

Literature Review: The Role of Women Entrepreneurs in the Digital Era

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Abstract: Women are expected to have the same opportunities to develop as men, in reality, various forms of discrimination are still encountered. Women now face dual demands, namely fulfilling responsibilities as mothers and wives, while simultaneously playing an active role in the world of work. The digital era provides great opportunities for women to promote and market products in a more efficient manner. Women have great potential in advancing the wheels of the economy, including entrepreneurial opportunities as a career choice for women to contribute to the economy and improve the welfare of themselves, their families, and the community. The method in this research is a literature review. Literature uses an academic database, namely Google Scholar. The development of women's entrepreneurship in East Java for the period 2020–2024 shows rapid progress with an increase in the proportion of women entrepreneurs to 68% in 2024.

Keywords: Digital Era, Entrepreneurship, Role of Women.

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Introduction

The condition and position of women in Indonesia continue to lag behind men in various aspects of life, including social, political, and economic matters. Although women are expected to have the same opportunities for development as men, various forms of discrimination persist. One such form of discrimination is limited employment opportunities for women, stemming from the perception that women are less competent than men (Kristiastuti et al., 2022). This gap is exacerbated by several factors, such as limited access to technology, low digital literacy, and social barriers arising from the still-dominant domestic role and strong gender stereotypes in society (Novita et al., 2025). As a result, women are often at a disadvantage in obtaining equal economic and social opportunities.

Furthermore, women now face dual demands: fulfilling their responsibilities as mothers and wives while simultaneously playing an active role in the workforce. While this dual role presents many challenges, women have the same potential as men to contribute significantly in various sectors of life. Women's involvement in the workforce has been proven to have a positive impact, not only on the family economy but also on community welfare. Through mastery of resources and increasing relevant knowledge, women can become agents of change in sustainable economic development (Nida Aqbila et al., 2024). The rapid development of digital technology also opens up new opportunities for women to adapt and innovate. Technology is now an integral part of human life, influencing various aspects from economics and politics to education and personal life (Mu'awanah, 2022). In this context, digitalization offers various conveniences that women can take advantage of, such as the opportunity to work flexibly from home, sell through social media and e-commerce, use financial applications for budget management, and access various skills training through online learning platforms (Rismawati et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the digital era offers significant opportunities for women to promote and market products more efficiently. Through the use of social media and various marketplace platforms, women can conduct transactions conveniently using digital payment systems and distribute products through accessible delivery services (Salmi Yuniar Bahri, 2023). Thus, digital transformation serves not only as a tool but also as a means of empowering women to compete and become economically independent. Overall, women's involvement in the use of digital technology is a crucial factor in reducing the gender gap in Indonesia. With increased digital literacy, access to technology, and social support and policies that support gender equality, Indonesian women have the potential to become driving forces for an inclusive and sustainable digital economy.

The entrepreneurial spirit will continue to be fostered in various circles, from students through entrepreneurship education to women or housewives, who are empowered to embrace their full potential as entrepreneurs. Instead of women simply having the initial motive of filling their free time with activities or simply actualizing themselves as active individuals, they are now striving to emerge as individuals with potential (Rahmi & Hidayati, 2019). Women entrepreneurs have received significant attention in promoting a country's social and economic empowerment. Women have significant potential to advance the economy, including entrepreneurial opportunities as a career option for women to contribute to the economy and improve the well-being of themselves, their families, and their communities (Anggadwita et al., 2022). Based on this explanation, this study aims to examine and further discuss the role of women entrepreneurs in the digital era.

Concept and Hypothesis

Variable Digital Era

The digital era is inseparable from change. According to Hussey (2000:6), there are six factors driving the need for change, namely:

1. Technological change continues to accelerate. As a result of this ever-increasing technological change, the rate of technological depreciation also increases. These new developments result in changes in skills, jobs, structures, and often even culture. Therefore, human resources must always keep up with technological developments to avoid being left behind. Human resources must not be technologically illiterate.
2. Competition is intensifying and becoming more global. In an increasingly open world, competition is becoming fiercer, spanning across countries.
3. Customers are becoming more demanding. In this case, customers are unwilling to accept poor or low-quality service.
4. The country's demographic profile is changing. Demographic developments will significantly impact the patterns of societal needs. Therefore, the business world must be able to respond to these trends.
5. Privatization of community-owned businesses is continuing. Business privatization is becoming more widespread, where monopolies held by certain groups are disappearing.
6. Shareholders demand more value. The influence of financial markets on demands for corporate performance creates pressure for continuous improvement in capital growth and corporate earnings. (Maryati & Masriani, 2019).

Business Opportunities for Women in the Digital Era

The increasingly massive development of the digital world has begun to transform business processes. Marketing, which previously relied on conventional methods, has shifted to the digital realm, utilizing social media advertising and marketplaces as platforms for business (Istiqomah, 2023). The opportunity to reach a large target market is highly accessible to today's business owners, given the internet's reach, which transcends time and space.

