

Towards the Journey of Women Empowerment: The Development of a Digital Platform for Women Entrepreneurs

Thilini De Silva¹, B L Sachin Pamuditha Dewantha¹ and Henrik Hansson²

¹NSBM Green University, Homagama, Srilanka

²Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

thilini@nsbm.ac.lk

lsdpdewantha@students.nsbm.ac.lk

henrik.hansson@dsv.su.se

Abstract: Women, representing nearly half of the global population (approximately 3.97 billion), often face marginalisation in their families, communities, and regions due to various reasons. Like any other, every woman has the right to make her own choices in life, leading to an empowered life. Entrepreneurship serves as a crucial tool for empowerment, yet women entrepreneurs encounter numerous challenges along the way. Digitalisation, especially in modern and developed societies, has significantly improved lives, including those of women. Digital platforms can play a key role in supporting women entrepreneurs, providing them with the resources and networks they need to thrive. In countries like Sri Lanka, which is evolving from a patriarchal to an egalitarian society, there is a growing need to develop comprehensive ecosystems to support women entrepreneurs. This study introduces and evaluates a digital platform prototype named "Empower Her," designed to facilitate the entrepreneurial journeys of women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka. Using a mixed method approach, the study evaluates how effective this digital platform is and explores what improvements are required. The research was looked at through the lenses of empowerment, digital empowerment, feminist theories and capability approach. In the quantitative approach, the User Experience Questionnaire (UEQ) was shared with 30 women entrepreneurs, along with the link for the "Empower Her" app to evaluate. The data were analysed using the UEQ analysis version 10.0. The analysis showed that "Empower Her" is an extremely good app to use. It was appealing and attractive, and the task-related qualities, such as perspicuity, efficiency, and dependability, were scaled at high levels. Attribute-wise evaluation indicated that the app is understandable, motivating, friendly and clear but does not have a leading edge. In the qualitative approach, five women entrepreneurs were interviewed on effectiveness and to take feedback on further developments. User friendliness, a motivator, a supporting hand, a learning platform and connectivity and collaboration were the themes for user effectiveness. On further developments, tailor-made education programmes, access to funding and financial tools, e-commerce integration, wellness and well-being, and social empowerment were suggested. Empowerment is a challenging journey, and entrepreneurship facilitated by digital technologies could enhance women's capabilities, letting them achieve the lives they aspire to.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Digital Platform, Women Entrepreneurship, Capability, Feminist Theory

1. Introduction

In the contemporary world that we live in today, digital technologies have become a transformative agent for the initiation, operations and survival of entrepreneurial endeavours (Verhoef *et al.*, 2021). In a developing country such as Sri Lanka, where women make up half of the population but economic participation is relatively lower than that of the male population, entrepreneurship is a critical notion for development (Elam *et al.*, 2019). Originally identified as a patriarchal society, contemporary Sri Lanka shows progress toward equality for women and the prominence of women's participation in different facets of society (De Alwis and Hernvall, 2020). However, despite the educational achievements, women's participation in economic activity is around 35%, compared to the economic participation of men at 75%. Women face challenges such as limited access to resources and opportunities, wage disparities, and work-life balance due to lack of support (De Silva *et al.*, 2021). The active participation of women in economic activity could lead to increased economic and societal results. Economical results could be economic output, a diversified talent pool, and poverty reduction. Societal results could be empowerment and autonomy, improved health conditions, reduced gender-based violence, social cohesion, work-life balance and improved social norms. All these could lead to enhanced business performance, innovation and market growth, resilience and sustainability of businesses (Sen 1999). Women face many inequalities in acquiring resources, networking, and business opportunities. Social norms on their role as the nurturer of the family are challenging for women to start or run their businesses despite the great perks of having a business of their own (Kaur and Kumar 2020). The advent of digital technologies, specifically social media, has provided a great platform for women to start their businesses and the women entrepreneurs to carry on their businesses, overcoming many challenges they face. These digital tools provide women with the accessibility and flexibility to do their business from anywhere, balancing work and family commitments, providing cost-effective marketing and sales opportunities to their businesses, providing innovation ability, and

enhancing the scalability of business (Ahmad *et al.*, 2018). The integration of digital apps like social media in women entrepreneurship has positively impacted women through financial independence, economic growth, and job creation and facilitated them to overcome traditional barriers of being a woman, paving the way for empowerment (Kabeer 1999a).

