

The Power of Digital Influence: How Female Social Media Influencers Empowered Women in India

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Abstract

The rise of female social media influencers has redefined women's empowerment in India, shaping economic, social, and political discourse. Digital platforms have provided women with unprecedented opportunities to assert agency, challenge societal norms, and create independent identities. This study critically examines the role of female influencers in facilitating empowerment by fostering entrepreneurship, promoting awareness of safety and security, and encouraging political participation. Economic empowerment is analyzed through the lens of female entrepreneurs who leverage social media for business growth, financial independence, and skill development. Influencers play a pivotal role in creating digital marketplaces, advocating financial literacy, and breaking barriers to women's participation in traditionally male-dominated sectors. Social empowerment is explored through the narratives of influencers who raise awareness about safety, self-defense, and digital literacy, equipping women with the tools to navigate both online and offline spaces securely. Political empowerment is assessed by examining the role of women in politics and influential social media figures who shape discourse, inspire civic engagement, and redefine leadership aspirations. This research adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative content analysis with surveys and interviews to assess the impact of these influencers. By analyzing engagement metrics, discourse patterns, and audience perceptions, the study identifies the tangible ways in which digital influence translates into empowerment. Positioned within India's socio-political context, this research contributes to academic debates on gender and digital media, arguing that female social media influencers are instrumental in challenging patriarchal structures and fostering a more inclusive public sphere.

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Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed an unprecedented transformation in the way women assert their agency, challenge societal norms, and carve out independent identities. The advent of digital media has disrupted traditional power structures, placing social influence in the hands of those who effectively leverage online platforms. In India, where patriarchy has historically constrained women's economic, social, and political participation, female social media influencers have emerged as formidable agents of change. These digital trailblazers are not just redefining personal success but are also reshaping discourses on empowerment, financial independence, and leadership. As India transitions into a digitally driven society, the role of social media influencers in shaping public opinion, fostering entrepreneurship, and facilitating gender equality has gained scholarly attention. While much of the research on digital empowerment has focused on finance, business, and political influencers, this study broadens the scope by examining the intersection of spiritual influence and social change. Religious and cultural narratives have long played a pivotal role in shaping Indian society, and in this realm, female kathavachaks like Jaya Kishori represent a unique confluence of tradition and modernity. Unlike conventional religious figures who restrict their teachings to theological discussions, she uses digital platforms to normalize conversations on women's health, self-care, and menstrual hygiene—topics often considered taboo in orthodox spaces. This research critically examines how female influencers—across diverse domains such as finance, culinary arts, and spirituality—drive empowerment at multiple levels. Figures like Kabita Singh in the culinary space and Anushka Rathod in finance have leveraged social media to foster economic independence and financial literacy among women. Similarly, Jaya Kishori has redefined the role of women in religious discourse, proving that spiritual platforms can serve as tools for social awareness and gender empowerment.

Objectives of the Study

This paper seeks to investigate the impact of female social media influencers on women's empowerment in India through three key lenses:

1. Economic Empowerment: How influencers foster entrepreneurship and financial independence through digital platforms. Case studies of female content creators who have built self-sustaining careers.

2. Social and Cultural Empowerment: The role of digital influencers in challenging gender stereotypes. How social media is used to address safety, self-defense, and digital literacy.

3. Religious and Psychological Empowerment: How female kathavachaks like Jaya Kishori integrate spirituality with social awareness. How digital religious discourse helps break menstrual taboos through scientific explanations.

The digital era has opened new avenues for women in India, allowing them to participate in entrepreneurship, financial education, self-defense awareness, and social discourse (Kaushal, 2024). Social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and LinkedIn have empowered women to break gender norms and establish independent careers.

Female influencers fall into diverse categories, including:

Culinary influencers (e.g., Kabita Singh), who promote self-sufficiency and financial independence.

Finance influencers (e.g., Anushka Rathod), who educate women about wealth creation and investment.

Spiritual influencers (e.g., Jaya Kishori), who blend religious teachings with modern social awareness.

