



EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A STUDY ON FEMALE VLOGGERS IN WESTERN ODISHA

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ABSTRACT

Women vloggers have emerged as a significant and creative source of extra income for their families in the fast-expanding digital world of the 21st century. The current study was conducted in western Odisha among female vloggers from various localities. The objective of this study is to investigate how women vloggers present and express themselves online as they get more exposed to the internet and supplement income to their families. It focuses on the multidimensional world of female vloggers, shedding light on the various income sources women use to support their families. Vlogging, or video blogging, has increased in popularity as a business and self-expression tool for women from all backgrounds. It enables people to share their knowledge, talents, and interests with a global audience. Along with this, they share about the different cultures, food, textiles & clothes, and festivals related to Western Odisha. These vloggers generate money on the internet in a number of methods, including sponsored content, affiliate marketing, ad revenue, product sales, crowdsourcing, and online courses. Successful female vloggers usually create and curate content that resonates with their target audience, building a loyal follower base that supports their goals. Despite the difficulties, female vloggers have carved themselves a place in the digital environment, demonstrating that they can contribute considerably to their families' earnings while pursuing their hobbies and building a strong online network. Based on various review papers, this study focuses on the dynamic and evolving role of female vloggers as they navigate the digital economy of the twenty-first century, finally empowering themselves and their families.

Key words: - Women Vlogger, Supplementary income, digital economy, Empowering

1.1 INTRODUCTION:

In recent years, the digital landscape has emerged as a transformative platform for economic empowerment, particularly for marginalized communities such as women. Female participation in community level plays a vital role in community enrichment. This year the theme of international women's day 2024 was "INSPIRE INCLUSION". Inclusion which creates success story becomes inspiration of others. So, both inclusion and inspiration are the head and tail of the coin. Inclusion may be categorised economic inclusion, social inclusion and political inclusion. Women vloggers are one of the best examples of economic inclusion in which they empower themselves and contribute supplementary income to their family along with the house hold work. With the advent of YouTube, individuals have found new

avenues to express themselves, share their stories, and generate income. This paper explores the economic upliftment of women YouTube vloggers, with a specific focus on Western part of Odisha. Western Odisha is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, vibrant festivals, and intricate handloom traditions. Among its cultural treasures is the Sambalpuri language, a dialect celebrated for its unique linguistic characteristics and historical significance. Despite its cultural importance, Sambalpuri faces challenges of preservation and promotion in the digital age. Through YouTube vlogging, women from Western Odisha have seized the opportunity to preserve their linguistic heritage. (Behera & Dash, 2017) One of the most significant festivals in Western Odisha is Nuakhai, a celebration of the new rice harvest that holds immense cultural and social significance. Nuakhai is not merely a festival but a symbol of gratitude, unity, and prosperity for the people of Western Odisha. (Meher, 2020). Women YouTube vloggers play a crucial role in showcasing the rituals, customs, and festivities associated with Nuakhai, thereby promoting the festival's essence and attracting wider audiences. Similarly, Sital Sashthi, Bhai Jutia, and Po Jutia are other prominent festivals deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Western Odisha. Sital Sashthi is dedicated to the worship of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, and it commemorates their divine marriage. while Bhai Jutia and Po Jutia are festivals dedicated to sibling love and son love for their long lives, respectively. Through YouTube vlogs, women vloggers offer insights into the traditions, rituals, and celebrations of these festivals, thereby preserving their cultural heritage and fostering a sense of community among viewers. Handloom weaving is another integral aspect of Western Odisha's identity, with its exquisite craftsmanship gaining recognition both nationally and internationally. However, the handloom sector has faced challenges in reaching wider audiences and sustaining livelihoods. Women YouTube vloggers have played a pivotal role in promoting handloom products, showcasing their beauty, craftsmanship, and cultural significance to a global audience. (Pradhan & Khandual ,2020). Personalities like Nirmala Sitharaman, Priyanka Gandhi, Madhuri Dixit, Vidya Balan, Kiron Kher, Diya Mirza , Nandita Das, Sona Mohapatra among others, have not only embraced Sambalpuri sarees as a symbol of cultural identity but have also played a significant role in promoting and preserving Odisha's rich handloom tradition on national and international platforms. (OB Bureau, Aug 7, 2023) While these eminent personalities may have been influenced by various factors in their decision to wear Sambalpuri sarees, including personal preference and cultural identity, social media platforms like YouTube undoubtedly play a significant role