This study of developing a prototype app called “Empower Her” was completed as an outcome of a series of research studies on the use of social media, women entrepreneurship and women empowerment in the context of Sri Lanka. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the app and further improve the app by answering two main research questions: how effective is the digital app to empower women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka? and what improvements does such a digital tool require for the empowerment of women entrepreneurs?

2. Theoretical Framing

The theoretical framing of the current study of developing a digital platform for women entrepreneurs and evaluating its experience is looked at from the lenses of the empowerment theory, digital empowerment theory, capability approach and feminist technological studies. Enhancing a woman’s capacity, autonomy and participation in decision-making is crucial for the development of women entrepreneurship and empowerment. The empowerment theory emphasises the importance of taking control of one’s own life, access to resources and getting the opportunity to develop the skills required for life achievements (Zimmerman 1995). In contrast, the digital empowerment theory specifies how digital inclusion, digital literacy and access to technology could support marginalised groups for empowerment (Helpser 2012). On the other hand, the capability approach discusses expanding freedoms and capabilities as a means to achieve what an individual values in life (Sen 1999). Feminist technological studies reflect on how power structures like patriarchy impact the lives of women and the challenges they face, especially in using technology. Gender biases could be embedded in the design, and development of technological tools. The access to technology usage by women, and facilitating technology for women's agency and identity formation are tenure tasks (Lohan 2000).

The development of a digital app could provide women entrepreneurs with access to resources such as funding, educational tools and mentorships to empower them. Digitally empowering them through access to technology allows them to scale their businesses, provide visibility and reach wider markets. The digital app could be used to develop their capabilities such as financial management, leadership and market access as a means to achieve their goals. It could also be a tool to empower them, allowing them to make informed decisions about their personal development and business. Reflecting on feminist technological studies, the app is designed for women to break gender norms, promote gender equity, and create an inclusive environment that can support women entrepreneurs in overcoming the barriers to women's entrepreneurship.

3. Methodology

3.1 The Context and the Participants

This study was conducted in Sri Lanka, where 51.5% (10.8 million) of the population are women, and their participation in economic activity is around 35% when compared to the economic participation of men at 75% (Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka (Annual) 2022). After reviewing relevant previous studies, this study employed action research to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of a digital app called “Empower Her”, aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka.

Action research is an iterative method that combines actions and reflections to provide solutions to a problem or to improve practices (Stringer 2013). The action was developing the app “Empower Her”. This concept was derived from researchers’ consistent interactions with women entrepreneurs since 2017 and from the results of the four systematic research studies conducted priorly. All prior research studies explored the experiences of women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka. The first study revealed that women face unique challenges compared to men, primarily due to balancing multiple roles, and highlighted social media as a vital tool to overcome these barriers. The second study examined how women entrepreneurs use social media, identifying its role in marketing, networking, and driving business growth and empowerment. The third study, through surveys and focus groups, demonstrated that social media significantly influenced women’s entrepreneurial intentions and business performance, serving as a source of motivation and knowledge sharing. A survey in the fourth study, involving 509 university students, emphasised the importance of peer support in shaping entrepreneurial intentions among women. The final study culminated in the creation of the “Empower Her” app, designed to

enhance women's entrepreneurial skills and foster their growth and empowerment in Sri Lanka. In previous studies, it was revealed that women entrepreneurs considered digital platforms as a platform to express their ideas without a barrier. They thought they could connect with other women role models who do well and get the best motivation from another woman (a peer) for their work. They thought digital platforms were convenient, and they could make connections and meet suppliers and customers easily. Further, it was discovered that digital platforms such as social media could be used as a medium to grow and advertise the business, as a medium of communication and customer care, as a medium of learning and skills sharing and as a medium for collaborative work (De Silva and Hansson 2022). All these ideas and results were taken into consideration when conceptualising the app. This digital platform was created to provide an opportunity for women entrepreneurs to create a profile as a woman entrepreneur and showcase their credentials and products to a wide community. This app offers learning opportunities by creating awareness of new trends in business and opportunities to learn relevant skills. Further, the app is a platform to raise any concerns they have and get feedback from peer women entrepreneurs and mentorship. The app has the possibility to add financial service providers and other stakeholders in terms of advertising and providing women entrepreneurs opportunities to get services, buy the materials they want, or even use them as a market to display and sell their products. Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate the appearance of the prototype of the "Empower Her" app.

