

EMERGING TRENDS  
IN  
FINANCE, MARKETING AND HUMAN  
MANAGEMENT



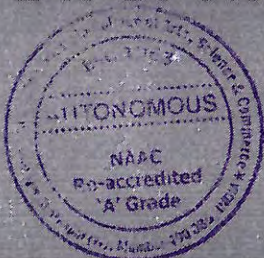
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RAMNIRANJAN JHUNJHUNWALA COLLEGE  
OF ARTS, SCIENCE & COMMERCE (AUTONOMOUS)  
Ghatkopar (W), Mumbai-400 086, Maharashtra, INDIA

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**Principal**

**Anniranjana Jhunjhunwala College,  
Chhatkopar (W), Mumbai-400086.**

**Dr. Saraswathi Moorthy**  
Associate Professor  
Dept. of Accountancy  
Ramniranjan Jhunjhunwala  
College of Arts, Science &  
Commerce (Autonomous)

**Ms. Purvy Karia**  
Assistant Professor  
Post Graduate Department  
(M.Com)  
Institution- Smt. P. N Doshi  
Women's College (Affiliated to  
SNDT Women's University)

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*Emerging Trends In  
Finance, Marketing  
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## CHAPTER- 3: Social Media Marketing as a Marketing Tool for Home Based Women Entrepreneurs post the lockdown: A Survey

### Abstract


Recent times have witnessed the mushrooming of home based businesses by women. This trend has escalated all the more with the recent pandemic and the resultant lockdown. There have been rising cases of people losing jobs due to the lockdown. As a consequence, many women have converted their skills, talent and hobbies into viable business options. Many of them have also given their existing businesses an overhaul to sustain their families in the lockdown recessionary conditions. With low funds, limited managerial skills and modest scale of business, these women are increasingly using social media as a vital marketing medium. This is because a marketer can spread word about their products on social media with spending little or no money. Further, social media seemed the most convenient medium of marketing post the lockdown period. This chapter attempts to examine the engagement of these home based women entrepreneurs on social media for marketing their businesses. The focus remains on identifying the extent of use of social media and recent trends followed by the homes based women entrepreneurs in the post- lockdown era. Findings to achieve the objectives are drawn through a survey of 60 home based women entrepreneurs based in Central suburban Mumbai. The impact of social media as a marketing medium for these entrepreneurs are found to be rather fragmented. Notwithstanding the fact that social media has provided brand visibility and means to advertise innovatively, it has failed to effectuate hard sales for these businesses. The researcher has also endeavored to provide suggestions to improve the experience of these business owners with social media as a marketing medium. The findings will supplement the critical literature on the catalytic role of social media marketing for the emerging sector of women owned home businesses in India.

**Keywords:** Home based women entrepreneurs, Social media, Social media marketing, Lockdown, Post- lockdown, Pandemic

### 1. Introduction

When 67- year old Pratibha Kanoi of Mumbai cooked pizzas for her grandchildren during the lockdown, little did she know that in less than a couple of months, she would be operating professionally out of her home serving pizzas to hungry customers. Mommys Kitchen was born as a result of the effort by Pratibha Kanoi and her sons. Aanchal Suri, a Bengaluru based home chef revamped her old food business during the lockdown, which had initially suffered way back in 2018. She rebranded the venture as Bhaturas to Brownies and started serving sumptuous home cooked food to customers. Both these ventures shared

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Ramniranjan Jhunjhunwala College,  
Ghatkopar (W), Mumbai-400086.

a common element; that of safety and trust during the pandemic. The customers placed trust in their operations and deemed them to be safe as compared to regular restaurants. Several home based entrepreneurs have emerged in the recent years selling diverse products and offering an array of services. This trend has risen post the lockdown.

