SYMBIOSIS COLLEGE OF ARTS AND COMMERCE
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INSTITUTION'S INNOVATION COUNCIL
(Ministry of Education Initiative)

EMERGE
Volume 4

'Amrit Kaal' and Business Growth

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EMERGE

Theme:

'Amrit Kaal' and Business Growth

Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce
Centre For Innovation
And Entrepreneurship

INSTITUTION'S
INNOVATION
COUNCIL
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FOREWORD

In an era marked by rapid transformation and opportunities, India stands at the threshold of its 'Amrit Kaal' - a defining period of next 25 years that promises to shape the nation's journey towards becoming a developed economy. During this time, the nation will move forward towards attaining resolutions made for Aatmanirbhar Bharat. As we embrace this vision of growth and progress, the role of business innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development becomes increasingly crucial.

At Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce, we are committed to nurturing young minds who can contribute meaningfully to this transformative journey. Our focus extends beyond theoretical knowledge to fostering practical insights and research capabilities that align with the nation's aspirations during this pivotal period.

We pleased to present the latest edition of our student research journal, Emerge, centered on the theme of 'Amrit Kaal' and Business Growth. This collection showcases the analytical skills and innovative thinking of our student researchers who have explored various facets of India's economic trajectory, including digital transformation, sustainable business practices, entrepreneurial ecosystems, and inclusive growth strategies.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to all the contributors for their insightful contributions. We commend the editorial team for their meticulous efforts in curating this publication and the reviewers for their valuable inputs that have enhanced the quality of the content.

We would also like to express our gratitude to our esteemed faculty members for their guidance and mentorship, which have been instrumental in nurturing the research capabilities of our students.
Special appreciation of Dr. Sharayu Bhakare for her dedication in spearheading the conceptualization and execution of this research journal focused on the ‘Amrit Kaal’ and Business Growth.

We believe this publication will serve as a valuable resource for understanding the evolving business landscape in India and inspire future research in this crucial area. May it encourage our students to continue their pursuit of knowledge and contribute meaningfully to India's journey during this transformative period.

Dr. Tessy Thadathil

Officiating Principal,

Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce

EDITORIAL

It is our pleasure to present the fourth volume of the National Level Student Research Journal- Emerge with the theme: 'Amrit Kaal' and Business Growth. This journal is a compilation of 15 research papers written by the undergraduate and postgraduate students at the colleges across India.

Through this edition of Emerge, we aim to bridge the gap between Amrit Kaal's vision and students' perspectives, showcasing how young minds can drive India's growth and transformation.

By aligning our research themes with Amrit Kaal, we empower students to tackle real-world challenges, develop critical thinking skills, and contribute to a prosperous, self-reliant, and innovative India. Emerge serves as a platform for student voices, highlighting their solutions and insights that align with India's journey towards 2047.

This student research journal is an outcome of the consistent efforts taken by our student researchers and editorial team throughout the year. The journal was launched in the beginning of this academic year inviting research papers from students at our college as well as colleges from various parts of India. With the intention of developing a research mindset and instilling an entrepreneurial acumen, students were encouraged to write and submit research papers on the sub-themes under the main theme. We received almost 25 research papers out of which 15 were selected for final publication. At all stage plagiarism checks are done, and the papers have been reviewed by the external experts. This publication is a platform for students to develop and strengthen research skills, which is an inevitable quality for an aspiring entrepreneur.

The papers highlight Amrit Kaal's focus on social justice, diversity, and inclusion, reflecting India's commitment to equitable growth and sustainable development. They explore innovative policies, economic reforms, and technological advancements that contribute to national progress.

The entire journey has been very exciting and humbling to see young minds put immense effort as researchers. As the editor I wish to appreciate the efforts of the entire Emerge team.

Prof. Dr. Sharayu Bhakare
Chief Editor

GENESIS

This year's theme for Emerge is ‘Unleashing Amrit Kaal: Pioneering Business Growth’, highlighting India’s vision for 2047—driving economic growth, innovation, and sustainability.

Amrit Kaal envisions a ‘New India’ with rapid progress in infrastructure, technology, and global leadership. The Panch Pran—developing India, eliminating colonial remnants, pride in heritage, unity, and duty—align with India's entrepreneurial ambitions.

As the world’s third-largest start-up ecosystem, India showcases entrepreneurship as a catalyst for economic growth and innovation. Even in uncertain times, Indian entrepreneurs demonstrate resilience, reinforcing Amrit Kaal’s vision for a dynamic business landscape.

By promoting critical thinking and research, we can nurture a culture of innovation and equip students with the ability to address the challenges around them.

A research-oriented mindset, when combined with an entrepreneurial attitude, paves the way for breakthrough innovations and sustainable progress.

Encouraging responsible entrepreneurship, fostering innovation, and building a resilient business ecosystem are key drivers of Amrit Kaal.

By empowering the youth with the right skills and opportunities, India can truly achieve its ambitious goal of becoming a global economic powerhouse by 2047.

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First and foremost, we would like to thank Dr. S. B. Mujumdar, Founder President, Symbiosis, whose passion for excellence has inspired us to encourage our students to excel in all fronts and Dr. Vidya Yeravdekar, Principal Director, Symbiosis for her continuous strive to build a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem in Symbiosis.

We are extremely grateful to our Officiating Principal, Dr. Tessy Thadathil, for his constant support, confidence and belief in us and for her valuable inputs in all our endeavors.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the expert review committee members Dr. Jyoti Gogate, Prof. Ravindra Kothavade and Dr. Neelam Yadava for their insightful feedback on the research papers which have helped our authors to understand the research process.

We appreciate the student authors' enthusiasm and persistent effort in writing the research papers. We are also very grateful to the college registrar, Mrs. Gandhali Parulekar, for the continuous office support.

