

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in Kerala: The Role of Instagram in Business Success

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to learn how Instagram affects the success of women entrepreneurs in Kerala. By merging questionnaires and interviews, find out what is important for successful entrepreneurs. spoke to 150 female business owners on Instagram from Kerala and carried out in-depth interviews. It was found that 46.7% of respondents thought Instagram improved brand visibility, 33.3% said it brought more customer engagement, and 20.0% noted an increase in sales as a result (Table 3). Half of all content was photos, and the next most common was videos (Table 2). Previous studies and this study agree that creativity, resilience, strong social networks, and effective online marketing were major factors that contributed to success. As a result, it is important to offer women entrepreneurs training in using social media and developing digital skills to increase their chances of success. The research contributes to the field of digital entrepreneurship by emphasizing a specific location and elucidating the use of Instagram for business purposes.

Keywords- Women Entrepreneurs,Instagram Marketing,Digital Entrepreneurship,Social Media Strategy,Kerala Business Ecosystem.

Introduction

Women entrepreneurs greatly contribute to economic growth, but they often struggle with social rules and lack of funding. Fortunately, technology can help address these issues. Because Instagram has ~2 billion monthly users across the globe, small businesses can locate it very useful (Nayana ,2019). Since product-based industries (like fashion and crafts) are typical for women's businesses, the visual nature of e-commerce suits them well. This way, through the platform, entrepreneurs have an easier way to display their products in appealing images and videos.

Researchers have found that using social media, women entrepreneurs can network and access the resources necessary for their growth(Singh et al., 2024).

The expansion of education for women and advantageous policies in Kerala have boosted entrepreneurship for women, though work on digital inventions is still not well covered in research. Many studies from Kerala explain funding and skill issues, yet do not devote much attention to social media(Kochukoshy et al., 2023). The research discovered that businesses run by women improve their market presence and sales when working with Instagram influencers, demonstrating how beneficial social media can be. But we still don't fully understand how everyday entrepreneurs (not related to influencer marketing) benefit from Instagram. This research helps address this problem by looking at how Kerala's women entrepreneurs use Instagram and what makes them successful (Pradeep et al., 2024).

This research aims to discover (1) what methods women entrepreneurs in Kerala use on Instagram; (2) which Instagram strategies are connected with business growth; and (3) the important factors, both social and business, that influence their success.

Literature Review

Women's Entrepreneurial Success Factors

Scholars in women's entrepreneurship have found that there are many things that influence success. Feng et al. (2023) discovered that having confidence in oneself and financial resources helps women-owned firms be more successful. Motivation and commitment link personality traits to the results we see. Other studies point out that having community support, learning, and a satisfactory work-life balance are essential for women entrepreneurs.

A comprehensive review of multiple studies indicates that participation in business networks and the possession of flexible skills are essential for women entrepreneurs. In India, there are social and cultural rules that make it tough for women to start businesses (family issues and unequal treatment), but social media could help them identify new ways forward and attract attention (Gupta et al., 2018).

Instagram and Social Media in Entrepreneurship

Being visually focused, Instagram is now an important tool for marketing in entrepreneurship. Because it relies on imagery, Instagram fits nicely with industries where appearances are central for attracting users. Research has demonstrated that sharing content on Instagram frequently increases brand awareness and fosters customer interaction. About 61% of social users say they find purchase inspiration on Instagram. Our study pointed out that working together with Instagram influencers helped women entrepreneurs in Kerala to grow their fanbase and profits.

Studies outside the Philippines show that women entrepreneurs on Instagram enjoy the same kinds of advantages. According to Pugalendhi (2024), female digital business owners use Instagram's tools, such as Stories, IGTV, and shopping, to build their businesses, despite facing problems in coming up with and sharing content. This is evident in the UAE, as female small-business owners believe Instagram helps them get in touch with their potential buyers. Nevertheless, researchers believe that keeping an active Instagram account is demanding for women in terms of skills and time, and they could suffer from malicious and biased comments (Adekunle et al., 2018).

