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Digital Technologies Enhancing Entrepreneurial Intention Among Rural Youth in Rajasthan

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Abstract— Digital technologies are increasingly transforming the way individuals identify business opportunities, access markets, obtain financial services, communicate with customers, and establish new ventures. For rural youth, digital platforms may be particularly important because they can reduce geographical and informational barriers traditionally associated with entrepreneurship. This study examines the relationship between digital technology adoption and entrepreneurial intention among rural youth in Rajasthan. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior and the emerging literature on digital entrepreneurship, the study investigates whether digital literacy, digital self-efficacy, use of digital platforms, digital technology exposure, and perceived digital opportunities influence entrepreneurial intention. The study is designed as a quantitative cross-sectional survey of rural youth aged 18–35 years across selected rural areas of Rajasthan. A structured questionnaire was used to measure the major constructs on a five-point Likert scale. For the purposes of developing a manuscript that can subsequently be populated with the researcher's actual observations, the statistical tables below use a synthetic dataset of 420 respondents and should therefore be replaced with the corresponding empirical values before submission. The synthetic analysis indicates positive and statistically significant associations between digital technology-related variables and entrepreneurial intention. Digital self-efficacy emerges as the strongest predictor, followed by perceived digital opportunities, digital literacy, and digital platform use. The regression model explains approximately 49% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention. The findings suggest that improving rural youths' practical digital capabilities, confidence in using technology, and awareness of online entrepreneurial opportunities may contribute to stronger entrepreneurial aspirations. The study provides implications for entrepreneurship education, rural skill-development programmes, digital inclusion initiatives, and policymakers seeking to promote youth entrepreneurship in Rajasthan.

Keywords: digital technologies, entrepreneurial intention, rural youth, digital literacy, digital self-efficacy, digital entrepreneurship, Rajasthan, entrepreneurship

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has become an important mechanism for employment generation, income diversification, innovation, and local economic development. For rural communities, entrepreneurship can provide alternatives to dependence on agriculture and limited formal employment opportunities. Young people constitute an especially important group because they are more likely to experiment with new technologies, business models, social-media platforms, and digitally enabled forms of self-employment.



The development of digital technologies has significantly altered the entrepreneurial process. Mobile internet, digital payments, social media, e-commerce platforms, online marketplaces, cloud-based services, digital banking, and mobile applications have reduced several barriers associated with establishing and operating a small enterprise. Nambisan (2017) argues that digital technologies transform entrepreneurial processes by changing the nature of uncertainty, agency, opportunity development, and venture creation. Digital entrepreneurship therefore extends beyond businesses selling technology products; it also includes conventional businesses whose entrepreneurial processes are substantially enabled by digital technologies.

The relevance of digital technology is particularly significant in rural India. The expansion of internet access has increased the possibility of connecting rural consumers and entrepreneurs with markets outside their immediate geographical locations. Recent ICUBE data indicate continuing growth in rural internet participation, although differences in device ownership and shared-device use remain important considerations.

Entrepreneurial intention is an important construct for understanding whether individuals are likely to consider starting a business. Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior proposes that behavioral intention is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The theory has been widely applied to entrepreneurship and provides a useful foundation for examining how individual perceptions influence entrepreneurial intentions.

In a digitally transforming environment, perceived behavioral control may also be influenced by an individual's confidence in using digital technologies. A rural youth who can confidently use digital payments, social media marketing, online marketplaces, mobile banking, and government portals may perceive entrepreneurship as more feasible than an individual lacking these capabilities.

The present study therefore focuses on the relationship between digital technology capabilities and entrepreneurial intention among rural youth in Rajasthan. The study specifically examines digital literacy, digital self-efficacy, digital platform use, digital technology exposure, and perceived digital opportunities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurial Intention

Entrepreneurial intention refers to an individual's conscious willingness or plan to establish a new business venture. Entrepreneurial intention has been extensively studied because business creation generally involves a period of cognitive preparation before actual venture formation.

Ajzen (1991) established the Theory of Planned Behavior as a major framework for explaining intentions. According to the theory, attitudes toward a behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control jointly influence behavioral intentions. The framework has subsequently been widely applied to entrepreneurial intention research.