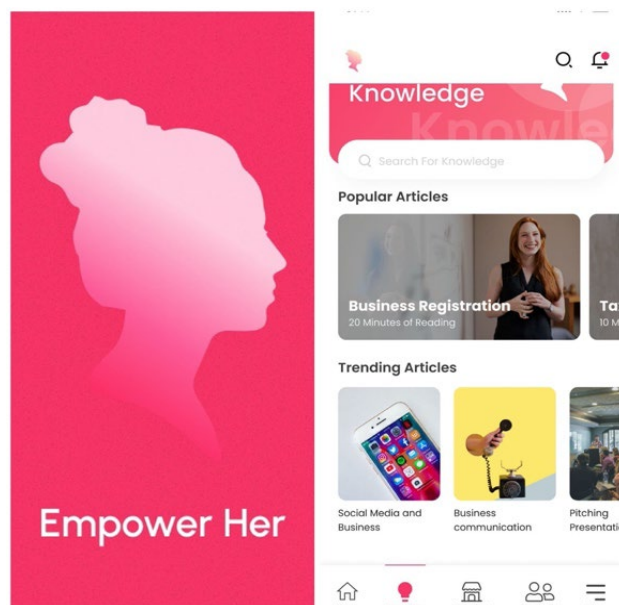


Figure 1: Empower her app outlook

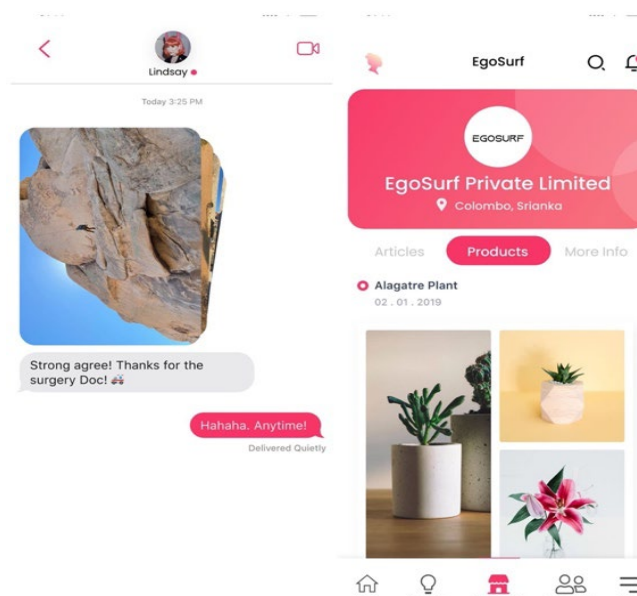


Figure 2: Sample of a user profile and support chat

The study was then expanded to see how effective this digital app is to empower women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka and to see what improvements this prototype requires for betterment. For this purpose, the study used both quantitative and qualitative methods in data collection and data analysis.

3.2 Data Collection and Instruments

In the quantitative data collection, the prototype of the app “Empower Her” was shared with 30 women entrepreneurs along with the User Experience Questionnaire (UEQ) (Schrepp 2019) to measure the effectiveness of the designed app. UEQ is an easy and free tool that provides resources to check the level of effectiveness of digital tools. The UEQ questionnaire contains 26 questions (detailed in the analysis) on a Likert scale of 1- 7 and is available to download at <https://www.ueq-online.org/>. The data were collected during the months of April and May of 2024. The sample of 30 women entrepreneurs was selected through a simple random sampling method. Afterwards, a qualitative data collection was conducted using the interview method. Later, in early June 2024, 05 women entrepreneurs were personally interviewed to get their feedback on the effectiveness of the app and their opinions on how to develop the features of the app to further support their empowerment journey. Each interview took nearly 30 to 35 minutes and was conducted at their own business premises. Their consent was obtained before the interviews were recorded, and anonymity was ensured.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data gathered from the User Experience Questionnaire were analysed using UEQ (User Experience Questionnaire) data analysis version 10. The data collected from the individual interviews were analysed using thematic analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

This section outlines the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis separately.

4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Table 1 depicts the profiles of 30 female entrepreneurs who responded to the UEQ questionnaire.

