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Facebook as a Tool for Economic Empowerment of Women in Bengal: During Covid- 19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Social media is one of the incredible arising instruments across the globe. India is encountering a fast development in the ICT area since 1990's and extended since 2000. The utilization of interpersonal communication tools like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn has gotten one of well-known methods of mingling. Women, for ages, have assumed an imperative part in building a general public they flourish in. Women as an essential piece of the general public, significantly include and add to it.

In this study, survey throughout different districts of the state, been performed to indicate the differences between different academic, geographical and economic section of the women, under one particular umbrella, called Facebook (FB). How the women of Bengal are using this particular medium to create an alternate earning resource in their household and gaining economic empowerment in the society, is the main objective of the study. In the due course the gender divide, as well as the digital divide urged for continuous mention as a prevalent factor in the growth of economic empowerment of women in Bengal.

Keywords: Facebook, Pandemic, Women Empowerment, Economic Empowerment, Bengal.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the five long months of strict lockdown, and all the guidelines, like social distancing and sanitization, have made life miserable to all the section of the society in general, and women in particular, because of their dual responsibilities. Kolkata, the city of 'haats' and 'bazaars', have always been informal and scattered, and therefore there was no job security and fixed earnings. This sector was mostly male dominated. But the advancement that the whole situation has made is to adapt the first step towards digitization. Today, digital marketing is one of the best ways to improve sells through social media. The increased screen time during country wide lockdown, has developed a tendency in middle aged, tech savvy, middle class background

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women to earn their own bread by selling through various women related groups in Facebook. The empowerment of women is by and large examined corresponding to political, social and financial strengthening, yet the economic empowerment of women has gotten specific consideration and is frequently referred to as quite possibly the main methods of advancing balance of sexual orientation, lessen the destitution level and, improve the well-being not only women, but also children and societies.

Opportunity for business and admittance to business sectors and portrayal in monetary dynamic jobs, and furthermore monetary strengthening, women can acquire independence from the rat race, enter the labor force, and have equivalent freedom to acquire places of financial force. The support of female in the monetary market is found to rival their family obligations, since women are frequently the only ones liable for family obligations. Women employment is undoubtedly prone to assume a significant part in forming the empowerment of women, as the aggregate endeavors of women with positive institutional help can advance the cycle of strengthening. The connection between female cooperation in the workforce and dynamic for quite a while has been of interest with regards to contemporary turn of events and the interest of populace strategy in India. The strengthening of women alludes to the force of women to think and act uninhibitedly, practice and pick, and understand the potential as equivalent citizenry.

(A) Aims and Objectives

- To examine the pace of adaption of Facebook of women in Bengal, during pandemic.
- To analyze the level of earning revenues through FB groups.
- To cultivate the growth of economic empowerment of Women in Bengal, during pandemic.

(B) Literature Review

Social media enables social cooperation among individuals, in which they make, offer or trade data and thoughts in virtual networks and organizations. Besides, online media relies upon portable and electronic advances to make exceptionally intuitive stages that offer people and networks to make, co-make, share, change, and talk about client produced content. (Holly Pavlika, 2012)

Online media is internationally one of the powerful arising tools (Anusha 2015). The ICT sector in India has been encountering speedy development since the 1990s and extension since 2000. Although even the current Facebook scenario, is dominated by mostly Indian men, and the gender gap is still very much prevalent, still women of 18-24 years of age are inclining more

towards using FB as a tool of income generation. Empowerment by the virtue of it, is, above all else, about power; changing force relations for the individuals who recently practiced little control over their own lives. Batliwala (1993) characterizes that power as having two fundamental perspectives: authority over assets (physical, human, scholarly, monetary, and oneself), and command over philosophy (convictions, qualities and mentalities). On the off chance that force implies control, strengthening along these lines is the way toward acquiring control.