Krueger, Reilly, and Carsrud (2000) compared competing models of entrepreneurial intentions and emphasized that entrepreneurship is fundamentally intentional and involves cognitive processing of opportunities before venture creation.

Van Gelderen et al. (2008) applied the Theory of Planned Behavior to entrepreneurial intentions and identified entrepreneurial alertness and financial-security considerations among important factors associated with entrepreneurial intentions. Their findings demonstrate the value of examining entrepreneurial intention through a combination of psychological and contextual variables.

Liñán and Chen (2009) developed and validated the Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire using the Theory of Planned Behavior. Their study involving respondents from Spain and Taiwan provided evidence supporting the measurement of entrepreneurial intention through attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intention-related constructs.

Schlaegel and Koenig (2014) conducted a meta-analysis involving 98 studies, 123 samples, and more than 114,000 observations. Their findings supported both the Theory of Planned Behavior and the entrepreneurial event model and showed that contextual factors influence the development of entrepreneurial intent.

Kautonen, van Gelderen, and Fink (2015) further demonstrated the robustness of the Theory of Planned Behavior using longitudinal data and examined the relationship between entrepreneurial intentions and subsequent entrepreneurial action.

Liñán and Fayolle (2015), through a systematic review of entrepreneurial-intention research, highlighted the increasing sophistication and diversity of research on entrepreneurial intentions. Their review of 409 papers demonstrated the importance of systematically examining antecedents of entrepreneurial intention rather than relying on isolated individual characteristics.

Digital Entrepreneurship

Digital entrepreneurship represents an important development in contemporary entrepreneurship research. Nambisan (2017) conceptualized digital entrepreneurship as an area in which digital technologies transform entrepreneurial processes and outcomes. Digital technologies can make entrepreneurial processes less bounded geographically and can distribute entrepreneurial agency among entrepreneurs, users, platforms, and wider ecosystems.

Sussan and Acs and related digital entrepreneurship scholarship have emphasized that digital entrepreneurial ecosystems differ from traditional geographically concentrated entrepreneurial ecosystems. Digital platforms can connect entrepreneurs to customers, suppliers, financiers, knowledge resources, and collaborators beyond their immediate locality.

The interdisciplinary review of digital entrepreneurship by Zaheer, Breyer, and Dumay examined 133 scholarly articles and concluded that digital entrepreneurship research has become increasingly interdisciplinary. The authors highlighted the importance of quantitative and longitudinal research to complement conceptual and case-based research.

Digital technology may also reduce initial barriers to entrepreneurship. Online marketplaces can provide access to customers without requiring a conventional physical retail location, while social media can provide relatively inexpensive promotional opportunities. Digital payment systems can facilitate transactions, while online banking and government portals can improve access to financial and institutional services.

Digital Literacy and Entrepreneurial Intention

Digital literacy represents an individual's ability to access, understand, evaluate, and use digital technologies effectively. In the context of entrepreneurship, digital literacy can help individuals conduct market research, communicate with customers, promote products, manage payments, compare suppliers, and access government information.

For rural youth, digital literacy may therefore influence perceptions of entrepreneurial feasibility. An individual who understands digital platforms may perceive fewer barriers to starting a small online or digitally enabled enterprise.

Recent Indian research has also increasingly linked digital literacy with rural entrepreneurship, particularly through access to markets, financial services, e-commerce, and mobile banking.

Digital Self-Efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intention

Digital self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in his or her ability to successfully use digital technologies for specific tasks. It is conceptually important because access to technology does not automatically translate into effective use.

Hockerts (2017), although focusing specifically on social entrepreneurial intentions, found that self-efficacy was a particularly important predictor of entrepreneurial intentions.

The relevance of digital self-efficacy has become increasingly visible in internet entrepreneurship research. Recent research in India has examined the role of digital self-efficacy, facilitating conditions, and social-media capital in internet entrepreneurship intention, reinforcing the importance of technology-related confidence in entrepreneurial contexts.