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Prof. Dr. Sharayu Bhakare
Chief Editor

Cross-Border E-Commerce and Digital Payment Solutions: A Comparative Study of UPI and Global Platforms

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ABSTRACT

The study compares India's Unified Payments Interface with global platforms like PayPal to explore the role of digital payment solutions in cross-border e-commerce. Cross-border e- commerce is changing the contours of international trade, where the roles that digital payment systems play to ensure business transactions are completed smoothly are paramount for businesses and policymakers. It fills a noted gap for conducting a comparative analysis between UPI, a domestic but globally rising in stature, and established global platforms for payment solutions. Using a mixed-method approach, the following study will assess key factors in cross border use such as transaction speed, cost efficiency, security, and user adoption through quantitative data analysis and qualitative case studies. Research indicates that though global platforms offer wider reach and established trust, UPI offers itself as an alternative with a lower transaction cost and real-time processing features. However, the challenges remain for international interoperability and regulatory alignment. Conclusion: UPI, with targeted enhancements, has the potential to become competitive on the global e-commerce field, offering a localized yet scalable solution. This research aims to contribute to the overall discussion of digital payment in international trade and to provide concrete actions that can be taken toward improving efficiency in cross-border transactions.

Keywords: *Cross-border e-commerce, UPI, PayPal, Alipay, digital payments, payment platforms, transaction speed, cost efficiency, international trade.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Cross-border electronic commerce has emerged as a crucial element of the world economy, propelling international trade by facilitating cross-border transactions between consumers and enterprises. There has never been a more pressing demand for effective, safe, and affordable digital payment solutions as businesses move more and more to online platforms. The foundation of e-commerce is digital payments, which enable smooth transactions across various currencies and regulatory frameworks. Cross-border payments, however, come with additional complications, like exorbitant transaction costs, protracted settlement periods, security issues, and disparate legal regimes (Smith, 2021).

For a considerable amount of time, global payment systems such as PayPal, Alipay, and Stripe have dominated the worldwide payment scene by offering dependable services to companies involved in cross-border trade. These platforms are well-liked by both consumers and businesses due to their broad adoption, numerous fraud prevention measures, and user trust (Yang, 2019). Notwithstanding their advantages, these platforms' costs can be unaffordable for small and medium-sized businesse (SMEs), in particular. Furthermore, because numerous banking intermediaries are involved, settlement periods for foreign transactions are frequently longer (Rao, 2022).

Conversely, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has revolutionized domestic payments with its user-friendly, low-cost, real-time Unified Payments Interface (UPI). In India, UPI has been a huge success, handling billions of transactions per month. Although UPI was initially intended for domestic use, attempts are currently being made to incorporate it into global payment networks. Growing attention is being shown in how UPI can replace well known international platforms in cross-border e-commerce, given its promise to provide quick and inexpensive transactions (Kumar, 2021).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Digital Payment Systems- Global Platforms: International digital payment companies like PayPal, Alipay, and Stripe have made a name for themselves as dependable and trustworthy ways to do cross-border business. Particularly, PayPal has a long history of safe transactions, which are bolstered by a strong anti-fraud structure and user-friendliness (Johnson, 2018). In a similar vein, Alipay has become well-liked throughout East Asia after branching out to provide international payment services outside of China (Zhang, 2020). Because of its many security features, which include encryption, two factor authentication, and dispute resolution procedures, these platforms have a high level of consumer confidence.

These platforms do have some disadvantages, though. Rao (2022) asserts that one of the main problems with international payment platforms is the comparatively high transaction fees they charge, particularly to small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) that conduct cross-border business. For example, PayPal levies a percentage-based fee that may result in sellers paying more for low-margin transactions (Gupta, 2022). Furthermore, even in areas with strict regulatory standards, the settlement time for foreign transactions can still be longer than that of local transactions, even though they are typically completed more quickly (Sharma, 2020).

UPI: Potential for Cross-Border Transactions: The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) created the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) to connect various banks and financial institutions and streamline domestic payments through a single interface. Because UPI is so simple to use, allows for real-time transfers, and has no transaction costs for users, it has become quite popular in India, handling billions of transactions every month (Verma, 2021). The use of UPI for cross-border transactions is still relatively new, though. Recent research indicates that UPI has the potential to be incorporated into the global payments network. Sharma (2020) posits that UPI's real-time processing capabilities and inexpensive costs make it a desirable option for cross-border transactions, especially in developing economies.

However, legal obstacles, complicated currency exchanges, and a lack of international alliances keep UPI from effectively competing with global platforms (Kumar, 2022).

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to give a thorough analysis of the relative efficacy of global digital payment platforms and UPI in cross-border e-commerce transactions, this study uses a mixed-methods research approach. To assess transaction cost, speed, security, user confidence, and scalability, both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques are used. Quantitative information was obtained from publicly accessible sources, such as financial reports from PayPal, Alipay, and UPI as well as transaction data released by the NPCI, regarding transaction costs, processing times, and adoption rates. Semi-structured interviews with professionals in the field, such as e-commerce business owners and payment system specialists with knowledge of cross-border transactions, were used to gather qualitative data. Statistical tools were employed to examine the quantitative data and compare the costs, adoption rates, and transaction times of UPI, PayPal, and Alipay. Adoption rates were determined by looking at transaction volumes and the number of active users, while transaction costs were computed as a % of transaction value. Themes and coding were applied to qualitative interview data in order to find recurrent themes and insights on user trust, security worries, and the difficulties in expanding UPI globally.

4. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The study on UPI's potential role in cross-border e-commerce is limited by its reliance on publicly available data, which may not fully capture transaction costs, processing times, and other critical metrics across different regions. The study also focuses primarily on India's domestic transactions, overlooking emerging payment solutions in other regions that could provide valuable insights into cross-border e-commerce. The qualitative data gathered from interviews with industry professionals is limited in scope, and the insights provided may not be representative of all stakeholders in the digital payments industry.

5. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

5.1. *Transaction Speed*

According to the data, UPI performs better than international platforms when it comes to processing domestic transactions in real-time, usually finishing transfers in a matter of seconds. On the other hand, international payment platforms such as PayPal and Alipay provide quick services for international transactions, but they still encounter delays because of regulatory inspections and currency conversion. For example, PayPal requires one to three business days to complete international transactions (Johnson, 2018), while Alipay requires an average of twenty-four to forty-eight hours to complete cross-border payments (Zhang, 2020).

International regulatory frameworks, compliance, and integration with foreign payment systems create delays in otherwise instantaneous transactions, which presents hurdles for UPI's application across borders (Sharma, 2020). Although there has been promise in the current efforts to connect UPI with international systems like Singapore's PayNow, widespread application is still in its early phases (Verma, 2021)

5.2. ***Cost Efficiency***

The minimal transaction fees associated with UPI are among its biggest benefits. In contrast to PayPal and Alipay, which impose fees on cross-border transactions ranging from 2% to 4% (Rao, 2022), UPI transactions—especially those made within India—are either completely free for businesses or come at a nominal cost. For SMEs and startups involved in international trade, this cost-saving tool is especially helpful as it enables them to optimize profits from low-margin transactions. However, the introduction of cross-border transactions reduces the cost benefits of UPI because fees associated with currency translation and intermediary banking services become relevant (Kumar, 2022). In spite of these obstacles, UPI continues to be a desirable substitute for foreign trade with countries that use comparable low-cost payment methods.

5.3. ***Security and Fraud Prevention***

Any digital payment platform should be very concerned about security, especially when it comes to cross-border transactions, which are more susceptible to fraud because of different legal frameworks. Robust fraud detection systems are in place on international platforms like PayPal and Alipay. These systems use machine learning algorithms and AI-driven technologies to identify suspicious transactions (Gupta, 2022). Although secure, UPI is mostly concerned with national security measures. Verma (2021) claims that while UPI uses encryption and multi-factor authentication to guarantee safe transactions within India, the system has not yet implemented international standards compliant global fraud prevention mechanisms.

5.4. ***User Adoption and Trust***

Global payment platforms such as PayPal and Alipay have a lengthy history and a strong international presence, which contributes to their high user trust ratings. According to user studies, people are more likely to believe in a payment platform that they believe is reliable and widely used (Yang, 2019). Even while UPI is very well-liked in India, its limited worldwide reach makes it difficult for people outside of the country to trust it. While UPI is well-liked for domestic payments, there are still doubts about its capacity to manage cross-border transactions with the same dependability and security, according to interviews with owners of e-commerce businesses (Sharma, 2020).

6. DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis demonstrates the benefits and drawbacks of global platforms and UPI for enabling cross-border e-commerce transactions. Because of its real-time processing capabilities and cost-effectiveness, UPI is a desirable choice for companies in low-margin industries. But there are substantial obstacles in the way of UPI being a completely competitive substitute for international payment platforms like PayPal and Alipay.

6.1. *Enhancing UPI’s Global Competitiveness*

In order to make UPI competitive in the global market, a number of important changes are required. It is imperative that UPI forms alliances with global financial institutions and payment gateways in order to expedite cross-border transactions. Although the current agreement between UPI and PayNow in Singapore is a good start toward building a worldwide payment network, more extensive alliances are needed to attain global scalability (Verma, 2021).

6.2. *Regulatory Compliance and Interoperability*

The main reason why UPI can't handle cross-border transactions is because of national regulation variances. UPI's global expansion will depend heavily on its adherence to international standards including Know Your Customer (KYC) and Anti-Money Laundering (AML) legislation. In order to provide easy currency exchange and settlement procedures, UPI must also make sure that its system is compatible with other significant payment networks (Kumar, 2022).

6.3. *User Trust and Adoption in Global Markets*

As UPI grows globally, gaining user trust will be a crucial task. Even though UPI has been successful in growing its user base in India, it does not yet have the same level of consumer trust or brand awareness that PayPal and Alipay have amassed over time. Building UPI's reputation in international markets will require marketing initiatives in addition to a track record of safe cross-border transactions (Gupta, 2022).

7. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could expand the sample size to include a broader range of perspectives, such as consumer feedback, regulators' insights, and input from financial institutions. Future research should explore the potential of emerging technologies, such as blockchain, to enhance UPI's cross-border capabilities. Blockchain technology has the potential to address regulatory and security challenges associated with cross-border payments, providing transparent, decentralized solutions that bypass traditional banking intermediaries. Investigating how UPI could integrate blockchain for international transactions could provide valuable insights for enhancing its competitiveness in the globally.

8. CONCLSUION

The study compares Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and global digital payment platforms like PayPal and Alipay, revealing both opportunities and challenges for UPI in cross-border e-commerce. UPI's cost-effective domestic payment structure has revolutionized the Indian digital payments landscape, making it appealing to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in low-margin sectors. However, UPI faces significant hurdles in cross-border e commerce due to its limited international scalability and regulatory alignment. Global payment platforms have years of experience and infrastructure investments that facilitate secure, trusted, and efficient cross-border transactions. PayPal and Alipay are synonymous with secure international payments, enabling users to transact across borders with confidence due to robust security features, fraud prevention systems, and international regulatory compliance. Their global reach, supported by partnerships with financial institutions worldwide, positions them as dominant players in cross-border e-commerce.