Digital marketing has become a highly efficient and effective solution for promoting products. In Indonesia, nearly all promotional methods have shifted to digital, including Instagram Stories (marketing through ads on Instagram stories), Search Engine Optimization (SEO), a website marketing method that relies on keywords in Google searches, and Virtual Reality (digital marketing conducted by companies) (Robby Aditya & R Yuniardi Rusdianto, 2023).

Women's Entrepreneurship

The term entrepreneur is often defined as someone who starts a new business. The number of women in business worldwide has increased significantly. They are known as women entrepreneurs because they are involved in independent decision-making regarding business management. These women also make significant contributions to economic growth and poverty reduction, even though their businesses are still small-scale (Hapsari & Nurhajjah, 2020). Women entrepreneurs can be described as women or groups of women who take the initiative to establish, organize, and manage a business.

According to J. Schumpeter, women who actively innovate, initiate, or adopt business activities are called women entrepreneurs. Frederick Harbison defines women's entrepreneurship as any economic activity initiated, innovated, or adopted by women or groups of women. Essentially, women entrepreneurs are women who plan a business, initiate it, coordinate the factors of production, run the business, assume risks, and manage the economic uncertainties associated with its operations (Setiadi et al., 2023).

Method

The method used in this research is a literature review. A literature review is a description of theories, findings, and other research materials obtained from reference materials to serve as a basis for the research. The literature review uses an academic database, namely Google Scholar (Aulia Putri Nurjanah, Ropi Yanti, Siti Hotijah, 2025). This study collected data from various relevant literature sources regarding the role of women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in the digital era. These sources include academic journals, research reports, and books covering related topics from 2018 to 2025 (Salwa Nasyifa et al., 2024).

Result and Discussion

The development of women's entrepreneurship in East Java between 2020 and 2024 showed a significant increase, with the proportion of women entrepreneurs reaching 68% in 2024. This growth is influenced by various empowerment programs involving collaboration between the government, the private sector, and community institutions, such as digital training, business incubation, and access to financing through fintech (Trinidad et al., 2024). Women's role in business in this digital era is a form of effort by housewives to meet their needs. As long as the business is conducted within the proper corridor, it is legitimate (Mu'awanah, 2022). Women entrepreneurs utilize digital technology, especially Instagram, as a tool to identify and capitalize on evolving consumer trends. In this process, they brand themselves as inspiring entrepreneurs and brand their products/services with the aim of capturing and exploiting greater business opportunities (Nurcahyani & Isbah, 2020). Women in this digital economy are required to be able to assume convergent roles, required to have and master more than one role. In contrast to the public assumption that has become a tradition, that women are only capable and ready in the domestic sphere, the digital era has a plus point that opens up the public paradigm that women are capable and credible to innovate and play an active role in the public sphere (Amalia, 2018).

Family factors are the most important factor for women in making entrepreneurial decisions. A hereditary business makes it easier for women to decide to become entrepreneurs, as they already have the necessary experience and knowledge to gain from the beginning (Munfaqiroh, 2018). The success of female entrepreneurs in Indonesia is not solely influenced by internal factors or factors within the woman herself. Many other factors, originating from outside a woman, can support the success of female entrepreneurs. This includes socio-cultural constructs that shape perceptions of gender. The social and cultural constructs of a region will determine these views on gender (Shafrani, 2019). The existence of female entrepreneurs is closely linked to historical values, traditions, and natural factors. Female entrepreneurs view their work as self-employment, with the following characteristics: independence and individuality, perseverance and hard work, entrepreneurial motivation, persistence and a desire to find solutions, customer-oriented, utilizing available resources, a desire to advance the business, and a prospective outlook (Yovita Dyah Permatasari, 2021).

Women entrepreneurs are crucial for the growth and support of MSMEs in the food industry in the Surabaya region. The quality of local food ingredients, productivity, and innovation are all significantly improved by women entrepreneurs. However, they face obstacles such as limited business networks, social support, and financial resources (Sugiarti, 2025). Women are human resources capable of supporting the achievement of development goals through their skills. Currently, women are no longer limited to performing routine household chores but also play a role in supporting the household economy through small business activities (Mardatillah, 2019). The capital variable has a positive and significant effect on factors influencing women's entrepreneurship in Langsa City. The emotional variable has a negative effect on factors influencing women's entrepreneurship in Langsa City. The education variable has an influence, but not a significant effect on factors influencing women's entrepreneurship in Langsa City (Rizal et al., 2020).

Conclusion

The development of women's entrepreneurship in East Java between 2020 and 2024 shows rapid progress, with the proportion of women entrepreneurs increasing to 68% by 2024. This increase is driven by synergy between the government, the private sector, and the community through various empowerment programs such as digital training, business incubation, and access to technology-based financing. Women now play a role not only in the domestic sphere but also actively participate in the public sphere, utilizing digital technology to build their self-image and develop their businesses, particularly through social media platforms like Instagram. Family factors, sociocultural values, and personal characteristics such as independence, perseverance, and customer orientation also contribute to their success. Although they still face obstacles in terms of business networks and access to finance, the role of women entrepreneurs has proven significant in strengthening MSMEs and driving regional economic growth, while simultaneously expanding women's participation in national development.

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