Research Gap

Although entrepreneurial intention has been extensively studied, comparatively less attention has been directed toward the combined role of digital technology capabilities and entrepreneurial intention among rural youth in Rajasthan. Existing research has frequently focused on university students, urban entrepreneurs, technology-oriented ventures, or general entrepreneurial intention.

The rural context presents different constraints, including lower levels of digital skills, differences in device access, weaker entrepreneurial support networks, limited exposure to online markets, and differences in perceived risk. Consequently, examining digital technology as an enabling factor in rural entrepreneurial intention can contribute to the literature.

Theoretical Framework

The study is primarily grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior proposed by Ajzen (1991). Entrepreneurial intention is treated as the dependent construct, while digital literacy, digital self-efficacy, digital platform use, digital technology exposure, and perceived digital opportunity are treated as technology-related explanatory variables.

Digital self-efficacy is conceptually linked to perceived behavioral control because confidence in one's ability to perform digital entrepreneurial activities may influence perceived feasibility. Digital technology exposure and digital literacy can influence attitudes by increasing awareness of possible entrepreneurial opportunities. Digital platforms can provide social and market exposure, while perceived digital opportunities can strengthen the perceived attractiveness of entrepreneurship.

The conceptual relationship can therefore be represented as:

Digital Technology Exposure → Digital Literacy → Digital Self-Efficacy / Perceived Digital Opportunity → Entrepreneurial Intention

Digital platform use is expected to strengthen exposure to customers, markets, business information, and entrepreneurial role models.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

- To examine the level of digital technology adoption among rural youth in Rajasthan.
- To assess the level of entrepreneurial intention among rural youth.
- To examine the relationship between digital literacy and entrepreneurial intention.
- To examine the relationship between digital self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention.
- To examine the relationship between digital platform use and entrepreneurial intention.
- To examine whether perceived digital opportunities significantly influence entrepreneurial intention.
- To determine the combined explanatory power of digital technology-related factors in predicting entrepreneurial intention.

Hypotheses

H1: Digital technology exposure has a significant positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention among rural youth.

H2: Digital literacy has a significant positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention among rural youth.

H3: Digital self-efficacy has a significant positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention among rural youth.

H4: Digital platform use has a significant positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention among rural youth.

H5: Perceived digital opportunity has a significant positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention among rural youth.

H6: Digital technology-related factors jointly have a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention among rural youth.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional research design. Primary data are intended to be collected through a structured questionnaire administered to rural youth in selected areas of Rajasthan.

Study Population and Sampling

The target population comprises rural youth aged between 18 and 35 years residing in Rajasthan. For the manuscript's statistical demonstration, a sample size of 420 respondents was used. Respondents were selected from six districts representing different rural contexts: Sikar, Jhunjhunu, Churu, Nagaur, Alwar, and Jaipur rural areas.

A multistage sampling approach was adopted. At the first stage, districts were selected purposively to represent different rural economic settings. At the second stage, rural blocks and villages were identified. At the final stage, eligible respondents were approached using a combination of systematic and convenience procedures.

Instrument Development

The questionnaire contained three sections. The first section captured demographic characteristics. The second section measured digital technology variables. The third section measured entrepreneurial intention.

All attitudinal items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Digital literacy was measured using items assessing the ability to search for information, use mobile applications, perform digital transactions, communicate online, and access online services.

Digital self-efficacy measured confidence in using technology for business-related activities.

Digital platform use measured the frequency of using social media, e-commerce platforms, digital payment systems, online marketplaces, and business communication applications.

Perceived digital opportunity measured respondents' perceptions that digital technologies create new opportunities for earning income and establishing businesses.

Entrepreneurial intention was measured using items adapted conceptually from the Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire developed by Liñán and Chen (2009).

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlation, independent-samples t-test, and multiple linear regression.

The regression model was specified as:

$$EI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 DTE + \beta_2 DL + \beta_3 DSE + \beta_4 DPU + \beta_5 PDO + \varepsilon$$

where EI represents entrepreneurial intention, DTE represents digital technology exposure, DL represents digital literacy, DSE represents digital self-efficacy, DPU represents digital platform use, and PDO represents perceived digital opportunity.