Research Gap

Many literary works highlight social media's benefits, but the majority of studies look at influencers specifically. More research is needed to see how Instagram helps everyday women entrepreneurs from Kerala. Factors such as what this group posts, how they publish content, and individual features have not been clearly tied to the outcomes of their businesses before. The study tries to fill these gaps by analyzing the collected data to reveal how women-led companies in Kerala succeed and use the platform.

Methodology

Researchers in this study gathered information by first giving a questionnaire and then conducting interviews. Created a cross-sectional survey on Google Forms and shared it online with Kerala women entrepreneurs who use Instagram for their businesses. A convenience sample was used, which produced $n = 150$ properly completed responses. It included questions about the audience's demographics, whether the business is active on Instagram, how the business approaches content, and how it evaluates the outcomes from using the platform. We measured marketing activities, social support, and self-assessed success by asking participants to rate their agreement on Likert scales.

The qualitative analysis included seven women entrepreneurs selected from the survey through semi-structured interviews. Because of these interviews, we gained more insights into strategies and challenges than from just using fixed-response questions. Asked about their reasons for creating content, the various features they use on Instagram, how the community helps, and how they feel their profiles have changed. All participants allowed the interviews to be recorded, transcribed, and studied for main themes. In line with standard practice, researchers use both surveys and interviews to understand what drives entrepreneurial success.

Survey data were analyzed by means of descriptive and inferential statistics. Tables 1–4 summarized demographic and usage variables by their respective frequencies and percentages. Analyzed the connections between the factors (e.g., how often posts are made, using advertising, support of followers) and the different success metrics (e.g., rising sales figures, getting more followers). Applied thematic coding methods to the interview transcripts to cross-validate the quantitative results. All along, ensured ethics: people took part of their own free will, their identities were not known, and the sessions were private.

Results and Analysis

Respondent Profile

The demographic information for participants in both the survey and Figure 1 is given in Table 1. The group of women answering the survey was mostly middle-aged: 25–34-year-olds made up 40% of the group, and 35–44-year-olds made up 30%. At least three-quarters of these entrepreneurs had bachelor's degrees or higher (Table 1), showing a highly educated group of

entrepreneurs. Included in the sample were organizations focused on fashion/apparel (33.3%), food & beverage (20.0%), and handicrafts (16.7%), in line with the majority of SMEs operating in Kerala.

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents($n = 150$)		
Age Group (years)	Number	Percentage (%)
18–24	20	13.33
25–34	60	40.00
35–44	45	30.00
45–54	15	10.00
55 and above	10	6.67
Total	150	100

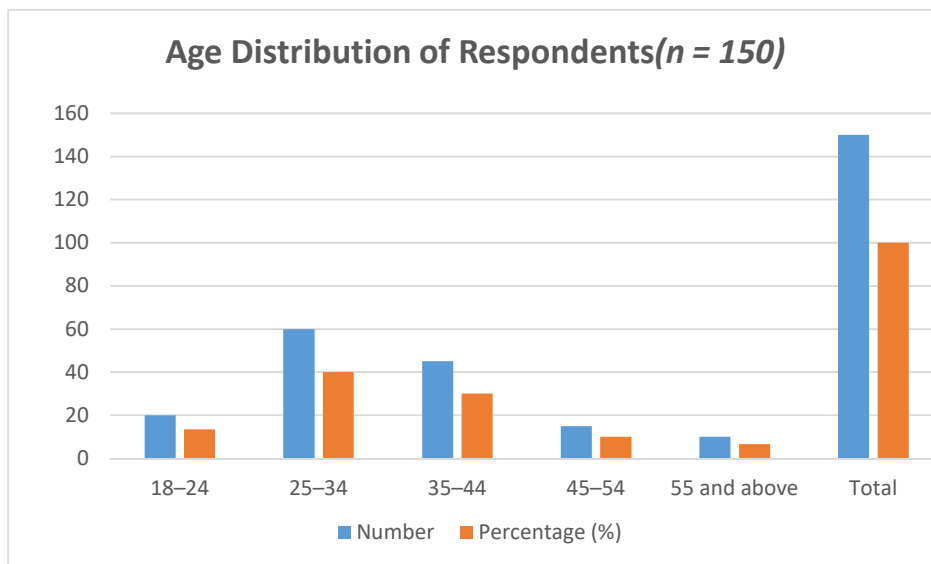


Figure-1. Age Distribution of Respondents($n = 150$)