As indicated by Kishor and Subiya (2008), the work of women for cash has a substantially more constructive outcome on womens' acknowledgment of womens' entitlement to decline to have sexual relations with their significant other than in dismissing the beating of ladies. Ladies who are consistently presented to the broad communications will in general have sex uniformity mentalities that are more equivalent than those that are not cautiously uncovered. Kabeer (1999) contends that, the empowerment is improvement in individuals' capacity to settle on essential life decisions in a setting where this capacity was recently denied to them. As indicated by Kabeer (1999), strengthening can't be diminished to just a single part of the cycle or result. How women practice decision and real outcomes will rely upon the person. The alternatives will fluctuate as per class, reality. Also, the effects on strengthening apparent by untouchables may not really be simply the ones generally esteemed by ladies. Kabeer et al. (1999) said that strengthening implies the interaction which requires change at various levels and in various measurements: change at the individual level and change in their 'internal' ability to be self-aware or in their admittance to material assets and connections inside the family and family.

In developing nations, the gender division of work inside family and outside family both are evident. (Mawdsley, 1998). The defective idea of support to the workforce, which for the most part don't perceive the household and domestic work as monetary movement, as a result of the emphasis on use vakue, as opposed to trade value. (Donahoe, 1999). This disregards an explanation of financial commitment of women to the family specifically and society in general.(Ironmonger 1999).

The fundamental idea of work performed by women in provincial zones, falls under non market monetary exercises. (Choudhury and Parthasarathy, 2007). The activities performed by women, regularly not considered economic empowerment, or are underestimated and commonly barred from investigation, (Shelton and John, 1996)

(C) Research Gap

From the extensive literature review, it is evident that, women empowerment and the negligence of the society to include it with the mainstream economy, has attracted attention of several researchers from 1990 onwards. But as 2020 has changed our way of living, our thinking pattern, or ways of seeing things, it surely has changed the perception of society towards the economic empowerment of women. In this 21st century, in a unprecedented crisis like Covid-19 has changed the perception upside down. There are many analysis based on the increased domestic violence during pandemic, but there are not much analysis on how women entrepreneurs are perceived in the household, when most male bread earners were out from their job. And Kolkata specifically, and West Bengal in general has always been a place for the informal business sector, which has been affected heavily due to pandemic. How FB has shifted the sector to the online users, is another area less examined on. This research paper will fill the gap to get a holistic picture of the economic empowerment of Women.

(D) Hypothesis:

Hypothesis is a proposition made as a basis for reasoning, without any assumptions of its truth. (John.W.Creswell, 2013). Hypothesis is particularly important for quantitative analysis.

The corona outbreak in the country for almost two long years, has changed the perception of the global market. The patterns of buying as well as selling both have changed, like never before. The COVID-19 crisis has impacted all sections of the society in an unprecedented manner. Apart from inducing panic and uncertainty amidst the general population, the pandemic has also significantly disrupted and impacted the way business processes have been hitherto conducted. There have been various impacts of COVID-19 on the nature of work and employment in business organisations across sectors. Employees' livelihood and parameters of 'Decent Work' are being severely threatened. Rampant job loss, pay cuts, emergence of new forms of employment are emerging in the wake of COVID-19 crisis. From this scenario, the first set of hypotheses the researcher would test:

H₁: The Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown has an impact on the economic empowerment of women through FB groups.

H₀: The Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown does not have an impact on the economic empowerment of women through FB groups.

Any change in the economic pattern, asks for sustainability in the market. Any change if is not sustainable in the long term, is not successful, no matter how important the changes are. As currently, the lockdown situation has gotten better, but a sustainable change in the pattern of

consumer buying behavior is more acceptable, than a whimsical change only during a crisis situation. The next set of hypotheses are:

H₂: There is a change in the consumer buying behavior that can lead to a sustainable growth in economic empowerment of Women in Bengal.

H₀: There is no change in the consumer buying behavior that can lead to a sustainable growth in economic empowerment of Women in Bengal.

(E) Research Methodology

The researcher is considering the research methodology using the research onion structure.

Research Philosophy:

This research has been based on the interpretivist research philosophy where the observations are further interpreted using different theoretical foundations and qualitative research along with quantitative research for deriving the research results. Other philosophies like positivism realism and pragmatism were not applicable for the present research (Pham et al. 2018).