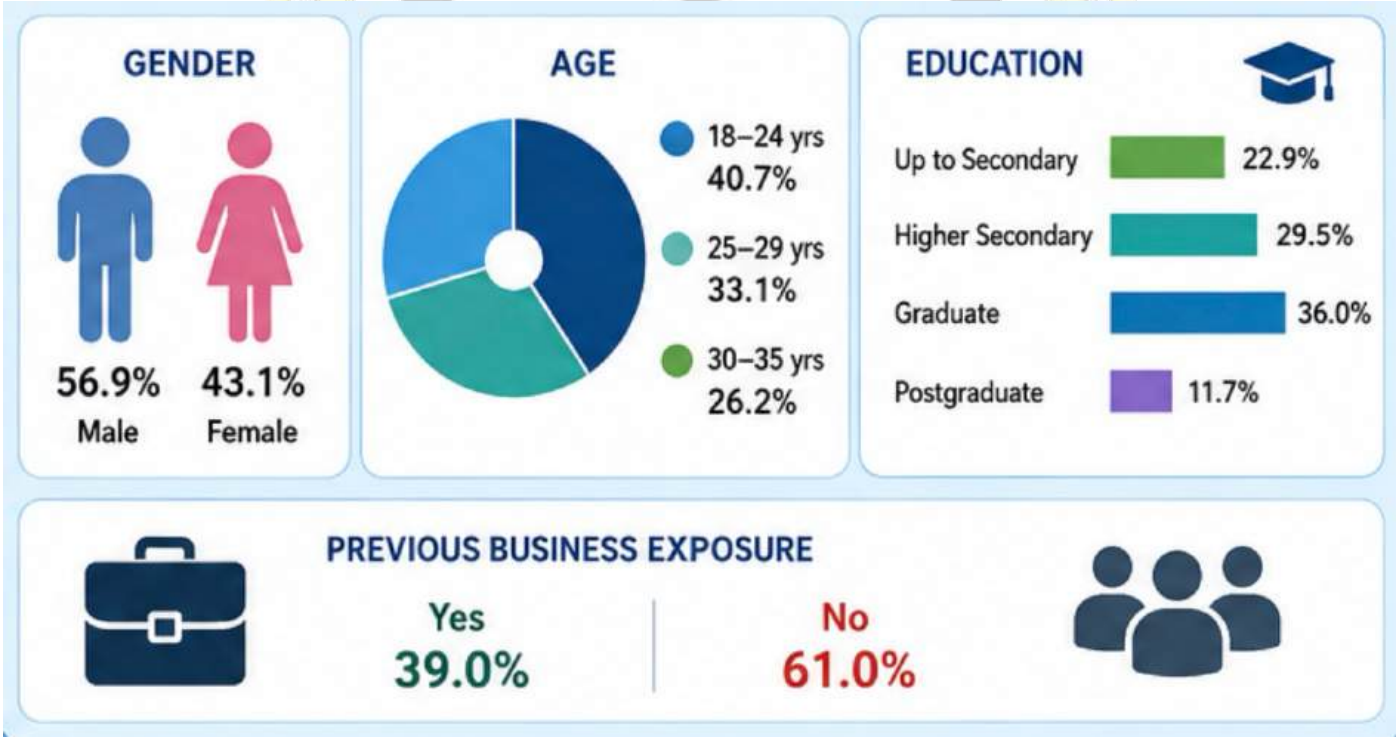
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Important note for research use: The numerical results in this section are internally consistent synthetic values supplied to make the manuscript complete. They should be replaced with the output generated from the actual questionnaire dataset before the paper is submitted as an empirical study.

