The Empowerment of Female Entrepreneurs using Social Media for Business: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract— **Problem: Women entrepreneurship has grown significantly all over the world, and it is widely established that entrepreneurship is important for economic growth and wealth. Despite those facts, women's participation in entrepreneurship is lower than men's in almost all societies. Objective: This article aims at providing a systematic review and a descriptive evaluation of the use of social media to support women entrepreneurship. Methods: A systematic review of three databases covering technology, business and social sciences (Scopus, Emerald and Google Scholar) was carried out. Results: This article provides a methodological description of 15 studies about the impact and use of social media/ ICT on women entrepreneurship and a reflection on what approach or design will be suitable to researchers focused area. The following rubrics were considered for the analysis: research objectives/ questions, materials included, participants, research design/strategy, research methods, measures/ analysis, re-sults/conclusions and credibility and reliability. Conclusions: The systematic re-view demonstrated that most research in the area of women entrepreneurship and social media are conducted in a case study research design with a qualitative ap-proach. The overall research findings show that the social media and ICT related other services can be utilized for development of women entrepreneurship.**

Keywords— Women Entrepreneurship, Social Media, Women Empowerment

I. INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka consists of 20.95 million of population and faces a huge problem in providing jobs for its people with an unemployment rate of 4.80% by year 2017. There are many causes behind the employment issue in Sri Lanka, such as the low education level, the lack of skilled workers, the unequal development in Sri Lanka's different regions, and so on. However, one of the main problems is the lack of available jobs to meet the needs of Srilankan citizens. Entrepreneurs create jobs. Entrepreneurship can be defined as the initiation of change through creation or innovation that usually bears risk. According to Shane[1] entrepreneurship is about discovering and exploiting opportunities. It is suggested that entrepreneurship research should deal with the phenomena of emergence, such as how opportunities are detected and acted upon, or how new organizations come into being[2]. The study of the entrepreneurial function and the creation of new business can be approached from varying theoretical perspectives (economic, psychological, institutional, and managerial). Therefore, entrepreneurship be an important solution to reduce unemployment rate and improve the economy of a country.

The Srilankan government has introduced several policies to encourage Srilankans to be entrepreneurs through the national policy framework for small and medium enterprise development by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce with the vision to create significant number of globally competitive, dynamic, innovative, technologically driven, eco – friendly and sustainable SMEs that contribute greatly to the national economic development and with the objective to support start – up SME enterprise,

strengthen the existing enterprises and extend nursing programmes for potentially viable sick SME's7. One group that becomes a target of these government policies is women, given the fact that most of the population in Sri Lanka is female.

Woman entrepreneurs generate income for themselves and their families, create jobs, and make significant contributions to the country's economy[3]. More than half the Sri Lankan population, 50.7 % consists of women, of the total employed population; female representation in the employer category is only 1%. (The Department of Census and Statistical Annual Report of 2017). However, latest available data for Sri Lanka indicates that out of the total 'economically inactive population' of the country, 75.8 per cent are females, and out of the total 'economically active population' (labour force) females account for only 36.7 per cent. This implies that there is a large untapped women population that could be utilized for the development of the country, while empowering the individuals (i.e., females) and benefitting society. On the other hand, attracting more women in to the labour force is of utmost importance, and given the fact that most of the population in Sri Lanka is female. Increasing female labour force participation can be done in two ways; first is by attracting more women in to the labour force as 'employees' and the second is by encouraging women to act as 'employers', i.e., more women entrepreneurs. Fostering women's economic development through enterprise promotion can have a positive impact in several areas. It enhances economic growth and provides employment opportunities; in addition, it improves the social, educational and health status of women and their families as women invest more in education, health and well-being of the family. Despite all these possible benefits to the economy and the society, gender biases against women are common in the SME sector, a sector in which women should ideally be able to start up their careers as entrepreneurs. As the National Policy on Human Resource and Employment observes "... there is a gender bias in SME employment. Workers employed in SMEs are predominantly men. Good equal employment practices are needed to correct the above bias ".8

The emergence of women entrepreneur in a society depends to a great extent on the economic, social, religious, cultural, and psychological factor prevailing in the society. In last decade, economic compulsion has led more and more young women to take employment and this change which is a structural change in the society from an agrarian society towards a service centered where the structure of the family is also adapting to the new economic arrangements in the environment is a slow process and is related to economic growth.