Table 1: Profile of the respondents of quantitative data

Characteristics	Frequency	%
Age		
20 – 25 years	12	40
26 – 30 years	7	23.3
31 – 35 years	2	6.67
36 – 40 years	3	10
41 – 45 years	1	3.37
46 – 50 years	4	13.3
51 years and above	1	3.37
Educational Level		
Ordinary level	1	3.37
Advanced level	14	46.67
Graduate	8	26.67
Masters	3	10
Doctoral	0	0
Professional qualifications	4	13.3
Sector of the business		
Fashion and accessories	8	26.67
Beauty	3	10

Characteristics	Frequency	%
Food and beverages	8	26.67
Decorations	2	6.67
Electronics	1	3.37
Event Planning	3	10
Other	5	16.67

The results of the UEQ, as in Table 2, show that all six main scales (attractiveness, perspicuity, efficiency, dependability, stimulation and novelty) are extremely good, with the lowest being novelty (1.625) and attractiveness (2.296) at the highest. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient values are included to present the scale consistency. All six scales show a positive alpha coefficient greater than 0.7, the accepted value.

Table 2: UEQ main six scales

Ueq Scale	Mean	Variance	Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient
Attractiveness	2.296	0.33	0.85
Perspicuity	2.175	0.42	0.78
Efficiency	2.100	0.56	0.74
Dependability	2.133	0.40	0.72
Stimulation	2.167	0.67	0.80
Novelty	1.625	1.25	0.76

According to the UEQ analysis, the scales could be grouped into prametic and hedonic quality. Pramatic quality describes tasks related to quality aspects such as perspicuity, efficiency and dependability. Hedonic quality is non-tasks related quality aspects such as stimulation, novelty and attractiveness, which stands alone. The table 3 semonstrates those quality values, and according to the results the highest quality is attractiveness (2.30 out of 3). When comparing pramatic and hedonic values, pramatic (2.14 out of 3) stays higher, specifying that tasks related aspects of the prototype of the app are appreciated better.

Table 3: UEQ quality dimensions

UEQ Quality Dimensions	
Attractiveness	2.30
Pragmatic quality (perspicuity, efficiency and dependability)	2.14
Hedonic quality (stimulation and novelty)	1.90

The values of all 26 items in the UEQ are demonstrated in the figure 3. All women participants have evaluated the prototype of the app “Empower Her” as providing good experiences depicted through positive mean values for all 26 items. Out of the 26 items 19 are above 2.0 (72%), indicating that the proposed app is very good. According to the results, the most appreciated attribute of the app is that it is understanding and motivating to use (2.6), whereas the least appreciated is the attribute of leading edge (0.9). They mainly consider that the app is friendly (2.5), attractive (2.5), supportive (2.4), efficient (2.3), clear (2.3) and practical (2.3).