Every respondent used Instagram for their business, though not everyone used it as often as others. Half of the businesses uploaded content daily or weekly, while another quarter posted several times each week. Most users (60%) liked to use Stories, while 33% preferred Reels. Fewer people (16.7%) used IGTV often, most likely because recorded IGTV stories are long and have greater production needs. Many more people seemed to post during the early afternoon (40.0%) than at any other time, aligning with browsing done after work.

Table 2: Peak Posting Times on Instagram(<i>n</i> = 150)		
Time of Day	Number	Percentage (%)
Morning (7–11 AM)	40	26.67
Afternoon (12–4 PM)	60	40.00
Evening (5–9 PM)	30	20.00
Night (10 PM–12 AM)	20	13.33

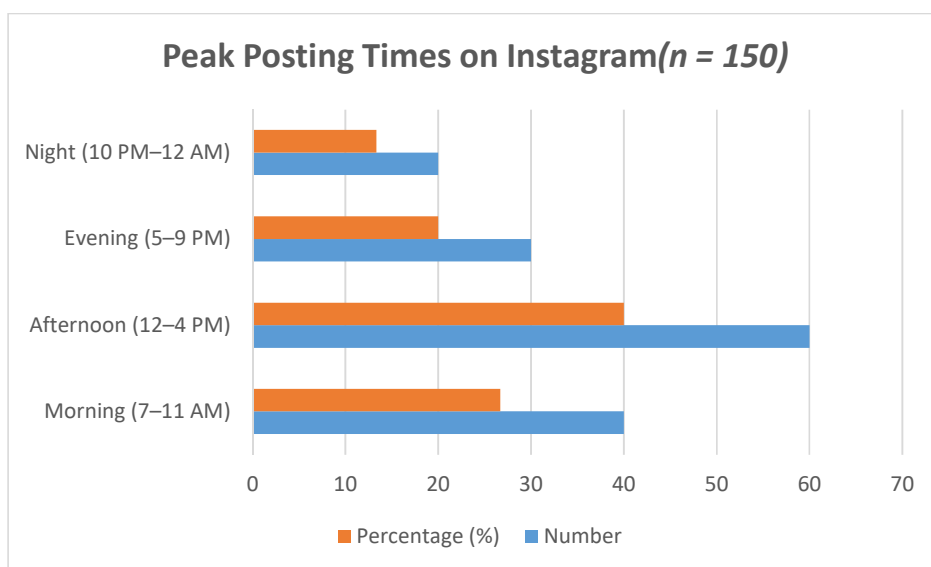


Figure-2 Peak Posting Times on Instagram(*n* = 150)

Content Strategies and Engagement

46.7% of respondents chose to use photos of their products in their posts, making photos by far their most popular type (see Table 3 and Figure 3). Nearly one in four (26.7%) participants turned to videos, particularly to watch demonstrations or tutorials. In many instances, entrepreneurs posted few Stories (16.7%) and Reels (10.0%). The numbers align with Instagram's primary feature, visual posts, and the platform's design.

Table 3: Content Types Shared on Instagram(<i>n</i> = 150)		
Content Type	Number	Percentage (%)
Photos	70	46.67
Videos	40	26.67
Stories	25	16.67
Reels	15	10.00
Total	150	100.00

