

Amazing Digital Women Entrepreneurs Theory and The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Beauty Industry

Saurav Kumar^{1*}

K.B Womens College¹

saurav1980kumar@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author

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Abstract:

"Amazing digital women entrepreneur's theory" was developed by Saurav Kumar. This theory states that digitalization is not an escape way for women entrepreneurs in prominent economic nations from the glass ceiling effect; rather, it is their capability to adopt digitalization more efficiently in comparison to their counterparts, the men. The term "Amazing digital women entrepreneurs" was coined by Saurav Kumar. Worldwide, women as homemakers stand out as the most suited reference of a complete managerial profile, handling purchases, appointments, budget control, and stock inventory with hardly any faults. However, for decades there has not been a prominent number evidencing their contribution as entrepreneurs in the world economy. This condition is changing, with a rise in their numbers in the digitalization age, as digital technology has empowered them to overcome barriers often called the glass ceiling effect. Digitalization is rapidly reshaping business operations by creating new avenues for growth and innovation. Some researchers pose digitalization as an escape way for women entrepreneurs to avoid obstacles, while others argue otherwise. This paper argues whether digitalization serves as an escape way for women entrepreneurs from the glass ceiling effect or reflects their capability to adopt digitalization more efficiently than men, and also examines the impact of artificial intelligence on the beauty industry. This research identifies reasons for the growth of women entrepreneurs in prominent economic nations during the digitalization age by studying them through four leadership theories, while also examining AI's impact on the beauty industry. Evidence confirms the existence of women entrepreneurs across transformative, servant, skill, and situational leadership theories. Additionally, beauty tech, by capitalizing on AI and big data, is becoming a powerful tool for brands to meet consumer expectations while boosting competitiveness in a crowded market.

Keywords: Beauty Industry, Digitalization, Global Women Entrepreneurship, Leadership Theories

Introduction

Stating that when 19th-century French painter Paul Delaroché first saw a photograph, he declared, "From today, painting is dead!", reflects early anxieties about technological change. However, painting remains very much alive, illustrating that such claims were overstated. Similarly, in the modern era, digitalization has not replaced creativity but has reshaped and enhanced it.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this shift, making digital transformation a necessity for organizations (S, A., & R, I., 2021). In recent decades, digitalization has rapidly increased data availability and driven the development of new technologies, fundamentally transforming how businesses operate and engage with customers.

Despite these advancements, structural barriers such as the glass ceiling persist. Initially conceptualized to explain challenges faced by women executives—including gender discrimination, family responsibilities, and limited mentoring opportunities (Morrison et al., 1987), these barriers remain evident in contemporary contexts. While digital transformation offers new opportunities for women, it has not eliminated the obstacles preventing their advancement into leadership roles. As noted by Alice Eagly, women continue to face greater resistance to authority and success than their male counterparts, although their representation in leadership is gradually increasing.

Extensive research highlights the positive impact of women’s leadership, including improved productivity, collaboration, and organizational commitment (American Psychological Association – [apa.org](https://www.apa.org)). Women leaders are often characterized by adaptability, resilience, and strong interpersonal skills (Ghaus-Kelley, 2014; Flaxman, 2023; White et al., 2010), alongside leadership styles that emphasize inclusivity, flexibility, and emotional awareness (Moyo et al., 2020; Mert, 2021). These attributes are particularly relevant in the digital era, where innovation depends on integrating technological capabilities with human-centered approaches.

In entrepreneurship, digitalization has created new opportunities by lowering entry barriers and enabling access to global markets. Since the information technology boom of the 1990s, women have increasingly leveraged the Internet to establish businesses, particularly in developed economies such as the United States (Carlassare, 2000) and the United Kingdom, where female-led digital ventures have gained visibility (Forson & Ozbilgin, 2003). Although the broader technology sector remains male-dominated (Grundy, 1996), the Internet has provided a relatively accessible space for women entrepreneurs, even being perceived as more “feminine” compared to other computing domains (Fitzpatrick, 2000).

Digital tools such as social media, e-commerce, and digital payments have further expanded opportunities for women entrepreneurs by enabling access to wider networks of customers and partners (Rajahonka & Villman, 2019). However, these benefits are unevenly distributed, as the global digital gender divide persists, particularly in developing regions, with notable gaps in Internet usage in least developed countries and Africa (eulacfoundation.org).