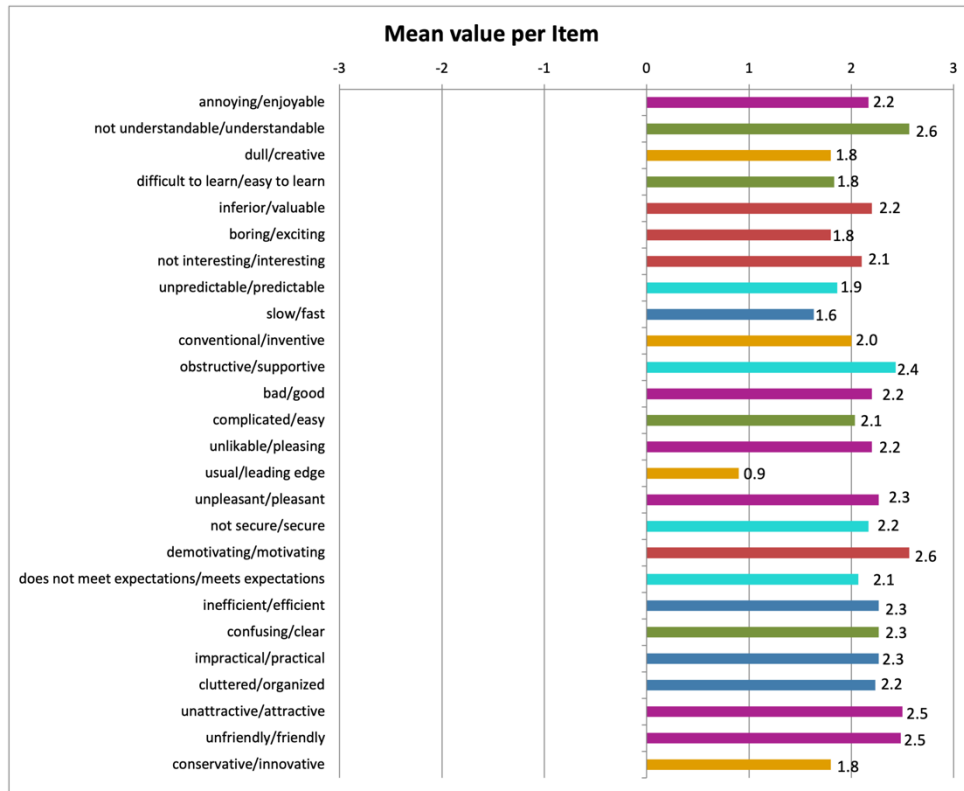


Figure 3: Mean values of 26 UEQ items

4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The structured interviews of 30 – 35 minutes were conducted with 05 women entrepreneurs on the effectiveness of the app and their opinions on how to develop the features of the app to further support their empowerment journey. Table 4 provides the profile data of the participants.

Table 4: Profile of the respondents of qualitative data

Participant	Age	Educational Level	Sector of Business
A	24 Years	Undergraduate	Food and beverages
B	48 Years	Masters and Professional	Architecture
C	31 Years	Graduate	Fashion and accessories
D	29 Years	Graduate	Event planning
E	34 years	Advanced level and Professional	Beauty salon

The interview data collected were analysed using the thematic analysis. Regarding the effectiveness of the app “Empower Her”, the below themes emerged. According to the qualitative analysis, “Empower Her” is effective for five main reasons.

Theme 01: User friendly

When using a digital platform for the first time, it takes time for the user to get used to it and its features. Even after, it is vital that all the features of the app are understandable for users of all ages and educational levels. The usage of colours, texts, fonts, themes, and design should be appealing to the user to get the feeling of using it.

B: “It was very easy to use the app from first step. It guided me clearly from setting up my profile to using the features. It was not complicated at all.”

A: “I loved the colour and the design of the app, it was soothing and felt very welcoming.”

E: “It is a user-friendly app unlike many other I use. I could try all the features relatively in a short time period.”

Easy to use, clarity, attractiveness, and easy understandability are effective features of a digital platform, and they encourage users to get services to the best of their ability. Further, the fact that women of any calibre could use the digital app easily increases its credibility and improves its ability to serve a larger audience that requires such an ecosystem.

Theme 02: A motivator

“Empower Her” app was developed to create a community for women entrepreneurs with fellow peers and stakeholders such as material suppliers, financial suppliers, advisors, educators and learners. It features articles of success stories, and users can view the profiles of fellow women entrepreneurs on the platform. For many women, it inspires and motivates them to see how another woman wins life. Listening to the stories of how others face the challenges of work-life balance, managing time for children, how they overcome the restrictions of partners or family, and the stigma prevailing in societies about working women can truly motivate fellow women when facing their own challenges.

D: “It is a motivation to see the work of other women, especially the amazing products and services offered by the women of my age.”

A: “I would love to listen to the winning stories of women and how they overcome the barriers they face. It is inspiring.”

In the journey to empowerment, these women require motivation and inspiration, so digital platforms should allow them to be motivated and inspired by each other.

Theme 03: A supporting hand

One of the main barriers for women in entrepreneurship is that they do not get sufficient support for financing, materials, markets, and support from society as men do. Therefore, this ecosystem facilitating women entrepreneurship could be developed using a digital platform. It is convenient for them to have the support they require in their smart device to overcome many challenges.

C: “The app has many features as a chat platform to put our problems and discuss details on how to find financial and other suppliers. It is a great support to us because otherwise, it is difficult for women.”

E: “This kind of app can give you all the support you need on your smartphone. It is a fingertip away. It is great.”

Digital technologies can save time, provide access to demographic locations that were impossible to reach, be cost-effective and offer many opportunities for support. Women require a supportive ecosystem to facilitate their entrepreneurial activities.