UPI's primary advantage lies in its minimal transaction fees, particularly within India. For businesses engaged in domestic trade or international trade with countries that support UPI, the cost savings are substantial compared to higher transaction fees imposed by global platforms. However, the cost-effectiveness of UPI diminishes in cross-border transactions due to currency conversion fees, intermediary bank charges, and other cross-border transaction-related costs. Security is another key aspect where global platforms currently hold the upper hand. UPI must adopt global best practices in security and develop fraud prevention systems tailored to the complexities of cross-border transactions. The study also highlights the critical role of regulatory frameworks in shaping the future of cross-border digital payments.

Ultimately, UPI's future success in the cross-border e-commerce space will depend on its ability to establish international partnerships, build trust with global users, and align with regulatory standards across different countries. By doing so, UPI can potentially offer a lower-cost, efficient alternative to current global payment giants.

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Question Maker AI: Revolutionizing the Educational Landscape

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of technology has transformed various aspects of education, and assessment is no exception. ***Question Maker AI*** *is an innovative application designed to automate the process of generating diverse and effective question papers for educators. By leveraging the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Natural Language Processing (NLP), the tool helps educators generate customized assessments efficiently, saving time and ensuring high-quality questions. Teachers can input any learning material, and the AI automatically generates a range of question types, including WH-questions, True/False questions, and fill-in the-blank questions. The app is available across multiple platforms, including Android, iOS, and desktop versions, and supports exporting question papers in formats like PDF and Word. Through its seamless integration of text extraction tools, question generation algorithms, and performance-optimized interface,* ***Question Maker AI*** *aims to revolutionize how assessments are created, offering a practical and scalable solution to the challenges faced by educators in today's digital age. This paper explores the working principle, technologies used, application testing, and status of the* ***Question Maker AI****, highlighting its potential to transform the landscape of educational assessments.*

I. Introduction

In today's education system, teachers face the constant challenge of assessing their students' learning and cognitive abilities through examinations and quizzes. One essential aspect of assessment is creating diverse questions that test students' comprehension, critical thinking, and knowledge retention. However, the manual process of crafting these questions is often time-consuming, tedious, and prone to human error. The creation of engaging, relevant, and thoughtful questions requires not only subject knowledge but also the ability to frame questions that effectively gauge a student's understanding.

Question Maker AI has been developed as a powerful tool to address these challenges. Using the latest advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Natural Language Processing (NLP), this application helps educators automate the process of question generation. Teachers can input any learning material, and the AI will instantly generate various types of questions, saving valuable time while maintaining a high standard of quality in assessments.

Through its automation, **Question Maker AI** eliminates the repetitive task of writing questions, allowing educators to focus more on enhancing their teaching strategies and fostering meaningful interactions with students. The tool aims to help teachers create effective assessments more efficiently, enhancing the educational experience for both educators and learners

II. Working Principle

The **Question Maker AI** operates on an intuitive and user-friendly interface that allows teachers to generate customized assessments from textual input. This process is powered by sophisticated algorithms and AI models that understand the context and structure of sentences, enabling the creation of high-quality questions from the provided material.

1. **Input Method**: Users can input their source material manually by typing it into the app, or they can utilize **Optical Character Recognition (OCR)** technology to scan and extract text from printed documents. This flexibility allows teachers to input content quickly and conveniently, even from physical sources like textbooks or notes.

2. **AI-Driven Question Generation**: Once the text is provided, the AI processes the content using advanced NLP models to generate diverse types of questions. These include:

- **WH-Questions**: These questions probe for specific information, such as "What," "Who," "Where," "Why," "When," and "How" questions. These are designed to assess a student's ability to recall key details from the content.
- **True/False Questions**: The AI generates statements that can be verified as true or false, allowing teachers to test students' understanding of specific facts or concepts.
- **Fill-in-the-Blank Questions**: These questions require students to complete sentences with missing words, making them useful for testing students' comprehension and vocabulary.

3. **Question Paper Generation**: Once the questions are generated, the application creates a draft of the question paper, which can be further customized by the teacher. The question paper is fully editable, allowing educators to add, remove, or modify questions based on the unique requirements of their classrooms.

4. **Output Formats**: The generated question papers can be exported in several formats, including PDF and Word documents, providing teachers with flexibility for printing and distribution.

III. Technology Used

The technology behind **Question Maker AI** is designed to be robust, scalable, and efficient. It utilizes a combination of programming languages, frameworks, and tools to ensure that the application functions seamlessly across multiple platforms. The following technologies power the app's various components:

1. **Question Maker AI for Android**:

The Android version of the app is developed using **Kotlin**, a modern programming language designed for Android development. The app uses the **Jetpack Compose** framework to ensure smooth, responsive, and visually appealing UI/UX. The AI-driven question generation logic is built using native Kotlin tools, optimizing performance on mobile devices. Kotlin's powerful features allow seamless integration of AI algorithms while keeping the app lightweight.

2. **Question Maker AI for Desktop**:

The desktop version of the app is built using **Python**, one of the most popular programming languages for AI and machine learning. It leverages several open-source libraries to implement various features:

- **OpenCV**: This library is used for image processing, enabling the app to scan and extract text from images (scanned documents).
- **Tesseract OCR**: Tesseract is an open-source OCR engine used for accurate text extraction from images, ensuring high-quality content extraction for the question-generation process.
- **NLTK and Spacy**: These libraries are used for Natural Language Processing (NLP) tasks. They enable the AI to analyze the structure of sentences, identify key phrases, and generate meaningful questions.
- **Tkinter and Custom Tkinter**: These libraries are used to create the graphical user interface (GUI), providing an easy-to-navigate and responsive interface for teachers to interact with the app.
- **Fpdf and Docx**: For exporting question papers in **PDF** and **Word** formats, these libraries are utilized. They allow for the easy generation of professional-looking documents ready for printing.