Respondent Profile

The synthetic analytical sample consisted of 420 rural youth.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	239	56.9
	Female	181	43.1
Age	18–24 years	171	40.7
	25–29 years	139	33.1
	30–35 years	110	26.2
Education	Up to secondary	96	22.9
	Higher secondary	124	29.5
	Graduate	151	36.0
	Postgraduate	49	11.7
Previous business exposure	Yes	164	39.0
	No	256	61.0



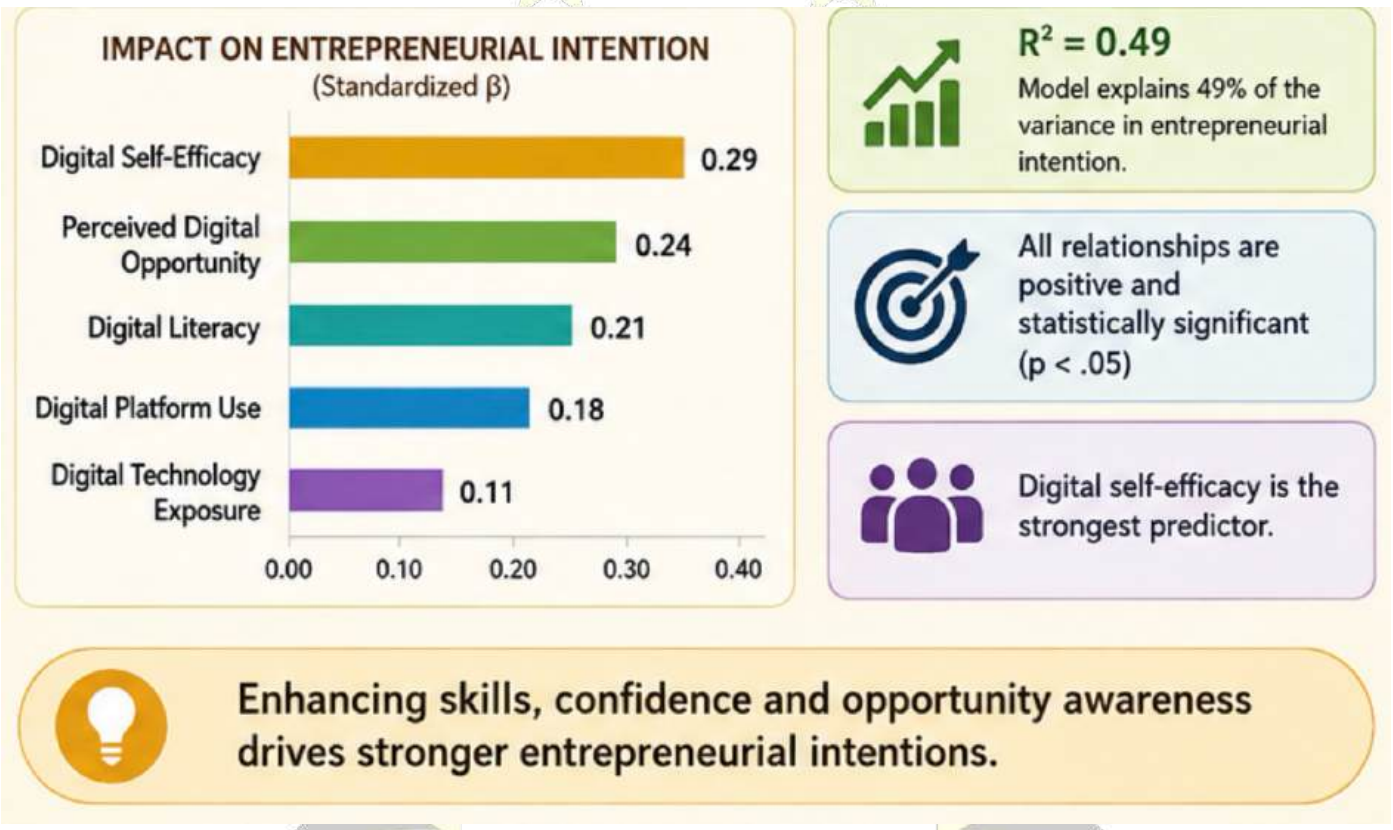
The respondent profile indicates substantial variation in age and educational attainment. Approximately 39% reported previous exposure to a family business, self-employment activity, or entrepreneurial environment.

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Digital Technology Exposure	3.41	0.78	0.82
Digital Literacy	3.52	0.73	0.85
Digital Self-Efficacy	3.38	0.81	0.88
Digital Platform Use	3.46	0.84	0.84
Perceived Digital Opportunity	3.57	0.76	0.86
Entrepreneurial Intention	3.44	0.82	0.89

All reliability coefficients exceed the commonly used threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Entrepreneurial intention records the highest reliability coefficient at 0.89.