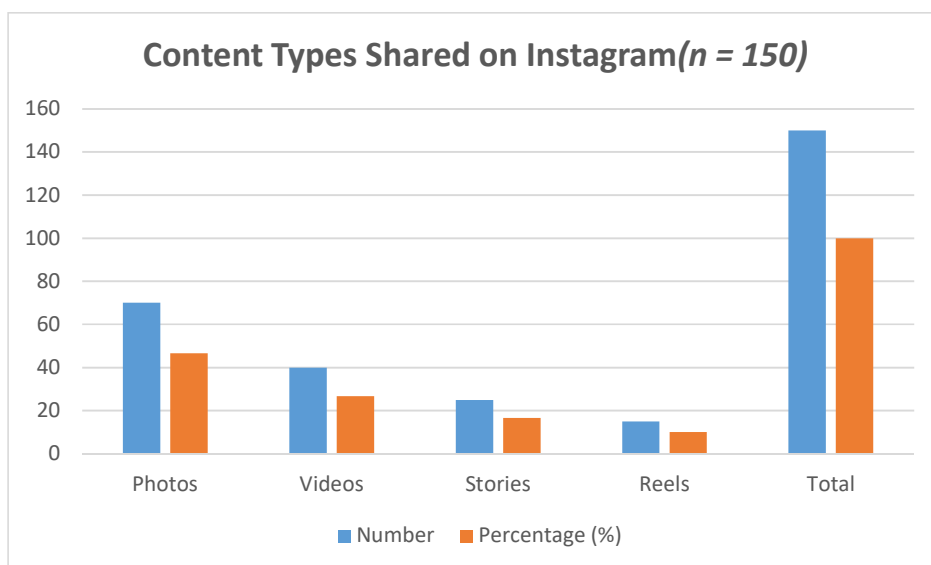


Figure-3 Content Types Shared on Instagram(*n* = 150)

People involved in the study used several kinds of engagement techniques. Typically, marketing strategies involved crafting captions that highlight the products for sale, selecting pertinent hashtags, and promptly responding to comments. Around half of all women entrepreneurs stated that they teamed up with other businesses or micro-influencers to promote their goods. The result is in line with studies that point to the value of using networking strategies on Instagram.

Impact on Business Outcomes

Table 4 and Figure 4 present the results of what entrepreneurs reported about their experiences on Instagram. Instagram helped drive an improved sense of visibility for 46.7% of the brands, proving how the platform can promote new audiences. About one-third of the brands saw more likes, messages, and inquiries on Instagram, showing how it supports building relationships with customers. According to the survey, only about a fifth (20.0%) of respondents believed that Instagram directly helped with sales, but its main role is to build recognition.

Table 4: Perceived Impact of Instagram on Business Outcomes(<i>n</i> = 150)		
Impact Area	Number	Percentage (%)
Brand Visibility	70	46.67
Customer Engagement	50	33.33
Sales Growth	30	20.00
Total	150	100.00

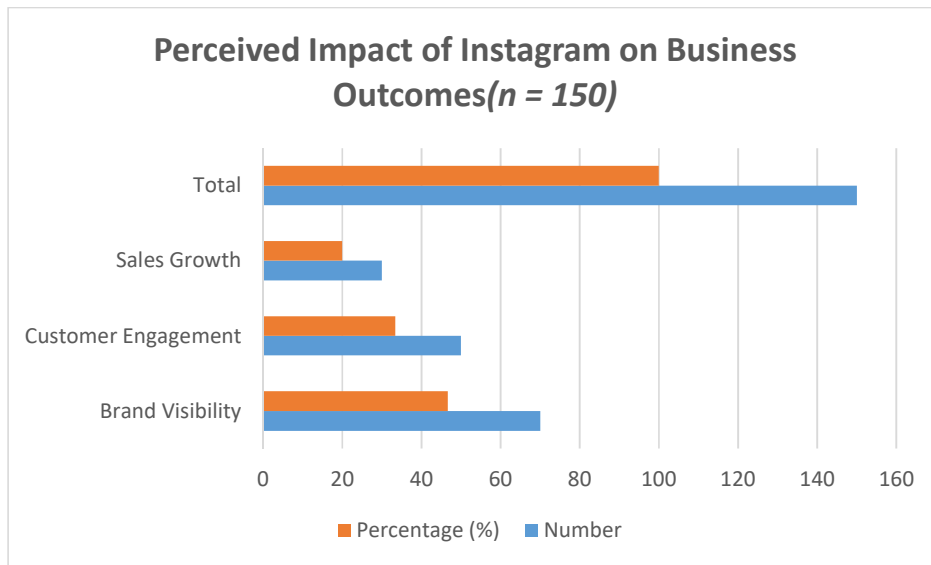


Figure-4 Perceived Impact of Instagram on Business Outcomes(n = 150)

The data indicated that companies that post often and share different types of content tend to have higher engagement ($p < 0.05$). Those who created more content per week on Instagram found that they gained more followers and higher engagement. Similarly, targeted ads and professional photography led to a greater conversion of visitors to paying customers. What the study proves is that intentionally using Instagram can better your business, just as past research has shown Instagram to expand brand reach.