Although existing studies portray women as increasingly successful entrepreneurs contributing to economic and social development (Kumar, S. 2023; Kumar, S. 2024), they do not adequately explain the rise in female-led businesses during the digitalization era. It remains unclear whether digitalization serves as an “escape route” from traditional barriers such as the glass ceiling, or whether women demonstrate a stronger capacity to adopt and utilize digital technologies compared to men.

Furthermore, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) introduce new dynamics, particularly in industries like the beauty sector, where innovation and personalization are critical. While digital transformation presents significant opportunities, it also poses challenges for both established firms and new entrants seeking to remain competitive. Therefore, this study examines whether digitalization enables women entrepreneurs in major economies to overcome the glass ceiling or reflects gender differences in digital adoption capabilities. Additionally, it explores the impact of artificial intelligence on the beauty industry.

Literature Review

Women Entrepreneurship

Burch (2013) explains that women entrepreneurs see the world through a different lens and, in turn, do things differently. However, they face a huge equality gap. Except seven countries (Panama, Thailand, Ghana, Ecuador, Nigeria, Mexico, and Uganda), women participate in business in similar capacity to men; in some countries like Pakistan, they seldom take part at all. Financial institutions must do a better work of banking on women's potential by thinking innovatively and forging partnerships (Burch, 2013). Menon (2010) in her motivational book leads the journey of some of India's most admired women achievers who have made a difference to society. Her book connects issues like what makes the woman professional achiever, whether there is any level playing field for women, and whether males can learn from their female colleagues.

Sarfaraz et.al. (2014) evaluated that the degree at which entrepreneurship affects the economy depends on multiple factors including quality, gender composition, and type of entrepreneurial operations. Gender equality and female entrepreneurship are critical factors in economic development. Their paper manifested the relationship between gender-related development indices (introduced by the UN) and various stages of women entrepreneurial activity (created by GEM), recommending that female entrepreneurial activity is not significantly correlated with gender equality. Lall & Sahai (2008) recognized psychographic variables like degree of commitment, entrepreneurial obstacles, and future plan for expansion. The research recommended that although there has been considerable increase in number of women opting to work in family owned business, they still have undignified status and face more operational obstacles.

Singh (2018) identified causes and influencing factors affecting entry of women in entrepreneurship, including lack of interaction with successful entrepreneurs, social denial as women entrepreneurs, family liabilities, gender discrimination, missing network, and low priority set by bankers to provide loans. He recommended corrective measures such as promoting micro enterprises, loosening institutional framework, and projecting to support women entrepreneurs. Cohoon et. al. (2018) explained five financial and psychological factors motivating women to become entrepreneurs: desire to build wealth, wish to capitalize on own business ideas, appeal of start-up culture, long-standing desire to own their own company, and partnerships that were not welcome. The research emphasized that women are very much concerned about protecting intellectual capital, and mentoring is really critical to women.

Women Entrepreneurs and Glass Ceiling Effect in Current Era

Since the publication of the seminal book that coined the term "glass ceiling" (Morrison et.al. 1992), this memorable metaphor for the invisible barrier that impedes the senior management advancement of talented women professionals has become ubiquitous in management literature. By December 2010, the Amazon.com database had 242 books with "glass ceiling" in the title and 337 books incorporating the keyword phrase. Scholarly journals also disseminate information about the glass ceiling phenomenon by reporting numerous studies that confirm its existence inside large firms (Helfat et al. 2006). Many scholars suggest frustrated women executives often choose to leave the corporate world in order to escape the effects of the glass ceiling by forming their own small firms (Mattis, 2004).

Some researchers emphasize that the strategy of leaving the corporate world to escape gender bias often fails, since women business owners typically encounter other forms of systemic gender bias that constrain their performance. Based on gender, women business owners face a disadvantage in raising capital (Muravyev et al., 2009). Researchers suggest that a common motivation for professional women to leave corporate jobs and start their own firms is that self-employment gives them greater control over their careers and is a way to escape the glass ceiling phenomenon (Mattis, 2004), yet they still do not consider them to be entrepreneurs in their view.