3. **Question Maker AI for iOS**:

For iOS users, the application is built using **Swift**, Apple's native programming language for iOS development. Swift ensures high performance, and the app can take advantage of Apple's hardware capabilities for enhanced functionality.

- **Vision Kit**: Apple's Vision Kit is used for text extraction from images, allowing users to scan and extract content from printed documents with ease.
- **Natural Language Framework**: This framework is used to process the extracted text, breaking it down into sentences and generating meaningful questions. The framework enables the app to perform language understanding tasks such as tokenization, sentence segmentation, and part-of-speech tagging.

4. **Application Testing**

To ensure that **Question Maker AI** functions smoothly across platforms, rigorous testing has been carried out. This includes both functional testing (to ensure all features work as intended) and performance testing (to evaluate the app's efficiency under different conditions).

4.1 Android Version Testing:
The Android version has been tested using **Google Firebase Test Lab**, which provides a comprehensive suite of tools for testing Android apps. The app has shown excellent performance across various Android devices and screen sizes.

- **Performance Report**: The app's startup time was recorded at an impressive 194 milliseconds, confirming that the app loads quickly and provides a seamless user experience.

- **Crawl Report**: The app's crawl report showed 112 actions performed in a total crawl time of 5 minutes and 1 second, indicating that the app processes text efficiently and generates questions within a reasonable timeframe.

4.2 iOS Version Testing:

The iOS version of the app has undergone thorough testing on a range of Apple devices, including iPhones and iPads. It has shown optimal performance, with fast text extraction and quick question generation.

- **Testing Report**: The iOS app has been tested under various network conditions and image qualities, ensuring it functions well even in suboptimal environments.

5. Application Status

The development of **Question Maker AI** has reached a significant milestone, with functional versions available for Android and iOS platforms. The desktop version is currently under development and is expected to be launched soon, expanding the app's accessibility.

- Available Versions:

1. **Android** – The Android version of the app has been published and is available for download on the Google Play Store.

2. **Desktop** – The desktop version, built for Windows and Mac, is under active development, with a release expected in the near future.

3. **iOS** – The iOS version of the app is live and available for download from the Apple App Store.

Future updates will expand functionality, including offline question generation capabilities and more customizable question types, allowing teachers to create a broader range of assessments.

6. Conclusion

The **Question Maker AI** is a transformative tool for educators, enabling them to create high quality question papers in a fraction of the time traditionally required. By automating the question creation process, it not only saves valuable time but also enhances the quality of assessments by leveraging AI and NLP techniques. The app is poised to reshape how educators approach testing and assessment, offering a smarter, more efficient way to evaluate students' understanding. As the app continues to evolve, its potential to streamline the assessment process and improve educational outcomes will grow even further.

The future of **Question Maker AI** looks bright as it continues to innovate and empower educators with the tools they need to succeed in an increasingly digital and fast-paced world.

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Leveraging AI in HR data-driven recruitment and employee engagement

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ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Human Resources leverages machine learning, natural language processing, data analytics, and robotic process automation to optimize HR operations. These technologies enhance functions such as recruitment and employee engagement, aligning them more closely with business objectives. In today's competitive global landscape, effective human capital management is crucial for organizational success. AI innovations have significantly transformed HR practices, particularly in recruitment and employee engagement. This review explores the application of AI in these domains, highlighting its benefits, including improved efficiency and personalized employee experiences, as well as addressing challenges like ethical considerations. Additionally, this paper investigates whether AI will replace HR jobs, employee beliefs about AI in HR practices, and the reliability of AI for recruitment through primary research involving 54 randomized samples and secondary research. Findings indicate that AI adoption in recruitment enhances efficiency by saving time and reducing costs, but unconventional talents may be overlooked. To optimize hiring processes, a balance between advanced technologies and human decision-making is essential. While AI can expedite recruitment and employee engagement activities, it cannot completely replace HR roles; rather, it complements them by reducing recruitment time and enhancing engagement efficiency.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, HR recruitment, Employee Engagement, HR practices.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Human Resources utilizes AI technologies to optimize and streamline HR operations. These technologies encompass machine learning, natural language processing, data analytics, and robotic process automation, aiming to enhance functions such as recruitment and employee engagement to align more closely with business objectives. In today's highly competitive global landscape, organizations recognize the crucial role of effective human capital management in attaining success. HR plays a pivotal role in ensuring that talent is effectively placed and nurtured within an environment that fosters both individual growth and strategic contributions. To meet these evolving demands, HR professionals are continuously exploring avenues to refine their processes. AI innovations have significantly transformed HR practices, particularly in areas like recruitment and employee engagement. This review examines the application of AI in these domains, emphasizing its positive effects such as improved efficiency and personalized employee experiences, while also addressing challenges such as ethical considerations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Human Resource (HR) practices transforms how organizations manage talent, enhance employee engagement, and optimize performance management. The literature on AI in HR highlights its potential to automate routine tasks, drive data-driven decision-making, and create more personalized and efficient HR processes. However, it also raises important ethical and operational concerns regarding privacy, bias, and the potential displacement of HR professionals.

AI's impact on recruitment has been one of the most significant advancements in modern HR practices. AI tools automate repetitive tasks like resume screening, candidate shortlisting, and conducting initial interviews. This allows HR teams to focus on strategic initiatives such as talent development and succession planning. A case in point is Unilever, which adopted AI-powered recruitment tools to enhance diversity and reduce bias in its hiring process, accelerating decision making and reducing time-to-hire. Additionally, AI enables predictive analytics, helping HR teams make more informed hiring decisions based on candidate data, reducing attrition rates, and improving retention. AI's ability to eliminate biases in the hiring process is particularly crucial in fostering diversity and inclusion, as shown in studies on AI's effectiveness in reducing discriminatory hiring practices.