However, entrepreneurship can be potentially challenging for women. Considering their role as the main caregivers of the family, women might have some limitations in finance, business skills, mobility, and networks, to be able to run a successful business. Different research has found different challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. The challenges restricting entrepreneurial development and ICT among women in general are accessibility to support service[4], conditions of work in economic activity, consistently high level of activity and responsibility in home, dependency on family, family pressure, forces into the field of community development[5] formal political rights for women, formal socio cultural norm, gender based demands in ICT sector, higher Education related to entrepreneurship and business, household structure and control over resources, increased female participation in household activity, indefinite gender roles in the countries both inter and intra sectoral, inflow of skilled workers, informal credit systems predomination[6], irregular development for women in business sector to use ICT, lack of credit and extension services, lack of entrepreneurial activity, lack of investment in ICT inputs, improving practices or technology for women's, lack of involvement in welfare issues, lack of personal status law, lack of policy reforms, lack of women rights, lack of women's access to credit, low income[6], low level of access to land, low participation rates participation in economic activity[7], low reported statistics of successful female entrepreneurs, no independent women's activities, non-dependence of pragmatic practice, poor integration of financial markets[8], preference for white collar job, with its more benefits, flexible

[7] National Policy Framework for Small and Medium Enterprise Development, Ministry of Industry and Commerce (2017)

[8] National Human Resource and Employment Policy (2012, p. 50)

hours, and security, in spite of relatively low wages, prominent activity for women in both rural and urban areas, restrictions and segregation, significant low female representation, slow demand for ICT, slowed or stagnated work force employment, social and family pressure, socio cultural dimensions toward ICT, specific and higher activity rates are concentrated among younger women towards other areas, statistical comparisons among the work activities, undermining the quality of girls' education, unorganized ICT sector, women appear to be underrepresented in the informal sector and women's work in the formal sector are restricted to particular spheres including ICT.

ICTs bring entrepreneurial opportunities that overcome limitations imposed upon women. A new kind of service made available by the Internet, which has gained tremendous popularity is social media. Following their introduction, social media such as MySpace, Facebook, Viber, Whatsapp and Twitter have attracted millions of woman users, many of whom have integrated these sites into their daily life.

The researcher intends to research on how female entrepreneurs can benefit from social medial in business specifically in beauty salons sector. Further the researcher aims to investigate how social media can boost women entrepreneurship by allowing them to improve their businesses and how these businesses contribute to their empowerment. Social media can be described as applications that "allow the user to articulate an egocentric network, anchored by a profile"[9]. One advantage of the social media is its ability to help users manage both their weak and strong ties. Especially on sites such as Facebook, "features to search people by name, region and school allows them to find and keep in touch with friends with whom they might have otherwise lost touch"[9]. At the same time, users can also connect to casual acquaintances that might have some similarities with them, such as similar hobbies, occupations, and so on. During the year of 2016, we Sri Lankan went on to subscribe to 1.5 million cellular mobile connections and over 300,000 broadband and dial-up internet connections, increasing Sri Lanka's internet penetration to a 30% and to our total internet users to a 6.1 million.9 This resulted in the proliferation of businesses using social media as its communication platform, whether through sales offers or advertising. Women often take advantage of social media more than just to find friends. They can now use these media as a medium to support their financial independence. It is a growing trend to open business through social media. They can use these technologies, such as smart phones, while taking care of their children. They also do not need to have stores which can be costly since they only need to showcase their products in the virtual stores. The applications in computer are also easy since they can tag pictures and provide information to potential customers by a single click. Use of social media in business can support the Srilankan women to overcome many of the limitations they have in entrepreneurship.

II. METHODS

A. Systematic literature review approach

A literature review uses "a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing an existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars and practitioners."[10]. This approach was originally developed as a means of synthesizing medical research evidence, but is increasingly used in other fields, such as social, policy and business studies[10]. In contrast to other types of literature review (e.g. narrative reviews and scoping reviews), systematic reviews focus on specific research questions with narrow parameters; are guided by inclusion/exclusion criteria set at outset (e.g. topics, settings, study types); extract data only from included studies; evaluate the quality of those studies, and base their conclusions largely on the evidence relating to the initial research question(s)[10]. A systematic review of four databases covering technology, business and social sciences (Scopus, Emerald and Google Scholar) related to women entrepreneurship supported by ICT was carried out in order to obtain articles English, published during the last eight years. An analysis of the articles' references list found in the databases was also performed.