Economic Empowerment Through Digital Entrepreneurship

The rise of digital platforms has provided women with unprecedented opportunities for economic independence, and Kabita Singh, the founder of Kabita’s Kitchen, is a prime example of this transformation. Once a homemaker, Singh transitioned into a globally recognized culinary influencer with over 13.4 million YouTube subscribers, proving that digital media can be a powerful tool for women’s entrepreneurship. Through her content, she has monetized her culinary expertise, generating income from ad revenue, brand collaborations, and sponsorships. Beyond financial success, Singh’s journey underscores the empowerment potential of home-based digital businesses. Her platform has encouraged women to explore digital self-employment, providing them with an alternative to traditional career structures that often restrict flexibility. By leveraging YouTube’s vast audience, she has challenged gender stereotypes, proving that women can excel in digital entrepreneurship while maintaining work-life balance. Her impact has been widely recognized, culminating in her winning the National Creator Award in the Best Food Category in 2024. This accolade highlights her influence in the digital culinary space and reinforces the potential of women-led content creation in India. Singh has redefined how homemakers can transform domestic skills into thriving digital careers, inspiring a new generation of women to embrace financial autonomy and entrepreneurial innovation.

Financial Impact of Kabita’s Kitchen:

Metrics	Value
Estimated Net Worth	5-6 Crore
Annual Revenue	50 Lakh – 1 Crore
YouTube Subscribers	13.4 Million

(Source: DNA India, 2024)

Financial Literacy and Economic Independence

In a country where 73% of women lack financial independence (Statista, 2024), the role of financial influencers in bridging the knowledge gap has become crucial. Anushka Rathod, a former investment banker and CFA Level 2 candidate, has emerged as a leading voice in financial literacy, using social media to make investing, budgeting, and taxation accessible to a broader audience. With an engaging and simplified approach to finance, she has empowered women to make informed financial decisions, fostering economic independence. Rathod’s digital influence extends beyond finance; she actively challenges gender disparities in wealth creation, proving that financial literacy is not limited to corporate professionals but is essential for all individuals, particularly women. Her success is part of a broader trend, where 65% of India’s top-earning influencers are women (Forbes, 2024), highlighting the increasing role of female voices in financial education. By making financial concepts relatable through videos, storytelling, and humor, Rathod has encouraged young women to take control of their finances. Her work exemplifies how digital platforms can democratize financial knowledge, breaking barriers and ensuring that economic empowerment is no longer a privilege but a readily accessible resource for all women.

Social Media Reach of Anushka Rathod:

Platform	Follower
Youtube	510K
Instagram	1M+
Linkedin	300K+

(Source: Forbes, 2024)

Social and Religious Empowerment: Jaya Kishori’s Impact

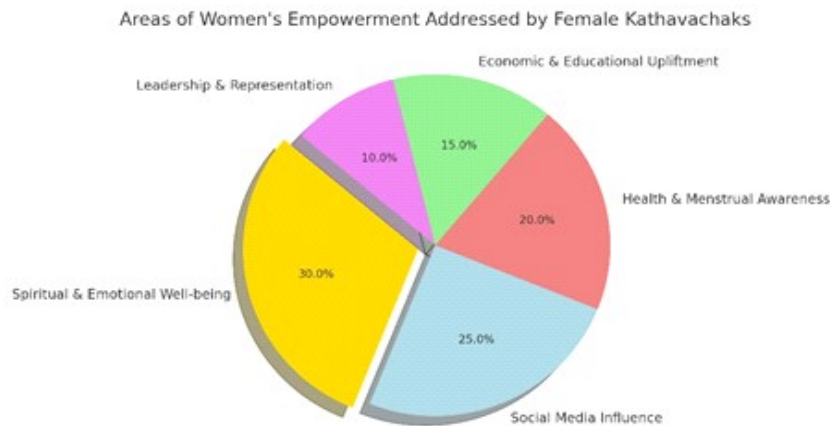
The Role of Female Kathavachaks as Digital Influencers also increases because to Historically, religious storytelling in India has been male-dominated. However, female kathavachaks like Jaya Kishori have redefined religious discourse, integrating traditional values with contemporary issues. Unlike conventional religious figures, she leverages social media to reach millions, normalizing discussions on topics like menstruation, self-care, and mental health. Jaya Kishori stands out as an influencer who merges spirituality with social awareness. She engages millions through kathas (religious discourses) while addressing women’s health, mental well-being, and menstrual hygiene. Breaking Menstrual Taboos Through Science and Indian traditions often restricts menstruating women from temples and social participation. Instead of rejecting these customs outright, Jaya Kishori reinterprets

them scientifically: Menstrual rest is necessary due to hormonal fluctuations. Energy conservation aligns with Ayurvedic principles. Sanitation concerns in ancient times led to the avoidance of communal spaces. Her discourse bridges the gap between tradition and modern medical science, making it easier for religious communities to accept scientific perspectives.