Discussion

Our findings illuminate how Instagram serves as a success tool for women entrepreneurs while also highlighting continuing challenges. The predominant use of photos (46.7%) confirms Instagram's visual focus; women entrepreneurs use images to showcase product quality and brand aesthetics. This aligns with studies showing Instagram's strength in product discovery and brand storytelling. The peak posting time in the afternoon (40.0%) may reflect Kerala's daily routine patterns; optimizing post timing to audience behavior is a known factor in social media success (though few local studies report exact timing).

Regarding success factors, our qualitative data identified **personal attributes** (creativity, self-efficacy) and **social support** (family encouragement, peer networks) as pivotal. This resonates

with Feng *et al.*, who found that personality traits strongly influence women's entrepreneurial success. It also matches Alam *et al.*'s finding that family backing, social ties, and intrinsic motivation affect entrepreneurial outcomes. Notably, entrepreneurs in Kerala often leveraged existing community groups and digital forums (e.g., Facebook groups, local associations) to amplify their Instagram reach, demonstrating how social capital boosts online ventures.

Marketing strategies emerged as another key theme. Many respondents highlighted the importance of consistent branding and professional visuals. Those who used Instagram's shopping features or collaborated with micro-influencers reported higher sales, supporting Karthika & Ravindranath's (2025) conclusion that influencer partnerships on Instagram expand market reach for Kerala's women-owned businesses. However, some challenges were evident: limited time and technical skills restricted a few entrepreneurs from fully exploiting features like Reels or IGTV. This finding echoes the documented "digital skills gap" for women in business, which can hamper their ability to leverage social media effectively.

An important concern is that while Instagram boosts visibility, the direct sales impact is moderate (20.0% reported sales growth). This suggests entrepreneurs need integrated strategies (e.g., link Instagram to e-commerce sites and use paid ads) to turn followers into revenue. The relatively low sales figure also underscores that success is multifaceted: as previous research notes, women's entrepreneurial success depends not only on marketing but also on access to finance, training, and supportive policies.

Conclusion

This study contributes a nuanced understanding of how Instagram use and personal factors interact to influence women's entrepreneurial success in Kerala. **Key findings** include: (1) Regular Instagram engagement—especially posting photos and videos—enhances brand visibility and customer engagement; (2) Personal traits (e.g. innovation), strong support networks, and skill development are critical success factors; (3) Despite benefits, challenges such as digital literacy gaps and social barriers persist.

These insights have practical implications. For policymakers and NGOs, supporting digital-literacy programs and funding tailored to women entrepreneurs could amplify Instagram's positive

impact. Business networks and training workshops can teach effective content strategies (e.g. using hashtags, storytelling) and time-management techniques to maintain an active online presence. Platforms like Instagram should consider features that reduce barriers (e.g. simpler e-commerce integration) to help women entrepreneurs convert visibility into sales.

Limitations: The study's sample was limited to Kerala and predominantly younger, educated entrepreneurs, which may limit generalizability. Self-reported measures and cross-sectional design also constrain causal inferences. Future research could employ longitudinal or experimental designs to assess how changes in Instagram strategy affect growth over time. Studies in other Indian states or comparative cross-country analyses would help determine the broader applicability of these findings.

In summary, this research underscores Instagram's role as a valuable tool for women entrepreneurs in Kerala, while highlighting the interplay of digital engagement with personal and contextual factors. By addressing both technological and socio-cultural dimensions, stakeholders can better enable women-led businesses to thrive in the digital economy.

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