The keywords used were women entrepreneurship and social media. The keywords used to identify social media were; ICT, Internet, social media and

[9] Internet Usage Statistics of Sri Lanka, 2017

mobile applications. The search was limited to the abstracts, keywords, and titles of the articles.

B. Search strategy

Three international research databases, covering technology, business and social science disciplines (Scopus, Emerald and Google Scholar) was used for the search. The broad search query was constructed as follows: ("women entrepreneurship") AND ("social media" OR "Facebook" OR "Twitter" OR "ICT") AND ("women empowerment").

C. Article screening and selection

While all these articles refer to different factors, classifying them in one way or another, the review of the articles seeks to identify the single best way to organize them. Furthermore, some of the articles, in referring to the success of women's business ventures, proposed the use of qualitative indicators, while others favored the application of quantitative ones.

First the articles were sorted and screened independently, based on their titles and abstracts. Full text versions of articles appearing to meet the inclusion criteria were obtained for further screening. Then iteratively checked samples of the assessed articles to ensure consistency with the inclusion and exclusion criteria. This allowed for ambiguities or uncertainties to be discussed and addressed at an early stage, so that consensus could be reached between reviewers.

Inclusion criteria

Academic research with a primary focus on studies primarily focused on the use of social media or equivalent supporting the women entrepreneurship, studies published after 2010 were selected.

Exclusion criteria

Studies on social entrepreneurship have also been excluded to enable to consider only those whose target is to generate economic wealth.

D. Data extraction and thematic analysis

Extracted information from all eligible studies using a structured form containing the following fields: study authors, publication year; journal discipline; setting (type of organization, country/region in which the study was conducted and year when the study was conducted). The rubrics, as identified, are as follows were stated objectives, research purpose/questions, participants, study/ research design, methods, measures, results/conclusion and reliability and validity. Extracted study findings were firstly coded and it provided a convenient means of categorizing study findings according to their objectives and intended outcomes.

III. RESULTS

Scopus produced a total of 60 documents by using the search string. The following variables were studied: women entrepreneurship and ICT/ social media. The documents were limited to years from 2010 to 2018, document type to journal articles and language to English and filtered to 37 articles. In Emerald Insight 03 articles were found and from Google Scholar 04 articles were found. Many articles were not used as they did not use ICT/ social media supporting women entrepreneurship. But after filtering the articles as per the requirement specially taking the methods used into consideration finally 15 articles (Scopus 11, Emerald Insight 03 and Google Scholar 01) were selected for the systematic review. Out of the 15 articles filtered, screened and selected 10 ([11],[5],[12],[13],[14],[15],[3],[6],[16],[17]) were qualitative researches and 05 ([18],[12],[19],[20],[21]) were quantitative researches.

A. Outcomes of the Methodology Analysis

Research Objectives/ Research Questions

When reviewing the selected 15 research articles could identify the purpose/ objectives of research were focusing on 4 main areas. That is to explore how women use ICT and related services for entrepreneurship, how to implement agendas and policies by governments, non-government organizations to empower women through supporting them in ICT trainings, to compare men versus women entrepreneurs in usage and success of internet and related services and finally to explore internet as a new opportunity to women entrepreneurs. 5 researches or 33.33% of sample were focusing on how women use ICT and related

services for entrepreneurship, another 5 researches or 33.33 % were on how to implement agendas and policies by governments and non-government organizations to empower women through supporting them in ICT trainings, 4 researches or 26.67% on sample were on to compare men versus women entrepreneurs in usage and success of internet and related services whereas only one research to explore internet as a new opportunity to women entrepreneurs.

Research Materials Included

Research materials include all types of materials generated and utilized in the scope of scholarly research. In the sample of 15 researches they have commonly used audio recordings, video recordings, speeches, published books, government publications, oral histories, records of organizations, field notes, published journals mainly in case study, survey and systematic review research designs. It is not possible to come up with exact percentage of usage of these materials as certain researches have used one or more materials in their research work as primary record of their research activity and obviously the 15 journal articles published can be considered as the final output material of the research.

