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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the significant role and application of strategic communication for women entrepreneurs (WEs) in India, an essential yet often overlooked contributor to economic growth. Despite receiving government support and experiencing digital expansion, WEs encounter considerable obstacles, such as familial responsibilities, limited access to finance, entrenched patriarchal attitudes, and infrastructural deficiencies. The study underscores the necessity of strategic communication advancing beyond mere messaging to intelligent and adaptable engagement as a means to surmount these challenges, enhance decision-making, and build client trust.

It investigates the use of digital tools, particularly social media, as influential platforms for market access and network development, which are vital for both rural and urban WEs. By assessing current practices and pinpointing communication deficiencies, this research seeks to offer practical frameworks that prioritize relationship-building, symbolic communication, and clarity, thereby empowering Indian women entrepreneurs towards greater success and sustainable business growth.

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INTRODUCTION:

In the dynamic yet traditionally patriarchal business landscape of India, women entrepreneurs are rising as significant drivers of economic advancement, utilizing digital platforms and unwavering determination to establish impactful businesses. Nevertheless, many encounter deep-rooted obstacles, ranging from societal prejudices to restricted access to conventional business networks, which frequently impede their journey toward success. This paper posits that Strategic Communication, an intentional process involving message formulation, audience assessment, and stakeholder involvement, is not merely advantageous but essential for these women to create robust brands, obtain funding, confront stereotypes, and ultimately prosper. By mastering strategic communication, Indian women entrepreneurs can convert their concepts into influential enterprises, leaving a lasting imprint on India's economic story.

Communication for women entrepreneurs

One of the significant challenges encountered by women SMEs is the access to timely and strategic communication. Women entrepreneurs have the potential to access modern communication technology on a global scale, similar to their male counterparts. However, the question arises regarding the extent to which women entrepreneurs can engage in strategic communication in various business scenarios to achieve success. Their ability to communicate strategically has emerged as a crucial factor in determining international competitiveness.

The global business landscape necessitates that women SMEs employ strategic communication to remain competitive internationally in aspects such as quality, delivery, after-sales service, and pricing. Effective strategic communication is essential across all business domains to facilitate transformation within the enterprise. The challenge lies in the availability of sufficient communication skills to effectively navigate entrepreneurial roles and to balance business needs with the strategies that must be implemented through effective communication, which is particularly critical for Indian women entrepreneurs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

This literature review examines various terminologies that define women's empowerment and promotes a comprehensive and relational understanding of women's empowerment through entrepreneurship and resilience. The notion of empowerment is rooted in power. Kabeer (1999) characterizes empowerment as the process through which individuals who have been deprived of the capacity to make strategic life choices gain that capacity. The term empowerment has gained popularity as it encompasses several key components, including decision-making authority, assertiveness, the ability to make choices, education, skill development, and enhanced self-image. Empowering women involves establishing a supportive environment where women can execute government initiatives and organizational policies that impact their lives (Chattopadhyay, 2005; Aspy and Sandhu, 1999; Patricia et al., 2003). Chattopadhyay (2005) posits that women's empowerment can be described as the transition from oppression to a state where both the oppressor and the oppressed enjoy social, political, and economic equality. Women's economic empowerment pertains to the process by which women achieve self-sufficiency to generate income, become the primary earners for themselves and their families, and contribute to poverty alleviation (Elliot, 2008). This literature provides a critical analysis of women's empowerment through entrepreneurship. According to Advani (2013), entrepreneurs initiate their businesses from the ground up to achieve profitability. Although women undergo the same stages of establishing a business as men and encounter

similar challenges regardless of gender, they face a unique set of barriers that hinder their entry into entrepreneurship and subsequently their success as businesswomen.