According to a study by the National Foundation for Women Business Owners, 16 percent of women entrepreneurs cite a glass ceiling as a major motivation for becoming an entrepreneur (Coughlin & Thomas, 2002). While a paradigm shift doesn't happen overnight, it is the little steps that compel conscious effort to redefine the antiquated perceptions etched into our mindset, particularly termed the Glass ceiling effect, which is winding up itself now in this age of artificial intelligence and digitalization.

Leadership Theories

In "Leadership: Theory and Practice," Northouse (2022) states that transformational leadership emphasizes how leaders can motivate and inspire followers to achieve astonishing outcomes. Burns (1978) coined the concept, later clarified by Bass (1985) to differentiate between transformational and transactional leadership. Transformational leaders motivate followers through charisma, visionary thinking, and the ability to foster a sense of purpose and commitment (Jung & Avolio, 1999). Bass & Avolio (1993) define that organizational culture is dynamic and evolves over time, with leaders playing an important role in this evolution. Transformational leadership seeks to transform organizational culture by introducing a new vision and reshaping primary assumptions, values, and norms.

Servant leadership, introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf in "The Servant as Leader" (1970), focuses on the leader's role as a servant first, prioritizing the growth and well-being of followers over personal gains (Letizia, 2018). Greenleaf's inspiration came from Hermann Hesse's "Journey to the East," a story illustrating the impact of a character named Leo who serves a group of travellers with humility (Greenleaf, 2007). In "Antoine Frederic Ozanam," Sickinger (2017) depicts that servant leadership is embedded in Christian teachings, characterized by listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community.

Situational leadership theory, developed by Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard in the 1970s, affirms that effective leadership is contingent upon situational factors rather than intrinsic traits of the leader (Arenas et al., 2017). Graeff (1983) described the core concept as having no one-size-fits-all approach to leadership. Northouse (2022) explains the skills approach to leadership as focusing on developing specific competencies: technical, human, and conceptual skills, emerging from Katz's work in 1955. Technical skills are important at lower and middle management, human skills are required at all levels, and conceptual skills are needed at upper management levels to articulate vision and long-term goals.

Digitalization and Entrepreneurship

Digitalization has become a natural phenomenon that integrates the appearance of the Internet and daily advances in computing (Kelley et al., 2017). Currently 70% of the prime companies listed in the Fortune 500 no longer exist, most having lost their place due to the digital revolution (Flaxman, 2023). Since 2011, the digital revolution has mocked large companies as startups and agile competitors find ways to transform their business (Salunkhe et al., 2012).

Digitalization has constructed business models described as holomorphic, where the entrepreneurial model would dominate and each individual would become the actor of their project (Cohon et al., 2018). The appearance of new sources of wealth, such as data or collective intelligence, is breaking traditional business models. Digitalization has entirely created short cuts in the entrepreneurial process (Sims & Morris, 2018). Digital technologies multiply connections, allowing one to easily reach formerly inaccessible markets, customers, or partners (Essien et al., 2021).

Digital technologies impact the speed of business strategy in four aspects: they accelerate product launches, enable faster decision making, quicken supply chain orchestration, and greatly accelerate the creation and mobilization of different networks (Elder et al., 2024). As per the Meesho impact study (Meesho, 2021), over 9 million women entrepreneurs in India have successfully built businesses using the platform. Productivity growth comes from the useful uses of technology spreading across various sectors of the economy. When the greatest advantages of new technologies have been exploited, productivity growth wanes (Statista, 2023).

Artificial Intelligence and the Beauty Market

Beauty Tech is described as the integration of beauty and technology, encompassing distinct advancements such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), big data, cloud computing, nanotechnology, and mobile technology within the beauty industry (Kim, 2008). Some studies argue Beauty Tech as wearable technology where electronics are embedded into beauty products (Vega et al., 2016). Other analysis focus on the use of AI and AR-powered apps, tools, and devices that can conduct skin analysis, virtually apply colour cosmetics, predict product matches, and provide proposals based on customer input (Statista, 2023). Some top beauty tech solutions include mobile apps that feign makeup, software that assesses skin or hair types, and smart mirrors in stores that facilitate virtual try-ons (Statista, 2023).

The demand for personalized beauty products is rapidly growing, driving the growth of AI within the beauty. Companies that excel in personalization yield 40% more revenue than competitors, with 76% of customers reporting that personalized communication boosts their consideration of a brand (McKinsey, 2021). Furthermore, 78% of customers stated that personalized content escalated the likelihood of a purchase and drove repeat engagement and loyalty (McKinsey, 2021). When productively implemented, personalization can lead to significant revenue growth from 5% to 15%, together with improvements in marketing efficiency of 10%-30% in a single channel (Boudet et al., 2019).