Research Approach

This research follows the deductive research approach where theoretical foundations regarding the research subject area were studied at first and then the process of data collection and interpretation was conducted (Woiceshyn and Daellenbach 2018).

Research Design

Using a descriptive research design has been applicable for this research because this research design helps to explore new segments of an existing research phenomenon.

Research on social media is common in media research sectors but finding its application in the aftermath of Covid-19 is comparatively new which is why a descriptive research design has been selected.

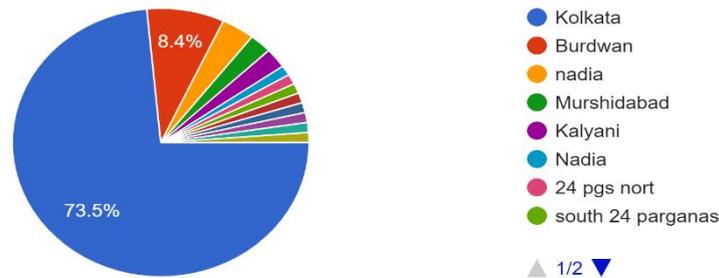
Data Collection:

The researcher will collect the data by survey questionnaire as primary data collection technique. Online survey sheets will be distributed to the women across two districts, Kolkata and Burdwan. The selected sample must be either women entrepreneurs who use Facebook as a media of their business, or a regular buyer from facebook.

II. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter will analyze the primary data received from 87 respondents, of the survey questionnaire.

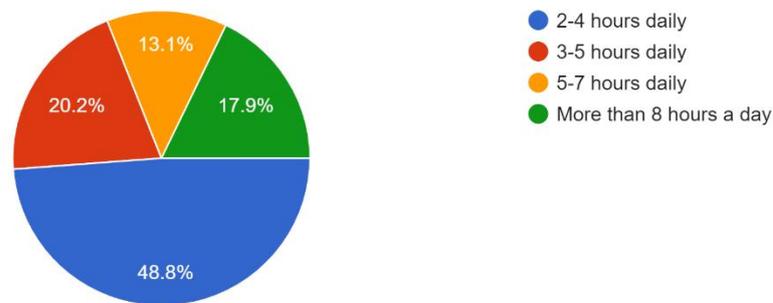
District
83 responses



(Graph1: District of respondents) (Author’s description)

From the received responses, 73.5% of the responses are from Kolkata, one of the most important districts of the state.

How much do you spend doing Facebook?
84 responses

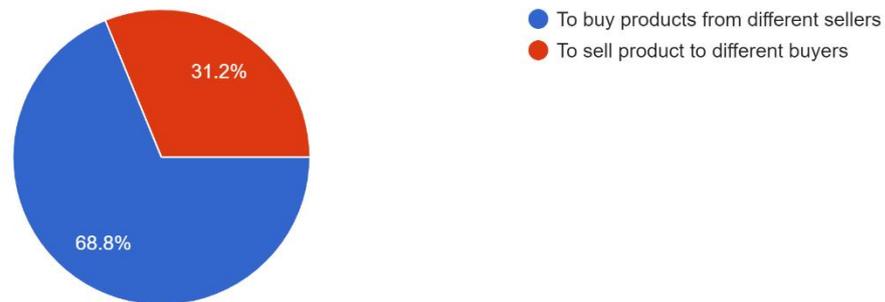


(Graph2: Facebook screen time of respondents) (Author’s description)

Most of the respondents spend 2-4 hours in a day, using Facebook. Almost 49% of the respondents spend almost 4 hours of their day using the platform. And 20.2% use it for 3-5 hours a day, and 17.9% respondents use facebook for more than 8 hours a day.

How do you use Facebook?