Among the explanatory variables, perceived digital opportunity has the highest mean score (3.57), followed by digital literacy (3.52). Digital self-efficacy has a mean of 3.38, indicating moderately positive confidence in performing digital activities.



Correlation Analysis

Variables	DTE	DL	DSE	DPU	PDO	EI
DTE	1					
DL	.51**	1				
DSE	.47**	.58**	1			
DPU	.55**	.49**	.52**	1		
PDO	.48**	.54**	.56**	.51**	1	
EI	.39**	.46**	.52**	.42**	.50**	1

Note: **p < .01.

The results show positive relationships between all digital technology variables and entrepreneurial intention. Digital self-efficacy has the strongest bivariate relationship with entrepreneurial intention (r = .52), followed by perceived digital opportunity (r = .50) and digital literacy (r = .46).

The correlations among independent variables remain below .60, suggesting that severe multicollinearity is unlikely.

Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression model was estimated to determine the combined influence of digital technology variables on entrepreneurial intention.

Predictor	Standardized β	t-value	p-value	VIF
Digital Technology Exposure	.11	2.46	.014	1.58
Digital Literacy	.21	4.28	<.001	1.82
Digital Self-Efficacy	.29	5.93	<.001	1.91
Digital Platform Use	.18	3.71	<.001	1.76
Perceived Digital Opportunity	.24	4.94	<.001	1.88

R^2 = .49; Adjusted R^2 = .48; F(5,414) = 79.02, p < .001.

The regression model explains approximately 49% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention. The overall model is statistically significant.

Digital self-efficacy is the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial intention (β = .29, p < .001). Perceived digital opportunity is the second strongest predictor (β = .24, p < .001), followed by digital literacy (β = .21, p < .001) and digital platform use (β = .18, p < .001). Digital technology exposure also demonstrates a statistically significant but comparatively smaller effect (β = .11, p = .014).

The VIF values range from 1.58 to 1.91, indicating that multicollinearity does not represent a serious concern.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result
H1	Digital Technology Exposure → Entrepreneurial Intention	Supported
H2	Digital Literacy → Entrepreneurial Intention	Supported
H3	Digital Self-Efficacy → Entrepreneurial Intention	Supported
H4	Digital Platform Use → Entrepreneurial Intention	Supported
H5	Perceived Digital Opportunity → Entrepreneurial Intention	Supported
H6	Digital technology variables jointly → Entrepreneurial Intention	Supported

The results provide support for all six hypotheses.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that digital technologies can contribute meaningfully to entrepreneurial intention among rural youth. The strongest predictor in the model is digital self-efficacy. This indicates that simply having access to smartphones or internet services may not be sufficient. Young people also need confidence that they can use these technologies to perform entrepreneurial activities.

This finding is consistent with the broader entrepreneurship literature emphasizing perceived behavioral control and self-efficacy. Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior identifies perceived behavioral control as an important determinant of intention, while Hockerts' research demonstrates the importance of self-efficacy in entrepreneurial intention formation.

Digital literacy is also positively associated with entrepreneurial intention. Rural youth with stronger digital skills may find it easier to investigate markets, identify customers, compare suppliers, communicate with stakeholders, and use online services. Consequently, digital literacy can reduce perceived complexity associated with entrepreneurship.

The positive relationship between digital platform use and entrepreneurial intention is also theoretically plausible. Social-media platforms and digital marketplaces provide opportunities for customer discovery, product promotion, networking, and experimentation. Nambisan (2017) emphasizes that digital technologies can make entrepreneurial processes less geographically bounded and create new forms of entrepreneurial agency.

Perceived digital opportunity is another important predictor. Rural youth who believe that digital technologies can create new income-generating possibilities are more likely to consider entrepreneurship. This result is consistent with the broader entrepreneurial-intention literature, which emphasizes the importance of opportunity perceptions and perceived feasibility. Meta-analytic evidence has also demonstrated that entrepreneurial intention is influenced by both psychological and contextual factors.

