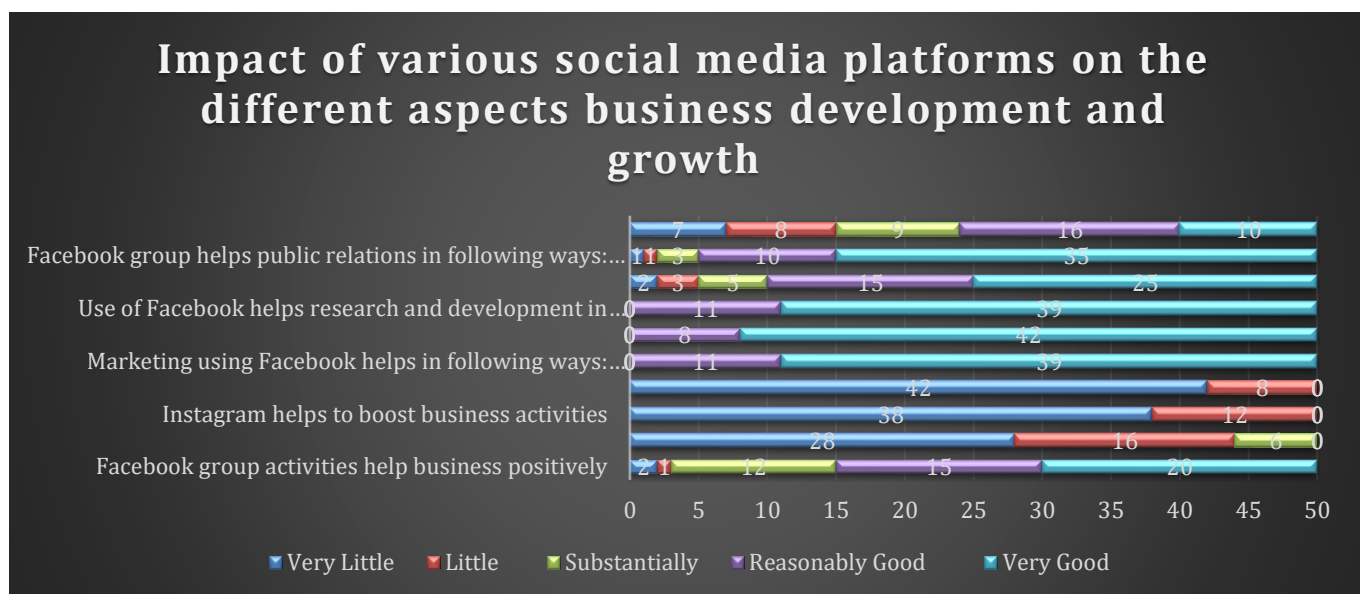


It has been observed from the above data that women entrepreneurs of PULA think Facebook group PULA has made an impact on financial aspects of business. 68% PULAites think use of social media has helped in the capital increase while 32% do not express the same. 68% PULAites think use of social media has helped in the increasing return on investments while 32% do not agree to it. 92% PULAites think use of social media has helped in the Profitability increase while 8 % of them do not agree to it. 90% PULAites think use of social media has helped in the increase of employees while 10% do not agree to it.

The next response was sought to understand the impact of Social Media on different aspects of business development and growth:

Impact of various social media platforms on the different aspects business development and growth						
		Very Little	Little	Substanti ally	Reasonably Good	Very Good
A	Facebook group activities help business positively	2	1	12	15	20
		4%	2%	24%	30%	40%
B	Facebook marketplace helps to grow business	28	16	6	0	0
		56%	32%	12%	0%	0%
C	Instagram helps to boost business activities	38	12	0	0	0
		76%	24%	0%	0%	0%
D	Google is a tool for business development	42	8	0	0	0
		84%	16%	0%	0%	0%
E	Marketing using Facebook helps in following ways: Increased brand exposure, build awareness, Brand reputation management, Increased targeted traffic, Improved Search Engine Optimization, Reduced marketing costs	0	0	0	11	39
		0%	0%	0%	22%	78%
F	Facebook group helps your business growth by: Customer interaction – Reviews, Real-time and personalized support, Improve my customer experience, Increased customer retention and loyalty, Recommendations, Mentoring	0	0	0	8	42
		0%	0%	0%	16%	84%
G	Use of Facebook helps research and development in following ways: Market insights on pricing, Competitor’s monitoring, New ideas from community/Trending,	0	0	0	11	39
		0%	0%	0%	22%	78%