Theme 04: A learning platform

A digital platform for women entrepreneurs must facilitate their acquisition of knowledge, skills, and personal and professional development. The women entrepreneurs could come from various educational backgrounds, exposure, and experiences. However, as entrepreneurs, they need specific basic knowledge and skills and some specialised skills in the business sector they have chosen. The basic knowledge and skills required by any women entrepreneur would be finance handling, communication, marketing and advising, human resource handling and basic IT skills. Examples of having specific knowledge would be baking techniques for a baker or hair-cutting techniques for a beautician.

B: “The feature on the opportunity to learn about financials, how to register a business in Sri Lanka, and tax is interesting. We do not know these things. The content can be translated to Sinhala too, and that is great.”

C: “With the businesses and families, we do not have time to pursue any education or skills, so the feature which provides education is very good.”

E: “I think we can learn from the profiles of other women entrepreneurs who work in our sector, too. We can upload videos on how we do make-up and haircuts, for example.”

The digital platform can provide the direct opportunity for women to educate themselves, or indirectly, it could offer the opportunity to learn from fellow women entrepreneurs too. The opportunity to continuously learn can keep these women updated and aware, make their lives more effective, and support them to empower them more.

Theme 05: Connectivity and collaboration

In a world devoid of digital technology, any person or organisation would have minimal access to markets, connectivity and liaise with people from their own region, country or world. But digital platforms open opportunities for the world. Today, people can connect with anyone, and they can reach the markets in the corners of the world. This digital platform can connect women with fellow women entrepreneurs, various suppliers, and customers. Further, it will allow them to work collaboratively with others.

B: "This app can give me the opportunity to meet fellow architects, and we can collaborate on new projects rather than working as individuals."

C: "We need to connect to others to see what is happening. There are a lot of opportunities you can receive from connecting to suppliers and customers."

When developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem, connectivity and collaboration play a considerable role, and the advantages of digital technologies can facilitate it.

In the same interview, the respondents were asked for their opinions on how to develop the features of the app to further support their empowerment journey. In the thematic analysis, the data could derive five themes in areas they suggested further improvements in the app, such as tailor-made education programmes, access to funding and financial tools, e-commerce integration, wellness and well-being, and social empowerment.

Theme 01: Tailor-made education programmes

The respondents suggested that there could be a separate feature in the digital app for them to follow courses online on basic accounting, English communication, HR practices and marketing. Further, they suggested that it would be great to include courses in bakery, software coding, tailoring, make-up, haircuts, and designing. They have identified the importance of continuous education and skills development to progress professionally and personally.

B: "I am an architect, and I don't know any finances and I would love to learn it. But with work, I cannot go to a place and learn it, but if I can do it online will be great."

E: "No one can survive in the beauty industry if you do not know the newest trends in makeup and hair. So, tutorials on these new things will be very helpful."

The app can collaborate with such course providers and connect a link for the women entrepreneurs to complete the courses online. It is great to see that they have understood the value of education and skills in their journey of empowerment.

Theme 02: Access to funding and financial tools

The app has a feature that allows financial providers to advertise. The respondents in the interview suggested improving the feature that will enable them to chat with these financial providers about the facilities they want. Also, they suggested a financial tool to record their financials to control and manage their financials on personal and business fronts.

A: "The financial providers we meet in this app have to have special financing programmes for women entrepreneurs. If we can chat with them directly, it is easy."

D: "It would be good if the app had a tool for our finance management and also some courses we could complete in finance and marketing."

They require an all-services integrated app.

Theme 03: E-commerce integration

In the prototype, the app could connect suppliers and buyers with women entrepreneurs. They suggest the developments to make this app an e-commerce platform to facilitate buying and selling.

A: "I do a restaurant and a takeaway. If I can order food materials via this app through reliable suppliers, that would be great. At the same time, it would be great if I could take my orders via this platform, too."

D: "We require many raw materials, and countries like Thailand and China have them at cheap prices. If we can have those suppliers here to order goods, that will be easy."

The women require simple tools to create e-commerce websites, manage orders, track delivery, and make payments, facilitating to list their products and services in the app for visibility and market access.

Theme 04: Wellness and well-being

Mental and physical wellness and well-being have become important lifestyle changes. The app currently does not feature anything in this category. They suggest a feature that promotes mental health, work-life balance tips, time management, mindful exercise, and physical fitness activities.