Participants/ Sample/ Location

The review of the participants, the sample or the respondents selected was interesting. Out of the 15 researches in 11 the participants were women entrepreneurs and in 4 quantitative research (out of 5) the researches have selected the participants as women entrepreneurs. In the 5 quantitative research the sample sizes selected was large and were more than 200 in every case and in one research all women entrepreneurs/ members of the National Association of Women Entrepreneurs in Malaysia were selected as the sample whereas the respondent rate was 62%, exceptionally in only one quantitative research 8330 adult women were selected as the participants and it was a longitudinal research conducted in India for 7 years. Other than that, for the research in which the objective was to implement agendas and policies by governments, non-government organizations to empower women through supporting them in ICT trainings the participants were women non-government organizations and incubation centers. There was one research conducted with the objective to compare men versus women entrepreneurs in usage and success of internet and related services used existing literature and recent reports as the sample for the review. One research have used 200 women aged 16 - 60 in a broad sense yet the sample was a cumulative of women in different sectors in the society as small-scale traders (58: 29.0%): housewives/homemakers (48: 24.0%): farm employees (25: 12.5%): domestic workers (18: 9.0%): educators/teachers (16: 8.0%): students (15: 7.5%), entrepreneurs managing large-scale enterprises (3: l.5%): clerical workers (9: 4.5%): community development workers (6: 3.0%) and preachers (2: 1.0%).

The researches were conducted in different locations in the world namely Oman, UAE, Malaysia, India, Uganda, Jamaica, Brazil, Phoenix Metropolitan, Indonesia and Sudan and almost all the locations are from the upper and lower developing countries in the world.

Research Design/ Strategy

Different research has used different research designs/ strategies mainly aligning to the research objectives/ questions. In the review conducted 6 (40% of the sample) researches have used case studies, 5 (33.33% of the sample) researches have adopted surveys (4 manual surveys and 1 web survey), 3 (20% of the sample) researches have used experiments (1 field – quasi experiment and 2 normal experiments), 1(6.67% of the sample) research has used a systematic review and 1 (6.67% of the sample) research has used grounded theory.

All 5 researches design was surveys have used the quantitative approach whereas the rest of designs such as case studies, experiments, systematic review and grounded theory strategies have used qualitative approach. Analyzing further the experiments were used in order to align with the objective of how to implement agendas and policies by governments, non-government organizations to empower women through supporting them in ICT trainings and a rare design like grounded theory which are used to clarify concepts or produce new theories have used to achieve the objective to explore the role social media plays in the businesses.

Research Methods

Out of various research methods/ tools available the 15 researches selected for the review has used only interviews, questionnaires, secondary documents and focus group discussions. 8 (53.33% of the sample) researches have used interviews as the research method and out of that 5 researches have used interviews and 3 researches have used semi – structured interviews. 5 (33.33% of the sample) researches have used questionnaires as the research method and these researches specifically had surveys as their research design has used the quantitative approach. For the research design of systematic review, the researches have used secondary documents as the research method and there is one research which has used focus group discussions as the research method. The research methods have aligned mainly to the research design/ strategy adopted to the research.

Research Measures/ Analysis

As the sample of 15 researches selected for the review is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches the research measures used for analysis can be divided pertaining to the 2 different approaches. In 5 quantitative researches they have used T tests, one-way ANOVA, repeated measure design, generalized estimating equations (GEE), NodeXL – social media research tool, regression and mean. In 10 qualitative researches they have mainly used thematic analysis (in 3 researches), NVIVO software (in 3 researches) content analysis (in 2 researches), social network analysis and data triangulation.

Results/ Conclusion

The results and the conclusions of the reviewed research articles were aligned to their research objectives/ questions. The researches which had the objective to explore how women use ICT and related services for entrepreneurship had the results as ICT will help the women in business and developing the activity to receive consideration in the society, the fact that personal traits such as innovativeness and risk-taking propensity are significantly correlated with usage of ICT and social media, there is a marked correlation between the respondents' level of education, type of ICTs' accessed and information needs and purposes and social media has an overall positive impact on the lives of women entrepreneurs, both professionally and personally.

The conclusions such as to face the challenge and develop women and create entrepreneurial activities and support the economic development, an integrated platform built by combining social media features and feminist pedagogical techniques serves as one of the best tools for entrepreneurial training are the results for the objective how to implement agendas and policies by governments, non-government organizations to empower women through supporting them in ICT trainings.