Home based business is an informal business, where the entrepreneurs manufacture/ sell products out of their homes on a small scale. They offer niche varieties of products like home- made food, masalas, spices, jewellery, artefacts, garments and such other items. It has grown significantly during and post the pandemic due to various reasons; foremost being confinement to homes and recessionary economic conditions. Home based entrepreneurs more often belong to the unorganized sector of trade and commerce. Yet they form a significant part of the economy. They are a source of income to various small entrepreneurs and have played a vital role in according gender equality as majority of these entrepreneurs are women. They may or may not brand their products. Home based business is quite a trend in today's era where social distancing is important and a visit to the retail shop or mall is avoided. They use third party delivery apps, facilitate digital payments and market using social media and whatsapp. In fact, many of them use digital mediums as sales channels too, where the orders are accepted. Thus, there is marked change in the landscape of small businesses across many cities in India.

## 2. Home based business and social media marketing

Social distancing as a norm of today has compelled consumers to look for locally available products which can be purchased with minimum effort and contact. Home grown businesses and brands have really taken off well in this scenario. Numerous sellers/ manufacturers have either commenced home based businesses during the lockdown or given their old businesses an overhaul following the lockdown. This is because, as an antecedent to the outbreak of coronavirus, consumers are witnessing altered lifestyles. Largely, they are seeking digital sources of information and shopping channels. Lockdown has necessitated people to stay indoors. This has increased the consumption of social media of the people across the globe. In the wake of this significant change, businesses have found a substantial footing on social media and digital platforms to reach out to the consumers. Brands have started focusing on digital mediums to meet the unprecedented demand from the consumers after the lockdown period. The emphasis of this chapter is to bring out the role of social media as a marketing medium for these home grown businesses.

To achieve this objective, the researcher interacted with 60 home based women entrepreneurs to gauge their perspective towards social media as a marketing medium. The researcher aims to bring out the role of social media as a marketing medium through addressing the following questions:

- To what extent home based entrepreneurs use social media as a marketing medium post the lockdown?
- What are the recent trends of social media marketing used by home based entrepreneurs in the era of social distancing?
- Is social media an effective marketing platform for home based entrepreneurs during the pandemic?

## 3. The home based entrepreneur and social media fit

2020 has been a landmark year in the world history. Not only has it changed human life, but it has also modified various aspects of life. The spread of the covid- 19 pandemic has significantly altered how people earn, do business or spend money. With social distancing and work from home governing human life, sustainability of businesses was a huge challenge. Organisations had to adopt new business models and marketing mediums which suit the era of lockdown and social distancing. Social media and whatsapp were lapped up by brands to market and sell their products using minimal effort and cost.

Social media is an umbrella concept that includes technology and web driven social interactions, collaborations and communications. The most commonly used social media include facebook and twitter, which are popular social networking sites. Youtube is an example of a media sharing site, which again is widely used globally. Apart from

forming connections and bonding socially with people across the world, social media offers exceptional opportunities to companies to market their products. Home grown brands can start with as little as owning their personal page on sites like facebook and Instagram or having their own youtube channel. This enhances the brands visibility as social media users start engaging with the page. They start interactions with the brand by posting comments on brand posts or images or by merely liking the posts. The congregation of user interactions gives rise to user generated content (UGC), which is highly responsible for the spread of electronic word- of- mouth (E-WOM). Brands acquire all of this at negligible cost. Further, complex social media marketing opportunities can be availed of by using the social media platform's paid services. In a nutshell, social media provides colossal marketing opportunities to brands as compared to traditional marketing mediums.

Social media is funky, trendy and offer a two- way interaction between the brands and their customers. Furthermore, with features like creation of stories or reels, brands can create catchy and innovative content to be showcased to the social media users. It can be concluded that social media has brought a fresh perspective to the marketing operations globally.

Home- based businesses are characterized by shortage of funds, home based indigenous business operations and low marketing budgets. They thrive heavily on local referrals, word of mouth, reviews and recommendations. With all of this possible on social media, home based businesses find a perfect fit with social media as a marketing medium.