in amplifying their message and reaching a wider audience. Through their presence on digital platforms, they contribute to the continued relevance and recognition of Sambalpuri handloom textiles in the world of fashion and culture. The lifestyle of Western Odisha reflects a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity. Through YouTube vlogs, women from this region showcase their daily lives, traditions, culinary delights like sarsatia, chaulbara, kardibhaja, hendua chutchuta, bhuja pudia, limb phool bhaja, ambil, lethia, patalghanta puda, jhuri puda and cultural practices to a global audience. (Sambad English Bureau, Aug 25, 2016) In this way women YouTube vloggers continue to pave the way for economic improvement in Western Odisha. Through collaborations, sponsorships, and monetization opportunities on YouTube, these vloggers are not only generating income for themselves but also creating employment opportunities and driving economic growth in their communities. (Kumari, 2024). Through collaborations with brands, organizations, and fellow content creators, women YouTube vloggers in Western Odisha are able to diversify their content and reach wider audiences. These partnerships often result in sponsored content, product placements, and affiliate marketing, providing vloggers with additional sources of revenue. Moreover, sponsorships and collaborations also contribute to the growth of local businesses and artisans, thereby stimulating economic activity in the region. (Vaheed, 2021)

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY-

This paper examines how women vloggers in western Odisha use the internet to make money and support their families. It explores how they express themselves online and earn income through various methods like sponsored content, ads, and selling products. These vloggers share about their culture, food, textiles, and festivals. Despite challenges, they've found success by connecting with their audience and creating content that resonates. Overall, this research highlights how female vloggers empower themselves and their families in today's digital world.

1.3 REVIEW OF LITERATURE: -

Blogging has become a personal window for the bloggers to express their feelings, ideas and opinions despite the restrictions that they experienced in the 'outside' world. Blogging gave a voice to the bloggers to express their opinions and a chance to be heard. For majority of them, blogging is also a medium to release their stress and worries. (Ayoub Zareie & Nor Hafizah Selamat, 2014). This literature review examines the transformative potential of ICT for low-income women, focusing on employment, family, and personal spheres. While ICT is lauded for its capacity to drive social change, it carries both benefits and risks. Internet access can enhance life conditions, yet policymakers must address the digital gender gap to mitigate exclusion and poverty. Focus should be given on the necessity of a gender-sensitive digital agenda to harness the benefits of digital inclusion while minimizing its potential drawbacks. (González, Ana & Arroyo 2014). Social media serves as a catalyst for empowering women and fostering women entrepreneurship in both rural and urban India. It amplifies discussions on women's rights, prompting policymakers to enact gender equality policies. While empowering women socially, psychologically, and financially, it necessitates addressing digital literacy and safety concerns amidst the virtual gender gap

and cybercrimes. (Kumari

,2024). Today, women are crucial in both business and household affairs. Digital tech has revolutionized how women entrepreneurs operate, enabling better communication, decision-making, and information gathering. This contributes to societal and economic growth. Understanding women's economic contributions and decoding digital entrepreneurship are vital for India's progress. (Jalan & Gupta ,2019). Popular YouTube channels led by women focus on makeup, cooking, cocktails, and fashion. Today's feminism encompasses equal opportunities and battling sexual harassment, while exploring how women express identity publicly and at home. Women on YouTube adjust the extent and type of personal sharing based on context, medium, and goals, influencing discussions on feminism and gender identity. (Fisher,2019). On the other hand, intersection between race and gender complicity to the developing identity among women vloggers. (Crenshaw, K. 1991). Black female YouTubers confront an abundance of issues and hurdles that revolve around negative stereotypes, societal pressure, and inconsistent messages. (Chohan, S. K. 2010)

1.4 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY-

The present study focusses on the Empowering women through digital entrepreneurship: a study on female vloggers in western Odisha with emphasised on the following objectives: -

1. To study the economic inclusion of female (special reference to Home Maker) using modern information technology i.e., social media.
2. To explore the life journeys of female vloggers of western Odisha on YouTube.
3. To analyze the role of YouTube in their lives, from career transitions to community engagement that inspire others and contribute to cultural preservation including online empowerment.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY-

This study involved gathering secondary data from publicly available sources such as online articles, social media profiles, and YouTube channels of the individuals mentioned. Five case study has been selected from different localities of Western Odisha such as Bolangir, Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Bargarh etc. Information was collected through observation and analysis of their background, motivations, challenges, journeys, and impacts, with a focus on key themes and patterns.