AI is also playing an instrumental role in enhancing employee engagement, a critical aspect of HR that focuses on improving workplace satisfaction, productivity, and retention. AI tools monitor employee performance in real time, providing ongoing feedback and tracking progress against clear and measurable goals, thus improving the accuracy and fairness of performance evaluations.

Current employee engagement strategies often fail due to their inability to accurately measure employee sentiment, as noted in a study by Maritz Motivation Solutions (2017). AI addresses this gap by using sentiment analysis to evaluate employee communications and behavioural patterns, enabling HR teams to gain deeper insights into employee well-being and motivation. By leveraging AI, organizations can implement more personalized and proactive engagement strategies, which significantly reduce turnover and boost productivity. The integration of AI-driven platforms in engagement also facilitates real-time feedback systems that provide immediate insights into employee sentiment, offering HR teams the ability to address issues before they escalate. AI-powered chatbots, for example, promote open communication channels, encouraging employees to voice concerns without fear of judgment, thereby enhancing workplace inclusivity.

While the advantages of AI in HR are substantial, its adoption is not without ethical challenges, especially concerning data privacy, security, and bias. AI's reliance on large datasets— often containing sensitive employee information—raises concerns about data breaches and the misuse of personal data. Ensuring data security through robust encryption, multi-factor authentication, and secure data storage protocols is essential to maintaining trust and safeguarding employees' information.

Another ethical concern is the bias embedded in AI algorithms, which can inadvertently perpetuate existing prejudices in the hiring process. The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has warned about the risks of discriminatory hiring practices when using AI. Since AI systems are trained on historical data, they may replicate biases from past hiring decisions, which can result in unfair evaluations of candidates based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, or educational background. To counter this, HR leaders must scrutinize AI tools to ensure they promote fairness and impartiality. Additionally, AI-driven HR solutions often adopt standardized approaches that overlook individual employee needs. The one-size-fits-all approach of AI can lead to depersonalized employee experiences, which may limit opportunities for unique talent development and reduce the emotional intelligence required for managing human capital.

The increasing automation of HR functions raises concerns about job displacement among HR professionals. According to Gartner, AI tools are designed to enhance rather than replace human capabilities. However, repetitive and less complex HR tasks, such as payroll processing and administrative roles, are at higher risk of automation. Dr. Dieter Veldsman classified HR roles into high-risk, moderate-risk, and low-risk categories based on their susceptibility to AI automation. For example, HR administrators and payroll team lead are more vulnerable to being automated, while roles requiring critical thinking and problem-solving—such as HR business partners and data scientists—are less at risk.

Despite the potential for job displacement, AI is expected to work alongside HR professionals by automating administrative tasks, freeing up time for HR teams to focus on strategic functions along with management development, skills management, and organizational development. To remain competitive in this evolving landscape, HR professionals must reskill and upskill, acquiring knowledge of AI technologies and focusing on roles that require complex decision-making and emotional intelligence.

AI's integration into HR practices offers numerous benefits, from streamlining recruitment processes to enhancing employee engagement and improving data-driven decision-making. However, ethical considerations such as data privacy, bias, and the standardization of HR solutions remain key challenges. Moreover, AI is expected to reshape the HR workforce, with more routine tasks being automated, but roles that involve complex human interaction and strategic decision making will remain vital.

3. RESEARCH GAP

I. ***Empirical Evidence and Case Studies****:* The literature relies heavily on general examples like Unilever's AI use. More specific case studies across varied industries and organization sizes would better illustrate AI's practical impact on HR.

II. ***Longitudinal Studies on AI****:* There is a shortage of long-term studies on AI's effects on HR practices. Longitudinal research could reveal AI's sustained impact on culture, satisfaction, and retention.

III. ***Human-AI Collaboration Models****:* More research is needed on frameworks for effective human-AI collaboration in HR, showing how AI and HR professionals can complement each other.

IV. ***Ethical Frameworks****:* The literature lacks detailed guidelines on managing AI-related ethical issues, like privacy, security, and bias, to ensure responsible AI use in HR.

V. ***Quantitative Bias Metrics****:* There is a need for concrete metrics to measure bias and fairness in AI applications, helping organizations minimize discrimination

VI. ***Reskilling Pathways****:* While reskilling is emphasized, specific AI-related skills and training programs for HR professionals are underexplored.

VII. ***Cultural and Regional Variations:*** Studies rarely consider how regional and cultural differences affect AI adoption in HR, limiting the applicability of AI solutions in diverse global contexts.

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To study the role of AI in HR practices for Recruitment
2. To study the role of AI in HR practices for Employee Engagement
3. To study the Challenges and ethical considerations in HR practices
4. To study whether AI will replace HR jobs

5. RESEARCH DESIGN

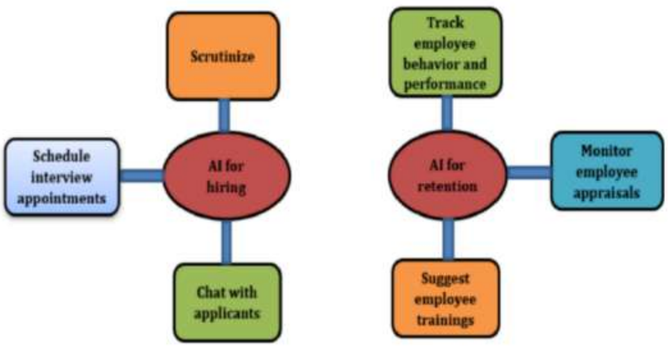
- Research methods include primary approaches like questionnaires (54 samples) and interviews, supplemented by secondary research from papers, articles, and blogs.