#### 4. Home based women entrepreneurs and recent social media marketing trends

The researcher approached 60 home based women entrepreneurs within various categories of age, ranging from 18 years to 55 years. The area of operation of these entrepreneurs was central suburban Mumbai. Using a set of structured questions, responses were elicited from them with regards to their use of social media as a marketing medium. A telephonic survey was conducted with many respondents too. The following are the key findings:

- All women respondents approached were sole owners of their businesses.
- 54 respondents already had operating business before the lockdown, while 6 had commenced business during the lockdown.
- The profile of the respondents ranged from those selling garments, food products, beauty products, accessories and jewellery. Entrepreneurs were also engaged in service delivery like beauty services, tarot reading and astrology.
- 6 respondents belong to the age group of 18 to 25 years, 22 were from the age group 26 to 35 years, 26 were from the age group 36 to 45 and 6 were from the age group 46 to 55 years.
- Out of the 60 respondents approached, 10 respondents did not use social media for marketing their products. However, all of them used whatsapp actively to market their offerings.
- The major means of marketing used were whatsapp and social media.
- Out of the social media platforms, facebook was used by 50 respondents and Instagram was used by 34 respondents to market their products. 6 respondents used youtube to showcase their products. All the respondents used more than one platform for marketing their products/ services.
- 23 respondents claimed to having their own brand page on facebook/ Instagram created by self.
- No respondent had their own youtube channel.
- 35 respondents were a part of various networking groups on facebook, where they actively marketed their products.
- 4 respondents used paid services of facebook for availing advanced marketing features.
- Most of the respondents used multiple forms of content for social media marketing. A revelation of the most used features of social media platforms for marketing products included posting photos/ imagery and text based posts by all 50 respondents. This was followed by facebook stories (30 respondents) and Instagram stories (28 respondents). Some of the respondents used Instagram reels (5 respondents) and hashtags (6 respondents) for making the marketing content novel. 21 respondents also listed their products

on facebook in the official product listings and 8 respondents used the direct messaging service to contact the leads.

- The frequency of posting marketing content on social media varied across respondents. Most of the respondents (27 respondents) posted content once in 2- 3 days, whereas 18 respondents posted daily. Only 5 respondents posted content once a week.

#### 5. Effectiveness of social media marketing for home based women entrepreneurs

The impact and effectiveness of social media marketing for home based entrepreneurs post the lockdown was assessed using specific parameters. 50 respondents who used social media marketing were asked to state their level of agreement or disagreement with the below mentioned parameters.

PARAMETERS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS				
	STRONGLY AGREE= 5	AGREE= 4	NEUTRAL= 3	DISAGREE= 2	STRONGLY DISAGREE= 5
Larger reach to target audiences	8	30	8	4	0
Spread of positive E-WOM (Electronic word of mouth)	10	21	12	7	0
Acquisition of leads	5	18	21	6	0
Facilitating actual Sales	3	15	20	5	7
Feedback from customers	20	25	4	1	0
Cheaper advertising platform as compared to traditional mediums	17	21	9	3	0
Enabling attractive and eye-catchy advertising	25	23	2	0	0
Enhancing brand visibility	28	18	4	0	0

#### 6. Synthesis of findings

With respect to the emerging trends and usage pattern of social media as a marketing medium for home based women entrepreneurs, the following can be inferred:

- 1) Whatsapp is a popular medium of marketing as it is used by all the respondents. Whatsapp is mobile friendly, simple to operate and popular, which makes it easy for entrepreneurs to market their businesses effortlessly. It was

further revealed that immediacy of whatsapp to transmit messages across to multiple users through whatsapp groups and its widespread use triggered its use as a marketing medium.

2) Many women entrepreneurs have adopted social media as a marketing platform actively. Facebook is the most widespread in its use for marketing purpose followed by Instagram.

3) 38% of entrepreneurs have discovered the modalities of the social media pages and have created their own brand pages. Many of them have joined networking groups to expand their marketing circle.

4) However, very few respondents used paid services of social media to market their products. The respondents displayed low inclination towards paid services as their scale of business operation was modest. Their reluctance to outsource social Media marketing to professional agencies reveals a lack of expertise in that regard.