Tanuja Das



Tanuja Das, a vlogger originating from Western Odisha and currently residing in Chhattisgarh, commenced her YouTube journey in 2019 with the goal of promoting the Sambalpuri culture. She runs the channel “Prasantanu Sambalpuri Vlog”. Her inspiration stems from personal adversity, as she stepped up to support her family following the tragic loss of her brother in 2008. Hailing from a modest background where her father ran a Pani puri vending business, Tanuja faced formidable challenges. With only a matriculate-level education and limited traditional job opportunities in her conservative village, she sought alternative avenues for livelihood. She documented her journey from infertility to childbirth on YouTube, sharing the highs and lows of her experience inspiring others with her story.

Tanuja's resilience led her to discover YouTube's potential as a source of income and a platform for cultural promotion. Recognizing its extensive reach, she saw an opportunity to showcase Sambalpuri language and culture to a wider audience. Through unwavering dedication, Tanuja has made a significant impact, not only in popularizing Sambalpuri but also as an inspiration to others from similar backgrounds. Her journey illustrates the transformative power of determination and digital platforms in breaking barriers, uplifting communities, and preserving cultural heritage.

Today, Tanuja earns a monthly income ranging from Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 60,000, reflecting the tangible rewards of her efforts and the growing popularity of her content. Her success story underscores the potential for individuals with limited resources and formal education to thrive in the digital age, paving the way for empowerment and success in underserved communities.



Jagruti Rath

Jagruti Rath, hailing from Bolangir, Odisha, is a multifaceted personality renowned for her talents in acting, dancing, hosting, and stage performances. She runs her YouTube channel “Jagruti’s World”. Motivated by her deep-seated passion for promoting the language, culture, and handloom traditions of her homeland, Rath embarked on a journey marked by determination and resilience. Despite facing obstacles inherent in the competitive entertainment industry and digital realm, particularly as she hailed from the western part of Odisha, Rath persevered.

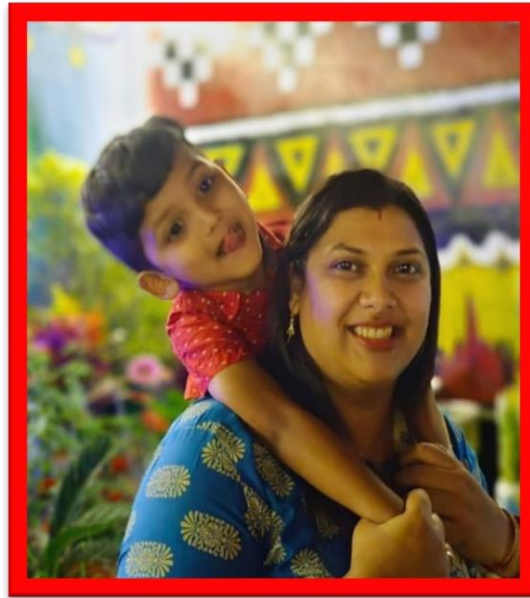
Her journey began with hosting the "Ajira Sakala" show on DD Odia, where she honed her skills and gained recognition as per the records found.

Transitioning to digital platforms, Rath launched her YouTube channel to expand her reach and connect with audiences on a broader scale. Through her dedicated efforts, Rath has earned widespread admiration and a significant following, both locally and beyond Odisha. Her commitment to showcasing Odisha's cultural richness serves as a beacon for cultural advocacy and community pride. Jagruti Rath's journey exemplifies resilience, passion, and a steadfast commitment to preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of Odisha. Her impact resonates across various platforms, leaving a lasting impression on audiences. Today, Rath's monthly income ranges from Rs. 60,000 to Rs. 80,000, reflecting the success and influence of her endeavors in the digital landscape.



Subasini Sahu

Subasini Sahu, originally from Bargarh district, embarked on her YouTube journey by establishing a channel named after her children, Ishan and Ishika as “Ishan & Ishika Odisha Vlogs”. Motivated by a desire to contribute to her family's endeavors and showcase her skills and interests, she sought to support her husband, who is a businessman. However, the journey wasn't devoid of challenges, as Sahu grappled with balancing familial responsibilities and managing her YouTube channel. Nevertheless, undeterred by these initial hurdles, she persevered. Her channel became a platform for sharing content focused on her lifestyle, cultural recipes, and home tours, offering viewers a glimpse into her world and passions. Through her channel, Sahu not only empowered herself but also inspired others, showcasing the potential for personal growth and contribution. Her authenticity and relatability garnered appreciation and support from her audience, fostering a sense of connection and empowerment. Subasini Sahu's YouTube journey reflects her determination to support her family while sharing aspects of her life and culture. Her story resonates with audiences, illustrating the power of digital platforms in facilitating personal expression and community engagement. Today, her monthly income ranges from Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 50,000, underscoring the success and impact of her endeavors on YouTube.