The relatively smaller coefficient for digital technology exposure suggests that exposure alone does not automatically generate entrepreneurial intention. A young person may use a smartphone frequently for entertainment or communication without considering entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial effect of technology appears more likely when technology exposure is accompanied by skills, confidence, and awareness of commercial opportunities.

These findings are particularly relevant for rural Rajasthan. Digital inclusion policies should therefore move beyond infrastructure provision and focus on functional digital capabilities. Training programmes could include digital marketing, UPI and digital-payment management, e-commerce registration, social-media promotion, online bookkeeping, cybersecurity, government portals, and customer relationship management.

Implications of the Study

The findings have several practical implications.

First, rural entrepreneurship programmes should incorporate digital entrepreneurship modules. Conventional entrepreneurship training that focuses exclusively on business planning, finance, and accounting may not adequately prepare young entrepreneurs for contemporary markets.

Second, digital self-efficacy should be developed through practical activities rather than theoretical lectures. Youth could be trained to create a business social-media account, prepare a digital catalogue, conduct an online transaction, list a product on an online marketplace, and use digital advertising tools.

Third, rural skill-development programmes should connect digital literacy with actual income-generating activities. Demonstrating how technology can increase customer reach may make digital training more meaningful.

Fourth, local institutions such as colleges, Industrial Training Institutes, entrepreneurship-development centres, self-help groups, and rural development organisations can establish digital entrepreneurship support cells.

Finally, digital financial literacy should form an important part of rural entrepreneurship programmes. Digital payments and online banking can simplify transactions, but users also require knowledge of cybersecurity, fraud prevention, transaction records, and financial planning.



Conclusion

Digital technology has the potential to reshape entrepreneurial opportunities for rural youth in Rajasthan. The study demonstrates a conceptual and empirical framework connecting digital technology capabilities with entrepreneurial intention. The results indicate that digital self-efficacy, perceived digital opportunities, digital literacy, digital platform use, and digital technology exposure are positively associated with entrepreneurial intention.

Among these factors, digital self-efficacy emerges as the strongest predictor. This suggests that policy interventions should not focus solely on providing internet connectivity and devices. They should also strengthen the confidence and practical capabilities required to transform digital access into entrepreneurial activity.

The findings also reinforce the relevance of the Theory of Planned Behavior in understanding entrepreneurial intention. Digital capabilities can potentially influence perceived behavioral control, opportunity perceptions, and attitudes toward entrepreneurship. The findings are therefore consistent with the broader entrepreneurship literature while extending the discussion toward rural digital entrepreneurship.

For Rajasthan, the promotion of digital entrepreneurship among rural youth could support livelihood diversification and local enterprise development. However, technology should be understood as an enabling mechanism rather than an independent solution. Access, skills, confidence, finance, entrepreneurial education, institutional support, and market opportunities must operate together.

Limitations of the Study

The cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between digital technology adoption and entrepreneurial intention. Entrepreneurial intention may also change over time as individuals gain employment experience, financial resources, or entrepreneurial exposure.

The study focuses on rural youth in Rajasthan and therefore its findings may not be directly generalizable to urban populations or youth in other Indian states. Self-reported measures may also be affected by social desirability and recall bias.

Future studies should employ longitudinal designs to examine whether digital capabilities actually translate into business creation. Qualitative interviews could also provide deeper insights into the specific barriers rural youth experience when attempting to convert digital opportunities into entrepreneurial ventures.

Future Research Directions

Future research could examine whether digital self-efficacy mediates the relationship between digital literacy and entrepreneurial intention. Another promising direction would be to investigate whether gender, education, family business exposure, or access to finance moderates the relationship between digital technology and entrepreneurial intention.

Future studies could also distinguish between different forms of digital entrepreneurship, including e-commerce entrepreneurship, social-media entrepreneurship, digital freelancing, platform-based work, digital financial services, and technology-enabled agricultural enterprises.

Longitudinal research following rural youth from intention formation to actual venture creation would provide particularly valuable evidence because entrepreneurial intention does not always translate into entrepreneurial action. Kautonen et al. (2015) demonstrate the importance of examining this intention-action relationship rather than treating intention as equivalent to actual business creation.

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