C: "It would be great if the app could provide exercise routines, diet suggestions for our busy schedules, and instructions for meditation and yoga. It will be great, actually."

B: "There is nothing like peace of mind. With the work of home and business, I am very restless all the time. A little piece of advice each day on how to stay calm and happy would be so useful."

Mental and physical health and well-being are crucial in the journey of empowerment for women. They need to be strong enough to face any challenge coming their way and also to handle many tasks at hand.

Theme 05: Social empowerment

The respondents believe in giving back to the society. They want to support and empower underprivileged women and support their children. They suggest that the app should have a feature to publish the social empowerment activities they do and promote success stories to encourage others.

A: "There are many women who need help. Sometimes, they lack opportunity and suffer. We need to promote small businesses for them so that they can help not only them but their children."

E: "We need to give back to society by helping the needy as much as we can."

This is something extra to an entrepreneurial ecosystem; however, this thinking and initiative could take society a long way.

Entrepreneurship leads to empowerment, enhancing women's capabilities and contributing to societal freedom and development. Women's agency, defined by their economic independence as entrepreneurs (Brush 1992), enables them to lead lives aligned with their values, positively influencing their families and broader society (Kabeer 2001). The integration of digital tools like social media represents a modern and transformative aspect of women's entrepreneurship (Olsson and Bernhard 2021). These digital platforms offer unprecedented access to customers and networks, enabling women to start and grow their businesses (Ukpere *et al.*, 2014). For women entrepreneurs, these platforms play a crucial role in overcoming challenges like marginalisation and lack of inclusion, fostering empowerment through innovative concepts such as sharing and collaboration (Cesaroni *et al.*, 2017). Financial independence, facilitated by entrepreneurship, enhances women's empowerment and family well-being (Kabeer, 1999b). Initially used for socialising and entertainment, digital apps have evolved into a gender-neutral platform empowering women through advocacy, business promotion, and social causes (Melissa *et al.*, 2015). Digital platforms designed for women entrepreneurs aim to provide essential support, networking, resources, and branding opportunities (Åsberg and Lykke 2010). This study developed a prototype focusing on education, mentorship, funding access, business tools, and community support, addressing critical areas identified by McGowan *et al.* (2015) as crucial for women entrepreneurs. Study findings underscore that digital platforms tailored for women entrepreneurs can serve as sources of motivation, inspiration, and support, enhancing their capabilities and fulfilling strategic gender needs (De Silva *et al.*, 2021).

5. Conclusion

We live in a digital age where tools like social media offer opportunities to enhance capabilities and empower women, promoting gender equality and diversity. Economic independence through entrepreneurship is crucial for women's agency and expanding their choices. Social media can significantly support women in establishing and improving their businesses, thereby enhancing their capabilities and overall well-being. The development of the "Empower Her" app reflects a commitment to understanding and supporting women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka, leveraging technology to provide resources and empower them economically. This initiative aims to not only benefit women entrepreneurs individually but also uplift their families and communities by fostering greater opportunities and empowerment.

Research in women entrepreneurship and empowerment should explore industry and country-specific challenges to assess variations and entrepreneurship's potential for empowerment across contexts.

Understanding how diverse factors like age, gender, education, and generational differences influence social media platform preferences requires investigation. Additionally, studying innovative digital tools can help overcome global barriers to technology access, enhancing capabilities and quality of life for women entrepreneurs worldwide. The need of the hour is to develop an app where these women entrepreneurs could get many of their requirements met and integrated – “one stop for all”. Future studies can investigate how to support women who are not digitalised and how to promote and facilitate their use of digital technologies. This requires collaboration with many parties and developing a wholesome app, which, in other words, could be a digitally efficient entrepreneurial ecosystem for women. The findings of this study could be the concept development for such a holistic digital ecosystem for women entrepreneurs. It could enhance the opportunities and capabilities of women, leading to their empowerment and allowing them to live the lives they aspire to while transforming the community for the better.