Monalisha Dash

Monalisha Dash, another YouTube vlogger running the YouTube channel “Sambalpuri Vlog Dash Creation” originally from Bolangir but residing in Gumadera with her family, embarked on a journey marked by determination and resilience. After completing her commerce studies in +2, she pursued a 6-month computer course driven by her interest in IT. To support herself financially, she took up a part-time job, reflecting her desire for independence and meaningful engagement. However, balancing studies, work, and personal life posed challenges, compounded by initial struggles in finding the right career path and establishing her own venture. Despite facing setbacks, including getting married during her MBA course and the unsuccessful launch of "Jana Seva Kendra," Monalisha's journey took a transformative turn when she discovered YouTube vlogging, thanks to her sister's suggestion. Through her vlogs, Monalisha not only shares her experiences but also serves as an inspiration for others, particularly aspiring independent women. Her contributions to the cultural and online community have earned her recognition and respect, as she navigates through her journey from struggles to success. Monalisha's story underscores the power of resilience and determination in overcoming obstacles and achieving success. Her vlogs not only provide a source of income, with her monthly earnings ranging from Rs. 40,000 to Rs. 50,000, but also serve as a platform for empowerment and cultural expression.



Suprita Purohit

Suprita Purohit, running the YouTube channel “Kunmun Purohit family vlogger”, originally from Bolangir, faced a significant disruption in her life when her father's transfer compelled her family to relocate to Sambalpur, interrupting her studies. Despite this upheaval, Suprita's passion for beauty and grooming services remained steadfast. She seized the opportunity to pursue a beauty parlour course in Sambalpur and in 2001, with limited resources, established a small parlour. However, her aspirations were put on hold after marriage and childbirth, as societal norms and family responsibilities took precedence. Determined to find a way to contribute financially while pursuing her passion, Suprita turned to online platforms, where she encountered various YouTube channels that inspired her to explore content creation. Through her YouTube vlogs, Suprita not only overcame societal stigma associated with beauty parlours but also emerged as an inspiration for other women navigating similar challenges. Her journey exemplifies resilience, determination, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Today, Suprita's monthly income ranges from Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 50,000, reflecting the success of her endeavors in the digital landscape and the opportunities it has provided for her and her family.

1.5 CONTENTS SHOWCASED ON THEIR YOUTUBE CHANNEL: EXPLORING CULTURE, CUISINE, CRAFTS, AND PERSONAL JOURNEYS-

The aforementioned YouTuber women serve as influential figures who use their platforms to showcase a diverse array of content encompassing culture, heritage, Western Odisha recipes, festivals, and personal life journeys, all with the aim of inspiring and uplifting their viewers.

Firstly, their focus on culture and heritage contributes significantly to promoting the rich cultural tapestry of Odisha, particularly Western Odisha, to a wider audience. By showcasing Heritage such as the Samlei Mandir, Ghanteswari Mandir, Hari Shankar Mandir, Nrusinghnath Mandir, Metakani Mandir, Patali Sree Khestra, and Huma Dhama Mandir, they not only preserve these invaluable aspects of heritage but also generate interest and appreciation among viewers. Additionally, their efforts indirectly boost tourism in Western Odisha by piquing the curiosity of potential visitors and encouraging them to explore the region's

unique cultural offerings.



(Picture 1 (Leftmost): "The Leaning Temple of Huma Dhama"; Picture 2 (Middle): "Samleswari Project"; Picture 3 (Rightmost): "Samleswari Temple")

Besides highlighting well-known tourist spots like the Hirakud Dam, Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Khandadhar Waterfall, and Dev Jharan, their channels have also shed light on lesser-known gems such as Rampaluga Spot in Sambalpur, Kana Kunda in Sundargarh, and Aapkhola Waterfall in Bargarh. By showcasing these hidden spots, they have not only increased their popularity but also contributed to the diversification of tourist attractions in the region, offering viewers a more comprehensive understanding and exploration of Western Odisha's natural beauty and cultural heritage.



(Hirakud Dam – Asia's longest Dam, located in Sambalpur)

In addition to showcasing heritage, these YouTuber women highlight local festivals and rituals like Bhai Jutia, Po Jutia, Nua Khai, and Pus Puni on their channels. Their efforts have made the entire nation aware of these once lesser-known celebrations, contributing to the preservation and appreciation of Odisha's cultural richness. Through their content, they bring attention to these traditions, fostering a deeper understanding and recognition of the cultural diversity within the region.