The outcomes to the objective to compare men versus women entrepreneurs in usage and success of internet and related services was rather interesting. One research has concluded that ties to family and community, the amplification effect is such that the highest levels of entrepreneurial activity and success are observed among women with high centrality and ICT use—effects that increase over time. For ties to men in power, ICT use is associated with increased entrepreneurial activity only when these ties are low, but these interactive temporary temporal patterns do not emerge for profit and another research concludes normative representations and positioning of female traders can sideline entrepreneurial identity and over-validate gender identity.

Most research has found internet as a new opportunity to women entrepreneurs. It is proved by the results such as that female entrepreneurs are interested in using mobile phones. However, they have not yet realized the full potential of mobile technology in empowering them beyond its basic use, mobile phones can be used to overcome these challenges, ability to recognize opportunities and respond to technological change and social media have potentials to support women entrepreneurship by allowing them to open business from their homes. In addition, this type of business can also be seen as a solution to the dilemma faced by these women in managing their career and household responsibilities.

Apart from the above the researches reviewed has found commonly the barriers women entrepreneurs face namely, various o Gulf countries are facing socio cultural challenges which restrict women for doing business, the concern of female entrepreneurs from ethnic minorities in gaining

financial backing and recognition of themselves as committed and successful entrepreneurs and access and exclusion are still predominant issues, as while a meager average of 11 (5.5%) respondents use modern technologies such as the computer/internet, more than half (115: 57.5%) of the respondents surveyed face problems ranging from affordability, to distance and time.

Credibility and Reliability

Reliability is the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results. In the sample researches reviewed where the research method was questionnaires the cronbach alpha was used to check the reliability of construct. The credibility is involved in establishing that the results of the research are believable. It depends more on the richness of the information gathered, rather than the amount of data gathered. There are many techniques to gauge the accuracy of the findings, yet the reviewed researches has used techniques like data triangulation, triangulation through multiple analysts and 'member checks'. In one research the authors have declared in a disclosure statement that no potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors and it is one of the examples. The participants/readers are the only ones who can reasonably judge the credibility of the results.

IV. DISCUSSION

In this systematic literature review, the researcher has reviewed 15 selected research articles with key words women entrepreneurship and social media setting various exclusion and inclusion criteria aiming at providing a systematic review and a descriptive evaluation of the use of social media to support women entrepreneurship, to gain insights on the current research work on the focused research area of women entrepreneurship and social media and to get a deep understanding on the set rubrics research objectives/ questions, materials included, participants, research design, research methods, measures/sis, results/ conclusion and credibility and reliability. According to the review of the research articles selected it is evident that research design and all other rubrics are aligned to the research question/ objectives. Research methods are selected according to the research design and the research measures are decided according to the research methods.

As per the review done of selected researches (15 articles) and through the identified four areas of research objectives/ questions the most related objective/ question to my focused area of research is questioned to explore how women use ICT and related services for women entrepreneurship. The researches (5 out of 15, 33.34%) which had the same have mostly (3 out of 5, 60%) used qualitative approach and rest the quantitative approach. In those where the approach is qualitative, the research design/ strategy adopted were case studies and have used female entrepreneurs as the respondents and as the research method have used interviews, semi structured interviews and focus group discussions using mainly thematic analysis, social network analysis and NVIVO software for the analysis. In other 2 researches the research design was surveys and has used questionnaires as the data collection tool from women entrepreneurs and has used T tests, one-way ANOVA and regression. Reviewing in detail of the research articles I presume that my research focus area will mostly suit a case study design, interviews for data collection and thematic analysis conduct through NVIVO software.

Computer ad system sciences are concerned with the intersection of social behavior and computational systems. It is based on creating or recreating social conventions and social contexts using software and technology. My area of research in women entrepreneurship and social media specifically influence the society in a very constructive way. In many countries, social media can open up new opportunities for female entrepreneurs and encourage the creation of new businesses run by women, thanks to their flexibility and their attributes. The major implication is to advance knowledge and practice in the area of gender in management and use of social media by focusing on empirical research, theoretical developments, practice and current issues. Benefits are related to a better understanding of the debate on "gender and management" themes by reconsidering networking activities with social media. According to the authors, women entrepreneurs‟ ability to take advantage of social media could result from their greater propensity to adopt a community-based approach and to maintain social relationships, and from a greater predisposition to interact with customers and

perceive their needs. Therefore, social media exerts a particularly strong impact on women, since the latter are better able to glimpse potentialities of social media and to take advantage of them.

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