5) Further, women entrepreneurs are not that keen to explore advanced features of social media like hashtags and Instagram reels. They are more comfortable posting plain vanilla content consisting of images and text. Instagram and facebook stories provide a catchy way to communicate shorter marketing messages as almost half of the respondents use it.

6) It has been observed that the entrepreneurs do not follow a well- planned strategy to post marketing content on social media. The frequency of posting content reveals that the posts are situational or random.

7) A key reflection with regards to youtube is that respondents found the response to the uploaded youtube content lukewarm and discouraging, which lead them to not having their own youtube channel. Most of the respondents disclosed their inability to create sophisticated videos for youtube. Hence, they chose not to venture into that territory.

7) The parameters which found favour with most of the respondents were that social media enhanced their brand visibility, facilitated eye catchy ads and enabled customer feedback. Marketing on social media was found to be highly economical as compared to traditional mediums of advertising as majority of them used free features of the various social media. It was also found to be useful in reaching to a larger number of target audience thus reducing the time a seller would take to acquire sales leads.

8) A remarkable finding revealed that despite having multiple advantages, social media marketing itself does not give enough fruitful leads or result into actual sales.

9) In spite of various limitations on the part of the women entrepreneurs in using social media marketing to its fullest, they divulged that social media played a meaningful role as a marketing medium post the lockdown.

#### 7. Researcher's perspectives on findings

Social media with all its benefits for brand building has somewhat fallen short of taking off as a dependable marketing medium for small marketers during the pandemic. A vital reason could be low incidences of hard sales and popularity of Whatsapp. However, with the latest issues with regards to the data privacy of whatsapp, it may lead to a question mark on the use of whatsapp to share critical business information.

There could also be a possibility of an association between failure to strike sales on social media and the absence of desire on the part of women entrepreneurs to use paid services on social media. Furthermore, the business model of these home grown entrepreneurs is similar to simple division of labour, where the owner does most of the work of the business within the limited knowledge they have. Most of these women have diverted their skills, talents and interests towards a viable business proposition. They play multiple roles of home makers, mothers, students and/ or wives while managing their businesses. Within these constraints, they fail to exploit the possibilities of using the various features and elements of social media to their advantage to showcase their brands. A reason for

this could be low level of knowledge about the various social media platforms and non- existence of a well- planned marketing strategy. It can be said that lack of formal business training or marketing skills may be an impediment to their growth and development of business. Further, if these entrepreneurs wish to expand their horizons of business (either to other states or internationally), it will become very imperative for them to develop business acumen and social media marketing proficiency.

#### 8. Suggestions to Home based women entrepreneurs

- 1) The entrepreneurial community has to focus upon developing a premeditated business strategy incorporating social media as a dominant marketing medium.
- 2) They can upskill towards social media literacy or choose to outsource social media marketing to digital marketing agencies in order to arrive at the best possible social media marketing plan
- 3) They can assess the type of content that works best for them and plan a content calendar. This implies determining a suitable content type and posting it at regularly planned schedules.
- 4) They can also look into social media metrics for data analysis. Social media offers metrics in terms of the demographics of the social media users who visit particular business/ brand pages. Data analysis will enable them to segment their market, acquire fruitful leads and close sales.
- 5) Exploiting social media as a tool for customer relationship management provides immense opportunities to interact with the customers. It facilitates two way dialogues, thus strengthening customer relationships.

#### 9. Conclusion

Notwithstanding the fact that the category of home grown entrepreneurs have a significant role to play in the Indian economy, there lie immense possibilities of developing these into Micro, Medium and Small Scale business models. Encouraging this kind of entrepreneurship will not only help the economy to fight the post covid 19 recessionary challenges but also infuse innovation into the system. It would require joint efforts from all the stakeholder to improve the performance of these home based businesses, right from the government, women entrepreneurs themselves to the consumers. Social media marketing is a small but significant route for these businesses to pave their way towards marketing excellence. Thus, the role and importance of social media as a marketing medium cannot be overlooked for small home based businesses.

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