H	Branding on Facebook group is economic in following ways: It is cost effective, Reduce costs in marketing, customer service and recruitment	2	3	5	15	25
		4%	6%	10%	30%	50%
I	Facebook group helps public relations in following ways: Communication in real-time and Increased brand exposure	1	1	3	10	35
		2%	2%	6%	20%	70%
J	Facebook group helps Human Resources in following ways: Business networking, facilitated recruitment, Reduce recruitment costs	7	8	9	16	10
		14%	16%	18%	32%	20%



It has been observed from the above data that women entrepreneurs of PULA think various social media PULA have made an impact on different aspects of business development and growth.

The extent of impact of different social media on business development and growth is seen from their responses. 94% PULAites think that PULA Facebook group activities help business positively. Only 12 % PULAites think that Facebook marketplace helps to grow business whereas 100% PULAites think that Instagram does not helps to boost business activities and Google is not a tool for business development.

Findings:

- The social media impact significantly on entrepreneurship development among users in Pune city of Maharashtra state of India.
- Social media contributes significantly in terms of Facebook, WhatsApp and in realizing self-potential and entrepreneurship among women entrepreneurs of Pune.
- The business activities conducted through Facebook groups have created a new market for the entrepreneurs.
- Twitter does not contribute to entrepreneurship development in terms of realizing self-potential and entrepreneurship among women entrepreneurs of Pune.
- Facebook helps in increased brand exposure, build awareness, brand reputation management, increased targeted traffic, improved search engine optimization, reduced marketing costs.
- Facebook group helps the business growth by Customer interaction Real-time and personalized support, Improved customer experience, Increased customer retention and loyalty.
- Facebook helps research and development in following ways market insights on pricing, competitor's monitoring, new ideas from community/trending
- The branding on Facebook group is economic as it is cost effective, reduces costs in marketing, strengthens the customer service and recruitment.
- Facebook group helps public relations by boosting up the Communication in real-time and Increased brand exposure

Suggestions: Following suggestions are given with respect to the mentioned findings,

- Women entrepreneurs on PULA should explore Instagram as new platform to connect with more and new generation of customers
- Women entrepreneurs should explore Facebook market as an open and wide platform to explore and reach new customer base.
- Women entrepreneurs should create a team dedicatedly working for social media so that communication and promotion channel is strengthened.
- Women entrepreneurs can also try and explore google as a means of promotion and strategic marketing tool.
- WhatsApp has emerged as potential customer service media, and needs strategic handling.

- Online networking is bridging gap of formal and informal communication so all communication should be thoughtfully designed and handled.

Area for further study:

- The study can further be undertaken for 500 women entrepreneurs and understand the broader insights to explore and experiment as a social entrepreneurship development process.
- Geographically this study can be extended to more area encompassing Maharashtra state and beyond as well.

Conclusion:

The study concludes that Facebook Groups play a very important role in women Entrepreneurship development. Entrepreneurship facilitated by PULA; a Facebook women group is influenced by four distinct factors: firstly, it is economic development that has created opportunities for women in the group who were smart enough to tap the gap between supply and demand. Secondly it is the culture of strong familial bonding that has created a healthy environment of trust and transparency leading to motivating more and more women to believe in themselves to start a venture that functions on their terms and convenience. It does have a risk or huge completion and competitive pricing in one of the major issues of concern for many women entrepreneurs. Third important aspect to this PULA based business development is technological development that has geared the use of technology and spread of smartphones which has become the tool for women entrepreneurship development. And the final factor that has been incremental to the business development and growth is education. The factor of education has impacted very positively as it has implanted a strong faith in themselves that 'they can do it'. That is the reason educated homemakers have turned into successful entrepreneurs and techpreneurs of the social media aware urban population of India.

The study, therefore, suggests that social media in terms of Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram should be government supported to make it mainstream media of entrepreneurship development. The study also suggests that Facebook groups can be realised as virtual self-help groups and with this approach support and necessary changes should be adopted in the policy to boost economic growth as well as motivating women entrepreneurship development.

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