Engagement Statistics: Jaya Kishori’s Social Influence

Platform	Followers	Engagement Rate
Youtube	6.5 million	4.8%
Instagram	4.2 million	6.2%
Facebook	7Million	3.5%

Source: National Creators Award, 2024)



Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative analysis to assess the impact of female social media influencers on women’s empowerment. The methodology consists of the following components:

Qualitative Content Analysis : Analyzing narratives, discourse patterns, and themes in the digital content of female influencers like Jaya Kishori, Kabita Singh, and Anushka Rathod. Examining video transcripts, social media posts, and engagement metrics to understand their role in shaping perceptions of women’s empowerment. Identifying how these influencers integrate spirituality, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship into their digital presence.

Social Media Engagement Metrics: Follower Growth & Engagement Rates: Measuring audience interactions across platforms like YouTube, Instagram,

and LinkedIn. Video Views & Comment Analysis: Assessing how female influencers influence social discourse by evaluating comment trends and audience sentiment.

Trend Mapping: Using data from Statista, Forbes, and YouTube Analytics to track the rise of female influencers over the past decade.

Surveys and Interviews

Conducting online surveys with followers of Jaya Kishori, Kabita Singh, and Anushka Rathod to gauge their impact on women's empowerment. Interviews with Female Entrepreneurs of Prayagraj, Lucknow and Delhi who have benefited from financial literacy or business strategies shared by influencers. Case Studies on women who changed their financial, social, or spiritual outlook due to these influencers.

Statistical and Graphical Analysis: Using pie charts, line graphs, and engagement data to visualize the role of female influencers. Examining trends in digital feminism and gender representation on social media.

Relevance of This Research

This research aligns with the growing importance of digital media in gender empowerment, specifically in India's socio-political and economic context. The findings contribute to the following areas: Bridging the Gap Between Traditional and Digital Influence because Historically, religious discourse and financial education were male-dominated. The rise of female social media influencers represents a cultural shift where women lead digital discussions on these topics. Jaya Kishori's role as a female kathavachak demonstrates how spirituality can be leveraged for social awareness. Women's gain Financial Independence and Digital Entrepreneurship through Platforms like YouTube and Instagram have enabled women to achieve financial self-sufficiency. Kabita Singh and Anushka Rathod showcase how women entrepreneurs use digital tools to build brands and educate audiences. Social Change Through Digital Discourse by addressing menstruation through a scientific lens, Jaya Kishori normalizes health awareness in religious spaces. Digital feminism and female representation in leadership roles are strengthened through these influencers. This research highlights the transformational power of digital influence, arguing that female influencers are not just content creators but changemakers.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The findings of this research confirm that female social media influencers play a crucial role in women's empowerment across multiple sectors. Their influence extends beyond entertainment and lifestyle, impacting financial literacy,

entrepreneurship, social awareness, and religious discourse. Economic Impact – Influencers like Anushka Rathod and Kabita Singh have transformed financial education and home-based businesses, enabling women to achieve financial independence. Social Impact – Figures like Jaya Kishori use social media to discuss health, menstruation, and self-care, breaking taboos while preserving cultural traditions. Political and Digital Engagement – Influencers play a role in shaping political opinions and civic participation, encouraging women’s leadership in digital spaces. Female influencers have become key players in reshaping patriarchal narratives and promoting an inclusive public discourse through digital platforms.

Suggestions for Future Policy and Research

1. Encouraging Women’s Participation in Digital Platforms: Governments and organizations should provide digital literacy training to women, especially in rural areas, to increase participation in online entrepreneurship.
2. Incorporating Digital Influence into Policy-Making: Policymakers should recognize social media influencers as stakeholders in gender policies and initiatives. Menstrual health awareness campaigns can integrate digital influencers to normalize discussions in traditional communities.
3. Supporting Female Leadership in Spiritual and Financial Sectors: Religious and financial institutions should promote women-led digital initiatives to ensure equal representation. Funding programs for women entrepreneurs in the digital sector can help expand their reach and economic impact.
4. Further Research on Digital Influence Trends; Future studies can explore how digital female influencers impact rural communities. Research on gender biases in digital platforms can provide insights into the challenges female influencers face.

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