77 responses

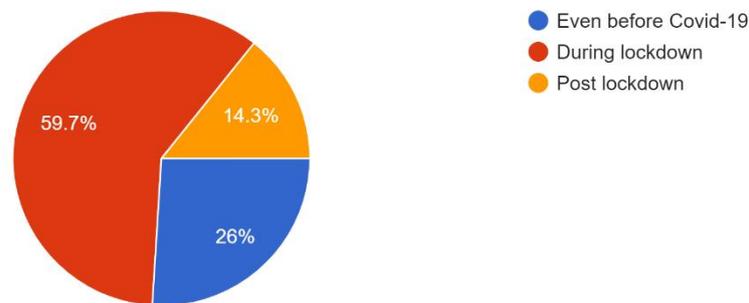


(Graph3: Use of Facebook by respondents) (Author's description)

From the received data, it can be observed that, 68.8% respondents use Facebook to buy products, while 31.2% use it to sell products.

From when did you start selling/ buying products using Facebook groups?

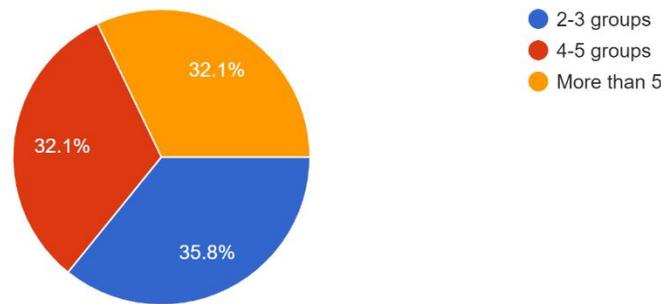
77 responses



(Graph4: Effect of Covid-19 on the process) (Author's description)

From the respondents, it is evident that, COVID-19 has changed the buying pattern, 59.7% of the respondents started buying products through Facebook during lockdown, and 26% has used even before lockdown, and 14.3% have started post lockdown.

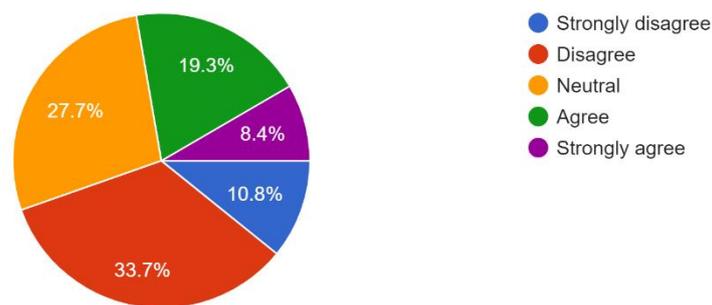
How many groups you are actively associated with?
81 responses



(Graph5:Association of respondents on Facebook) (Author’s description)

From the received responses, 35.8% respondents are associated with 2-3 Facebook groups.

The process of selling or buying products using facebook groups are hassle-free.
83 responses

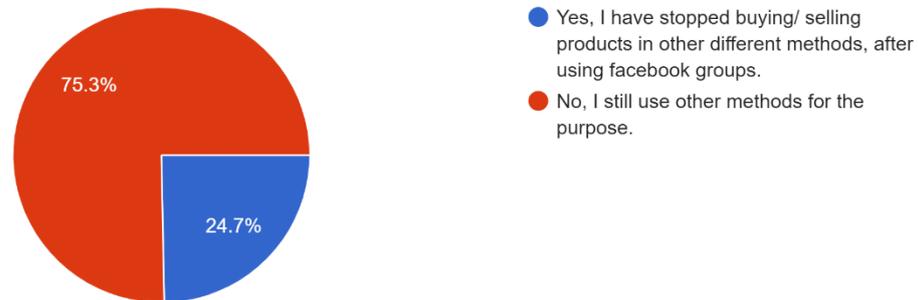


(Graph 6: Satisfaction level of business through Facebook) (Author’s description)

From the responses, it can be said that, 33.7% respondents don’t think the process of the business through Facebook completely hassle free, 27.7% are neutral about the process, and 19.3% agree to the fact that the process is actually hassle free. Only 8.4% strongly agree to the fact.

Do you sell or buy products only using facebook?