- Key objectives include understanding AI's role in recruitment and employee engagement, exploring associated challenges, and considering whether AI will replace HR jobs.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

I. <u>To study the role of AI in HR practices for Recruitment</u>

Importance of AI in Modern HR Practices



Source: The Future of Work: Implications of Artificial Intelligence on HR Practices

Figure 1. AI for hiring and retention

AI's integration into HR practices brings numerous benefits. For example, AI handles repetitive tasks, enabling HR teams to concentrate on strategic initiatives. Additionally, AI improves the employee experience through personalized development and well-being initiatives. Examples include AI-powered tools that streamline resume screening and conduct initial interviews, thus accelerating hiring processes. Unilever's adoption of AI-powered recruitment exemplifies these advancements, improving diversity and inclusivity while reducing biases in the hiring process. Over the years, AI in HR has evolved from early experimentation to sophisticated applications today, with predictive analytics and intelligent insights becoming standard.

Looking ahead, IDC's research suggests widespread adoption of AI in HR, with functions like employee records management, payroll processing, and recruitment benefiting significantly. As AI continues to advance, it promises to reshape HR practices, optimizing efficiency and fostering inclusive workplace cultures that support growth and well-being.

The Eightfold AI found functions, where HR departments are currently using AI technology, are:

- Employee records management (78%)
- Payroll processing and benefits administration (77%)
- Recruitment and hiring (73%)
- Onboarding (69%).

II. To study the role of AI in HR practices for Employee Engagement

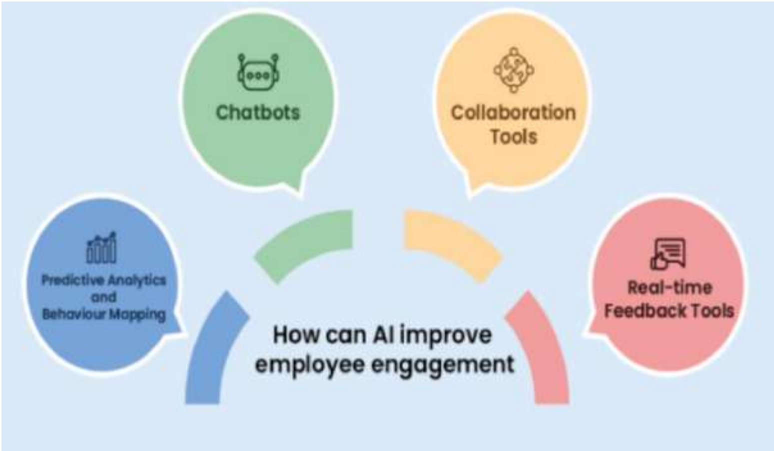
AI tools play a crucial role in enhancing employee engagement by continuously monitoring goals and performance, providing prompt feedback, and ensuring unbiased performance evaluations through clear and measurable goals. The current employee engagement system is failing because it struggles to gauge employees' sentiments accurately. Despite a significant investment—documented by 78% of companies in a 2017 study by Maritz Motivation Solutions—the existing strategies often fall short of effecting genuine changes in the work environment. HR leaders must prioritize building trust with employees and demonstrating through actions to address factors influencing employees' motivation to work hard.

Looking forward, AI offers substantial improvements in employee engagement. It can automate tedious tasks, expedite talent search processes, and reduce attrition rates. Incorporating AI into HR functions like onboarding and engagement holds promise for enhancing the overall employee experience.

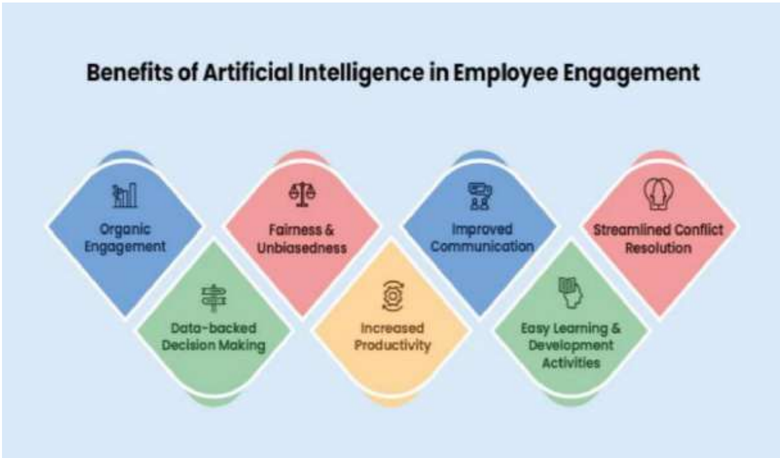
AI facilitates predictive analytics and behaviour mapping, moving beyond annual data to monitor real-time employee mental well-being, behaviour patterns, and engagement levels with data-driven insights. Additionally, AI-driven chatbots enhance communication channels, fostering interactive and judgment-free employee interactions crucial for engagement.

Collaboration tools powered by AI algorithms enable management to identify employees who work well together, promoting productivity and team synergy. Real-time engagement feedback tools powered by AI-driven platforms help organizations collect immediate feedback, gaining insights into employee sentiments and areas needing attention to boost productivity.

Overall, integrating AI into employee engagement strategies holds immense potential for creating a more dynamic and supportive workplace environment, driving higher engagement and performance levels among employees.