AI tools sanction consumers to make informed and personalized purchasing decisions about their skin and hair from home, where data is gathered through facial analysis or simple quizzes (Elder et al., 2024). Data gathered can include demographics, environmental data on UV exposure and pollution, skin conditions and sensitivities, and consumer preferences, habits, and lifestyle. Artificial Intelligence is then utilized to cross-reference this information with data about ingredients, functions, and skin conditions to give personalized product guidance (Georgievskaya, 2023). Case studies include Proven Beauty (machine learning with 527 product combinations), Curology (AI with board-certified dermatologists), Sallve (quizzes to collect skin data), and L'Oreal Paris (AR-powered Vichy Skin Consult AI and Virtual Try-On).

Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative research approach grounded in literature review and case study analysis. Secondary data were gathered from multiple sources, including academic journals, books, research reports, and corporate case studies. The analytical framework involves assessing women entrepreneurs through the lens of four leadership theories: transformational, servant, skills, and situational leadership. Furthermore, the study examines the influence of artificial intelligence on the beauty industry by analyzing case studies of key companies, namely Proven Beauty, Curology, Sallve, and L'Oréal Paris.

Result

Evidences of Women Entrepreneurs Across Four Leadership Theories

Servant Leadership

The success of women entrepreneurs in MSME sectors in Indonesia is influenced by opportunities involving self-confidence and compassion as indicators of servant leadership (Setyaningrum & Muafi, 2023); similarly, Oprah Winfrey at Harpo nurtured a culture committed to helping others, modelling servant leadership and constructing a servant leadership engine (Okun, 2016; Davis, 2022); and a study of 12 women business owners in four US states revealed that women enacted a compassionate love servant leadership style with a hefty authenticity orientation (Sims & Morris, 2018).

Skills Leadership

A survey of 385 women SME owners in Ogun, Nigeria found that informal entrepreneurial education is a positive and significant driver of businesswomen's management skills and entrepreneurial sustainability (Essien et al., 2021); female entrepreneurs are identified as self-directed learners who learn from challenges and problem solving (Wells, 2021); and women business owners show a higher propensity for innovation than males (Kelley et al., 2017), with studies confirming the importance of innovativeness for their entrepreneurial success (Nair, 2020; Huang et al., 2022).

Situational Leadership

Jyoti Naik of Lijjat Papad became president in 1999, constructed a sustainable business model employing over 43,000 women across 81 branches with a turnover exceeding USD 100 million (Salunkhe et al., 2012); Upma Kapoor founded Teal & Terra in the beauty industry, starting with Rs 7.5 lakh and achieving Rs 2.24 crore revenue within two years despite obstacles as a single mompreneur (Salunkhe, et al., 2012); and Kalpana Saroj revived the sick company Kamani Tubes, steering it back to profits, receiving the Padma Shri Award, and being appointed to the board of Bhartiya Mahila Bank (Salunkhe, et al., 2012).

Transformational Leadership

According to a number of academicians (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Gundersen et al., 2012; Raes et al., 2013), transformational leadership style matches more closely with the behavioural disposition of women, with most authors labelling it as "feminine leadership style" (Chao, 2011; Carless, 1998), and Kark and Vinkenbug explain that female behavioural traits such as sensitivity, emotionality and socialisation are also part of transformational leadership behaviour (Kark, 2004; Vinkenbug et al., 2011).

The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on the Beauty Industry (Beauty Tech)

Proven Beauty, a California based company, uses machine learning to cater consumers customized skin care products (Salunkhe, et al., 2012).. The PROVEN Skin Genome Quiz, developed by a dermatologist, encompasses questions about age, skin type, skin care concerns (i.e., fine lines, redness, dryness), current topical prescriptions, ethnic background, lifestyle (i.e., level of stress, diet and water intake, and sleep), and geographic location. Upon completing the PROVEN skin care website quiz, the company spawns a unique skin care regimen, including a cleanser, daily moisturizer with skin protection factor (SPF), and night cream tailored to the consumer's skin type and cosmetic needs (Salunkhe, et al., 2012).