The role of supporting women in achieving empowerment and generating income through self-employment or entrepreneurship is a crucial aspect of empowerment (Anita Chaudhary, 2012). Women entrepreneurs account for over one-third of entrepreneurial ventures globally. Therefore, the economic empowerment of women is essential for robust economic growth, with entrepreneurship being the most effective means to achieve this. The participation of women in entrepreneurial activities will guarantee the efficient use of labor, income generation, and consequently, an enhancement in the quality of life. Jameela (2003), in her research, investigates the effectiveness of various policies and initiatives implemented by the government to empower women. Her findings indicate that the microcredit approach has been successful in reducing poverty and empowering women. This paper emphasizes the analysis of specific schemes and initiatives established by the government of India to promote the growth of women entrepreneurs. It examines the current status of empowerment among those women who have benefited from the Standup India loan scheme and have initiated their own businesses.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To evaluate the impact of communication on the perceptions and expectations of women entrepreneurs.
2. To investigate the expectations regarding different factors in strategic communication among women entrepreneurs and how these relate to their profiles.
3. To identify and analyze the relationship between the profiles of Women entrepreneurs and their perceptions of communication regarding various aspects of their business foundations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

The current research relies exclusively on secondary data obtained from a review of literature, including journals, newspapers, websites, and published articles pertinent to this specific subject.

HOW COMMUNICATION EMPOWER WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS:

Communication plays a significant role in empowering women entrepreneurs by equipping them with tools such as social media to establish and expand their brands., These tools enable them to access global markets at a low cost and circumvent traditional gatekeepers, giving them the opportunity to create supportive networks and share knowledge., Additionally, communication aids in challenging stereotypes and increasing visibility, thereby fostering economic independence and growth by facilitating direct connections with customers and collaborators. Furthermore, it assists women entrepreneurs in overcoming societal barriers and developing resilient personal brands, ultimately leading to success in competitive environments.

- **Challenging Stereotypes**: By elevating their voices and disseminating success narratives, women have the ability to confront conventional norms and reshape roles within male-dominated sectors.
- **Direct Customer Engagement:** Facilitates direct communication, fostering loyalty and comprehending customer requirements, thereby improving the customer experience.
- **Overcoming Barriers:** Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) along with development communication assist in overcoming traditional challenges such as restricted access to resources and institutional biases, as noted by SciSpace.

- **Knowledge & Skill Sharing:** Seasoned entrepreneurs can guide aspiring ones, imparting essential insights regarding business expansion and work-life equilibrium.
- **Enhanced Visibility and Brand Development:** Social media platforms provide affordable opportunities to display products, cultivate personal brands, and engage broader audiences, thereby enhancing market presence.
- **Worldwide Accessibility**: Digital communication transcends geographical limitations, enabling women to efficiently connect with global customers and markets.
- **Networking and Community Development:** These platforms promote connections among entrepreneurs, fostering supportive environments for mentorship, collaboration, and collective learning.

SUCCESSFUL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN INDIA :

Accomplished women entrepreneurs in India specializing in strategic communication are leading large-scale strategies, demonstrating their leadership in public relations, digital media, and wider corporate communications. These women thrive by identifying market opportunities, establishing specialized agencies, utilizing digital platforms, and fostering inclusive environments within the strategic communication field and beyond in India.

ENTREPRENEURS	POSITION	START UP
Shradha Sharma	Founder of your story	A media platform documenting start up journeys, an example of media entrepreneurship.
Neha Bajaj	Founder of scroll mantra	Championing equal opportunities in pr.
Nikky Gupta	Co-founder of Teamwork Communications	Built India's first specialist healthcare PR agency, expanding into digital and influencer marketing, noted Exchange4Media in a feature on women in PR.
Malini Agarwal	Founder of miss malini	A major digital platform for Bollywood and lifestyle content, demonstrating success in digital media.
Shruti Mishra	Senior vp at flags communications	A g100 leader with deep pr expertise in media strategy, guiding global brands.
Anisha Singh	Founder of mydala.com	A local deals platform, showcasing digital marketing success.
Tanya Swetta	Co-founder & CEO of id8 media solutions	Focusing on data-driven inclusive workplaces in pr.

CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS RELATED TO STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION:

Women entrepreneurs in India face significant challenges in strategic communication, largely due to a lack of expertise and confidence in applying effective communication strategies in business settings.These challenges are often exacerbated by societal and cultural barriers, further hindering the ability of women entrepreneurs to effectively communicate their ideas and navigate the business landscape.

- **Challenges in Promoting Achievements**: Societal norms frequently condition women to act as consensus-builders, leading them to avoid claiming individual credit for their successes. They often

use terms like "we" and "us" even when referring to their personal contributions. This behavior adversely affects their capacity to present a robust and confident personal brand, which is essential for gaining the respect of stakeholders and investors.

- **Restricted Market Access and Visibility**: Women frequently face limitations in mobility due to safety concerns and familial obligations, resulting in fewer opportunities to attend trade shows, client meetings, and pursue market growth. This restricted visibility impedes their understanding of evolving market trends, the application of effective marketing strategies, and their ability to compete with well-established companies.
- **Insufficient Knowledge of Government Initiatives**: Although there are numerous government programs aimed at assisting women entrepreneurs, a considerable number of women, particularly in rural regions, remain uninformed about these resources. This lack of awareness stems from gaps in information dissemination and limited access to relevant information channels. Consequently, they miss out on vital financial and infrastructural support.
- **Lack of Strategic Communication Expertise**: A considerable number of women entrepreneurs, especially those operating within small and medium enterprises (SMEs), have not cultivated sufficient expertise in strategic communication (such as clarity, conciseness, correctness, courtesy, consideration, creativity, and completeness). This shortcoming poses a substantial obstacle to business performance and the success of negotiations.
- **Information Asymmetry and Misinterpretation**: Ineffective or inadequate communication can result in information asymmetry, where clients or business partners may react unfavorably due to miscommunication or misinterpretation, thereby consuming time and energy and potentially leading to the rejection of business agreements.
- **Perception and Credibility Challenges:** Women frequently encounter doubt regarding their business skills from clients, suppliers, and investors, especially in male-dominated sectors such as manufacturing or construction. This compels them to exert greater effort to demonstrate their proficiency, which can be mentally exhausting and affect their negotiating power and self-assurance.
- **Networking Barriers:** In India, professional networks are frequently dominated by men, which complicates the ability of women to effectively navigate these environments. The restricted access to these essential networks limits opportunities to connect with vendors, collaborators, and mentors, all of which are crucial for business development and market growth.

CONCLUSION :

Currently, India is experiencing a favorable shift in entrepreneurship, with a notable increase in women's involvement in this sector. In this rapidly evolving economy, women have always faced the choice of pursuing a successful career with independence or being held back by societal expectations. Given that multitasking is an inherent skill for women, it enables them to effectively balance their careers and responsibilities simultaneously. The outdated notion that women enter entrepreneurship solely due to push factors such as poverty, the death of a spouse, or the necessity for additional income has evolved; today, they are engaging in business ventures driven by their risk-taking capabilities, innovative ideas, and a strong desire for success. The 'Start-up India' initiative, launched by the Prime Minister of India, has

introduced various schemes aimed at fostering entrepreneurial awareness, orientation, and skill development programs specifically for women. As the environment rapidly transforms, investors are increasingly supporting women in leadership roles, recognizing their contributions to economic development, which are also on the rise. Government-initiated start-up schemes are cultivating an entrepreneurial culture by educating women about their latent potentials and strengths through entrepreneurial orientation programs, raising awareness, and encouraging women to excel in entrepreneurship with their creative and innovative concepts. This initiative helps them understand their significant role in society and how they can contribute to the nation's economic growth. However, the report indicates that the conditions for women business ownership in India remain less than favorable, highlighting that obstacles are primarily due to gender bias perceptions, which lead to inadequate social and cultural acceptance, diminished self-belief, and limited access to financial resources or venture capital. Therefore, there is a pressing need for additional government initiatives to assist women in ascending the entrepreneurship ladder in India.

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