81 responses

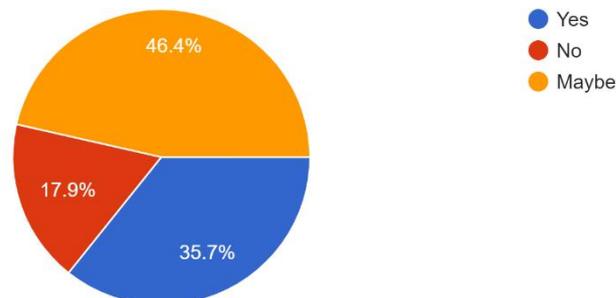


(Graph 7: Selling product through only Facebook) (Author's description)

From, the responses, it can be said that, 75.3% respondents still use other conventional methods for purchasing or selling their products. While only, 24.7% have shifted strictly to Facebook.

Do you think, Facebook groups have empowered women financially?

84 responses



(Graph 8:Relevance of Facebook groups on women empowerment) (Author's description)

From the received responses, 46.4% believe that maybe Facebook has empowered women, and 35.7% believe yes it has empowered women. And 17.9% don't think likely.

Frequency Distribution Table of effect of Covid-19 in the process:

(Table 1: Frequency Distribution Table of effect of Covid-19 in the process) (Author's Description)

From the above table, it is evident that, Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown had a major effect on the adoption rate of Facebook marketplace and business through groups option. The possible reason for this fast pace adoption, can be the increased screen time during lockdown and also uncertainty about formal job, rampant pay cuts, Work From Home culture everything forced for an alternative method of business. Therefore from the frequency table we can come to the point that, Covid-19 pandemic has an impact on the economic empowerment of women through FB groups. The null hypothesis(H_0) can be rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Frequency Distribution Table of Use of Facebook as only platform for business:

From when did you start selling/ buying products using Facebook groups?	FREQUENCY
During lockdown	46
Even before Covid-19	20
Post lockdown	11
Do you sell or buy products only using facebook?	FREQUENCY
No, I still use other methods for the purpose.	61
Yes, I have stopped buying/ selling products in other different methods, after using facebook groups.	20

(Table 2: Frequency Distribution Table of Use of Facebook as only platform for business) (Author's description)

Frequency Distribution Table of Customer satisfaction from Facebook as business platform:

The process of selling or buying products using facebook groups are hassle-free.	FREQUENCY
Neutral	23
Strongly disagree	7
Disagree	16
Agree	28
Strongly agree	9

(Table 3: Frequency Distribution Table of Customer satisfaction from Facebook as business platform) (Author's description)

From Table 2 and Table 3 it is evident that, although Facebook has not successfully place itself as an alternative to the conventional mode of business, but in near future, it can surpass the conventional methods, as it has got the customer satisfaction. Customer and seller's satisfaction are the two pivotal areas, that determine whether a particular mode of business will sustain in the long term or not. And the 'Live sessions' from the groups, the interaction through comments, the advertising through marketplace option in groups, help in the satisfaction.

So, from the above table, we can reject the second null hypothesis, and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_2).

III. CONCLUSION

Gender policies underscore a more prominent investment of women in the labour market, while the vulnerable section has been excluded by the social analysts for many years. This research calls attention to the way that simple occasions of the measurable swells in Female Work Participation Rates doesn't guarantee enabled women status, rather the nature of work included is likewise a significant determinant since business can decide the empowerment.

The human advancement of the nation will go through a significant positive change with instructed and empowered women. Given that 33% of the assessed 480 million positions in the nation are being performed by women, the greater part of the publicizing is focused towards the homemaker. women's' work and business designs have an important part for women empowerment, as they are key variables adding to their financial strengthening which, thus, impact women's general situation in the public arena. Wit economic empowerment comes economic stability, and economic responsibility, and independence and therefore equal

position in the society.

From the above study and the findings from primary research, it is evident that Facebook has proven itself as a successful tool to cumulate the informal business sector in West Bengal. And has positively approached to the growth and economic empowerment of women. Although in West Bengal, the ratio of working women has always been satisfactory, in comparison to the others states of the nation. But almost a two-year long lockdown has changed the mode of business for the women from Self Help groups to the FB live sessions, the journey was quite noteworthy. And for the similar cause, the adoption rate of FB has increased in the rural areas, which shows a ray of light to the digitization that has started in the yesteryear.

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