Curology, a company from New Mexico founded in 2014, seeks to combine AI-based machine learning analysis with suggestions from board-certified dermatologists to provide customized blended skin care regimens (Ramakanth, 1988). The Curology assessment includes a personalized formula (Custom FormulaRx or Future-ProofRx) based on individual lifestyle factors and designed with the help of licensed dermatology providers (Boudet et al., 2019). Sallve, a Brazilian company founded in 2019, uses quizzes to collect information about different skin types and complaints and based on this data they develop products with superior efficiency, good for the skin and the environment, stimulated by real needs (Ramakanth, 1988).

L'Oreal Paris is a company that uses AR to power home-based applications. The company offers distinct online applications, such as the Vichy Skin Consult AI website, an antiaging and skin care simulation application for beauty and medical industries with credentials to detect, quantify, and predict changes in the skin. This system was developed using machine learning based on dermatologist-developed skin aging atlases and provides the consumer with information concerning their skin quality. After launching the application via their phone or computer camera, the consumer is given scores in the following categories: infraorbital lines, elasticity, generalized fine lines and deep rhytids, lack of radiance, hyperpigmentation, and pores. The program then offers a tailored product regimen to target weak areas in the skin.

L'Oreal also conducts a similar augmented-reality simulation called L'Oreal Virtual Try-On, allowing patients to try innumerable makeup products and styles. Both applications are accessible via the L'Oreal website (Elder et al., 2024).

Discussion

The findings support the "Amazing digital women entrepreneur's theory" developed by Saurav Kumar, which states that digitalization is not an escape way for women entrepreneurs from the Glass ceiling effect rather it is their capability to adopt digitalization more efficiently in comparison to their counterparts the men's. Evidence across four leadership theories confirms that women possess diverse leadership attributes including self-confidence, compassion, authenticity (Sims & Morris, 2018), self-directed learning (Wells, 2021), higher innovation propensity (Kelley et al., 2017), and behavioural traits aligning with transformational leadership (Helmich & Erzen, 1975).

The glass ceiling concept originally defined challenges faced by female executives including family responsibilities, gender discrimination, and lack of mentoring (Morrison et al., 1987). However, this research demonstrates that women have overcome these barriers through digital platforms, accessing new customers, suppliers, and partners (Rajahonka & Villman, 2019). As per the Meesho impact study (2021), over 9 million women entrepreneurs in India have built businesses using the platform, contradicting the view that self-employment is merely an escape way rather than a demonstration of business abilities (Mattis, 2004).

The success stories of Jyoti Naik, Upma Kapoor, and Kalpana Saroj exemplify situational leadership (Arenas et al., 2017). Despite immense obstacles, these women demonstrated resilience and adaptability, which are pivotal for women leaders to succeed (Flaxman, 2023). Their journeys reflect that female leaders bring creativity, communication, authenticity, and emotional sensitivity (White et al., 2010; Moyo et al., 2020). Oprah Winfrey's servant leadership further confirms that women adopt a flexible, democratic approach with attention to detail (Mert, 2021).

Regarding AI in the beauty industry, beauty tech is turning into a powerful tool for brands to meet consumer expectations while boosting competitiveness. Companies excelling in personalization yield 40% more revenue (McKinsey, 2021), leading to growth from 5% to 15% (Boudet et al., 2019). Proven Beauty, Curology, Sallve, and L'Oreal Paris demonstrate how AI transforms consumer experience through personalized skin care and virtual try-ons (Elder et al., 2024).

Conclusion

Gender doesn't confirm inherent business leadership skills rather it's because of a worldwide situation often known as glass ceiling effect the limited access to resources which at one side ceases women's in turning to entrepreneurs flipped to the other side of the coin provides them with an opportunity to learn through their own life experiences which finally results into habits making them more efficient compared to their male counterparts where astonishingly for many men's globally the other side of the coin is missing. For established companies, the confrontation lies in staying ahead of the curve by embracing the technological advancements and implementing a digital transformation. Confrontation exist particularly for new entrants, the opportunities are vast, and the future of AI in the beauty market holds significant potential for those who embrace it completely. So necessarily meaningful internet connectivity needs to be accompanied by relevant skills for women to master more advanced technology and digital skills, which will underpin the possibility of entrepreneurs to leverage digital tools and make economies stronger across the globe.

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