References

- Ahmad, S.Z., Ahmad, N. and Abu Baker, A.R. (2018), “Reflections of Entrepreneurs of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises concerning the adoption of Social Media and its Impact on performance outcomes: Evidence from the UAE”, *Telematics and Informatics*, Vol. 35, pp. 6–17.
- Åsberg, C. and Lykke, N. (2010), “Feminist technoscience studies”, *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 299–305.
- Brush, C.G. (1992), “Research on women business owners: Past trends, a new perspective and future directions”, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 16, pp. 5–26.
- Cesaroni, F.M., Demartini, P. and Paoloni, P. (2017), “Women in Business and Social Media: Implications for Femal Entrepreneurship in Emerging Countries”, *African Journal of Business Management*, Vol. 11 No. 14, pp. 316–326.
- De Alwis, S. and Hernvall, P. (2020), “Technology Intense Workplaces, Boundary Preferences and Work–Life Conflict: Evidence from Sri Lanka”, *South Asian Journal of Human Resources Management*, pp. 1–25, doi: 10.1177/2322093720965326.
- De Silva, T.D., Barbutiu, S.M., Wakunuma, K. and Dhameeth, G.S. (2021), “Empowerment Through Women Entrepreneurship: A Case from the Beauty Salon Sector in Sri Lanka”, *Journal of Women’s Entrepreneurship and Education*, Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 121–146, doi: <https://doi.org/10.28934/jwee21.12.pp121-146>.
- De Silva, T.D. and Hansson, H. (2022), “Social Media as a Digital Tool Changing the Game Plan of Women Entrepreneurs - Case on the usage of Facebook in the Beauty Salon Sector of Sri Lanka”, *T. Bastiaens*, presented at the Proceedings of EdMedia + Innovate Learning, Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE), New York, pp. 992–1000.
- Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka (Annual). (2022), *Computer Literacy Statistics 2022*, Colombo.
- Elam, A.B., Brush, C.G., Greene, P.G., Baumer, B., Dean, M. and Heavlow, R. (2019), *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor; 2018/2019 Women’s Entrepreneurship Report*, Global Entrepreneurship Research Association, London Business School, London, UK.
- Ellen Johanna Helpser. (2012), “A Corresponding Fields Model for the Links between Social and Digital Exclusion”, *Communication Theory*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 403–426.
- Kabeer, N. (1999a), “Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women’s Empowerment”, *Development and Change*, Vol. 30 No. 3, pp. 435–464, doi: 10.1111/1467-7660.00125.
- Kabeer, N. (1999b), “The Conditions and Consequences of Choice: Reflections on the Measurement of Women Empowerment”, *United Nations Research Institute For Social Development*, No. 108.
- Kabeer, N. (2001), “Reflections on the Measurement of Women’s Empowerment”, *Discussing Women’s Empowerment: Theory and Practice*, SIDA: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Stockholm.
- Kaur, K. and Kumar, P. (2020), “Social media usage in Indian beauty and wellness industry: a qualitative study”, *The TQM Journal*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 17–32.
- Lohan, M. (2000), “Constructive Tensions in Feminist Technology Studies”, *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 30 No. 6.
- McGowan, P., Cooper, S., Durkin, M. and O’Kane, C. (2015), “The influence of social and human capital in developing young women as entrepreneurial business leaders”, *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 53 No. 3, pp. 645–661.
- Melissa, E., Hamidati, A., Saraswati, M.S. and Flor, A. (2015), “The Internet and Indonesian Women Entrepreneurs: Examining the Impact of Social Media on Women Empowerment”, *Impact of Information Society Research in the Global South*.
- Olsson, A.K. and Bernhard, I. (2021), “Keeping up the pace of digitalisation in small businesses–Women entrepreneurs’ knowledge and use of social media”, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, Vol. 27 No. 2, pp. 378–396.
- Schrepp, M. (2019), “User Experience Questionnaire”.
- Sen, A. (1999), *Development As Freedom*, Oxford University Press, Great Britain.
- Stringer, E.T. (2013), *Action Research*, Fourth Edition., Sage, Los Angeles.
- Ukpere, C.L., Slabbert, A.D. and Ukpere, W.I. (2014), “Rising Trend in Social Media Usage by Women Entrepreneurs across the Globe to Unlock Their Potentials for Business Success”, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 5 No. 10, pp. 551–559, doi: 10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n10p551.

- Verhoef, P.C., Broekhuizen, T., Bart, Y., Battacharya, A., Dong, J.Q., Fabian, N. and Haenlein, M. (2021), "Digital transformation: A multidisciplinary reflection and research agenda", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 122, pp. 889–901.
- Zimmerman, M. (1995), "Psychological Empowerment: Issues and Illustrations", *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 23 No. 5, pp. 581–599.