(Nuakhai: Ritualistic offering & feasting in Western Odisha)



(Puspuni)

(Sital Sasthi)

Puspuni Known as the second most important agricultural festival of western Odisha after Nuakhai. It is celebrated on the day of ‘Pausa Purnima” (fool moon day of month “Pausa”).Chher Chhera, Puspuni and Pushyavishek all these three words are colloquial replication of “Pausa Purnima” which comes in the month of Pausa, the full moon day. For Odisha this day is culturally associated with Lord Jagannath where on the ceremony of Pushyavishek is conducted in the Sri Mandir at Puri..Sital Sasthi, or Sitala Sasthi, is the marriage function of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati observed in Odisha.



(Pua Jiuntia Puja for Son and Bhai Jiuntia puja for brother)

Pua Jiuntia celebrated in every village and town of western Odisha region in the month of

“Aswina”. Pua Jiuntia is generally observed by mothers to invoke the grace of Lord “Dutibahana” for the long life and prosperity of their sons. On the occasion of Bhai Jiuntia festival girls worship goddess Durga for the prosperity of their brothers.



Manabasa Gurubar

The Manabasa Gurubar is a significant event in the Odia religious calendar. Every Thursday of the Margasira month, which start just after Kartika Purnima, devotees worship Goddess Lakshmi.

In addition to showcasing heritage and festivals, these YouTuber women promote the Sambalpuri language through their channels. By speaking in Sambalpuri, they stimulate the interest of people from all over, leading to a growing fascination with the language. Their efforts have contributed to the recent surge in popularity of Sambalpuri songs, with fans emerging from all corners of Odisha. Through their dedication to cultural representation and linguistic preservation, these women play a significant role in revitalizing and promoting the Sambalpuri language, fostering a sense of pride and appreciation for the region's linguistic heritage among viewers.



(Jagruti Rath advocating Sambalpuri language in a show)

They present a variety of Western Odisha recipes on their channels, including Patal Ghanta Chutchuta, Sarsatia, Chaulbara, Kardibhaja, Hendua Chutchuta, Bhuja Pudia, Limb Phool Bhaja, Ambil, Letha, Patalghanta Puda, and Jhuri Puda. These dishes showcase the rich culinary heritage of Western Odisha,

featuring unique flavors and cooking techniques passed down through generations. By sharing these recipes, they not only preserve cultural culinary traditions but also inspire viewers to explore and appreciate the diverse gastronomic delights of the region.



(Left: Chaul Bara; Middle: Sarsatia; Right: Ambil or Letha)

They feature Sambalpuri handloom on their channels, promoting it within the fashion industry and throughout Odisha, India, and globally. Their efforts have sparked widespread interest in Sambalpuri sarees, even among foreigners, who have developed a fondness for them. By showcasing the intricate designs and craftsmanship of Sambalpuri handloom, these YouTuber women contribute to its recognition and appreciation on a global scale. Their advocacy not only boosts the local economy but also preserves a centuries-old tradition, enriching the cultural heritage of Odisha and fostering connections with enthusiasts worldwide.



(You tuber Vlogger exhibiting the elegance of Sambalpuri sarees)

These influencers also share their life journeys as women, including their struggles, financial challenges, and educational limitations. They bravely document personal experiences like overcoming infertility and the journey to childbirth. Through their stories, they inspire others facing similar obstacles, showing that perseverance and determination can lead to success despite hardships. Their candid portrayal of life's ups and downs fosters empathy and solidarity among viewers, promoting a message of resilience and hope.



(Tanuja Das sharing from infertility to motherhood journey)

1.6. CONCLUSION-

From Western Odisha, several individuals have embraced the digital world, transforming their passions into successful ventures. These inspiring individuals have shown remarkable resilience and determination throughout their journeys, bringing prosperity not only to themselves but also to their families and communities. Utilizing platforms like YouTube, they have found avenues to share their talents and interests with the world, leading to personal fulfilment and substantial financial rewards. Their stories highlight the significant impact of digital platforms in preserving culture, empowering individuals, and driving economic growth. By leveraging the power of the internet, these individuals have not only improved their own lives but have also become role models for others seeking to pursue their dreams in the digital age. Their journeys serve as shining examples of how determination and the opportunities provided by online platforms can lead to success and positive change, inspiring others to follow in their footsteps.

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