Source: AI in employee engagement-redefining purpose
Figure 2. AI for employee engagement



Source: AI in employee engagement-redefining purpose
Figure 3. Benefits of AI in Employee Engagement

• ***Organic Engagement*****:** AI algorithms facilitate advanced and predictive sentiment analysis, leveraging deep dives into email conversations and biometric data. This enables companies to foster a sense of belonging, identify potential issues early, and cultivate an engaging workplace environment.

• ***Data-driven Decision Making****:* AI provides valuable insights that empower decision-makers to make informed and nuanced decisions based on comprehensive content analysis.

• ***Fairness and Impartiality****:* AI-powered engagement platforms help eliminate biases and prejudices, promoting equality and diversity in the workplace. These platforms facilitate swift grievance resolution systems where conflicts are addressed efficiently.

• ***Increased Productivity****:* AI's automation of routine tasks enables HR, marketing, and IT teams to dedicate additional time to strategic business development. This automation enhances productivity and operational efficiency across diverse sectors including manufacturing, healthcare, and finance.

• ***Enhanced Communication**:* Artificial intelligence significantly improves both internal and external communication by enabling personalized interactions tailored to each professional. This fosters a culture where employees feel valued and heard, whether through chatbots or automated feedback systems that ensure confidentiality and openness.

• ***Simplified Learning and Development:*** AI revolutionizes upskilling and reskilling efforts by creating customized training programs. Whether employees are on-site or remote, AI analyses training needs and delivers tailored development opportunities.

• ***Streamlined Conflict Resolution**:* AI algorithms play a crucial role in conflict resolution by handling sensitive workplace issues with care and objectivity. Automated platforms are preferred for managing confidential information such as credit histories and employee records.

Hilton has integrated AI-driven strategies to elevate employee engagement, aiming to enhance the overall employee experience, increase productivity, and lower turnover rates. Their adoption of AI prioritizes improving human connections and responsiveness during the application and interview processes.

III. To study the Challenges and ethical considerations in HR practices

1. ***Data Privacy and Security*: As AI becomes more integral to HR practices, especially in managing sensitive employee and candidate data, concerns over data privacy and cybersecurity have escalated. HR departments need to establish strong cybersecurity protocols, which should include dependable antivirus software and the implementation of multi-factor authentication. These steps are crucial to maintain trust, safeguard confidential information, and prevent potential data breaches.

2. ***Bias and Fairness in AI**:* A significant drawback of AI usage lies in the bias that can occur during the hiring process. The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission highlighted the liability employers face for discriminatory hiring practices when using AI tools. HR leaders must scrutinize AI software during procurement to identify and mitigate any biases. AI algorithms can perpetuate biases present in the data they are trained on, leading to unfair hiring practices and unequal opportunities for diverse employees.

3. ***One-Size-Fits-All Solutions**:* AI-driven HR systems often provide standardized solutions for common departmental issues. While this can enhance efficiency, it may overlook the need for personalized support tailored to individual employees. Each employee brings unique strengths, weaknesses, and experiences to the workplace, and relying solely on AI for managing performance and development risks diminishing the crucial human touch required to foster top talent.

IV. Resistance to Change Among HR Professionals

HR professionals often resist the adoption of AI for several reasons:

- **Concerns Over Job Security**: Many fear that AI will render their roles obsolete, creating job insecurity. It's crucial to convey that AI is designed to enhance rather than replace human capabilities.

- **Knowledge Gaps**: There might be a lack of understanding regarding how AI functions and its potential benefits. Educating and training HR staff about AI technologies and their practical applications can help mitigate these uncertainties.
- **Change Management**: Successful implementation of AI requires effective change management strategies. This involves engaging HR professionals in the planning phase, addressing their apprehensions, and demonstrating the value that AI can bring to HR processes.

V. <u>To study whether AI will replace HR jobs</u>

Misunderstandings exist regarding AI in HR and its capacity to substitute human jobs. According to Gartner, AI tools are created to enhance human abilities and assist in task delegation. Instead of completely replacing employees, technology is expected to be widely integrated into various aspects of employees' tasks. However, HR will still experience changes due to the adoption of AI and automation. Predictably, roles involving repetitive and less intricate tasks are at higher risk of automation, whereas positions demanding problem-solving skills are less susceptible.

Dr. Dieter Veldsman, Chief HR Scientist at AIHR, categorized 55 common HR roles into three risk levels based on their susceptibility to automation:

- High-risk roles encompass HR administrators, DEIB consultants, and payroll team leads.
- Moderate-risk positions encompass L&D Specialists, HRIS Analysts, and HRBPs. · Low-risk positions include Senior HR Business Partners (HRBPs), HR Specialists, and Data Scientists.

For HR professionals in roles deemed at risk of automation, Dr. Veldsman advises taking proactive steps such as: Evaluating the necessity to enhance or broaden their skill set. Acquiring the ability to utilize their skills across various situations. Consider transitioning to roles that emphasize critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

7. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

- As of July 2024, approximately 88% of global companies are utilizing AI technology for recruitment, marking a significant increase from its market size of $540.4 million in 2022 to a projected $590.5 million by the end of 2024. The adoption of AI chatbots in recruitment offers substantial benefits to recruiters and companies by enhancing hiring quality, reducing costs, and
- Recent data highlights the widespread adoption and benefits of AI in recruitment processes. **Over 95% of recruiters acknowledge AI's effectiveness in the application process.** Major companies leveraging AI technology in their hiring strategies include Unilever, Amazon, IBM Watson Talent, Siemens, Hilton, and Procter and Gamble (P&G). AI's automation of candidate screening has significantly streamlined operations, prompting more organizations to integrate AI tools into their workflows.
- Small businesses are also increasingly adopting AI tools for recruitment, with approximately 26% incorporating these technologies. This trend reflects broader industry shifts where AI is

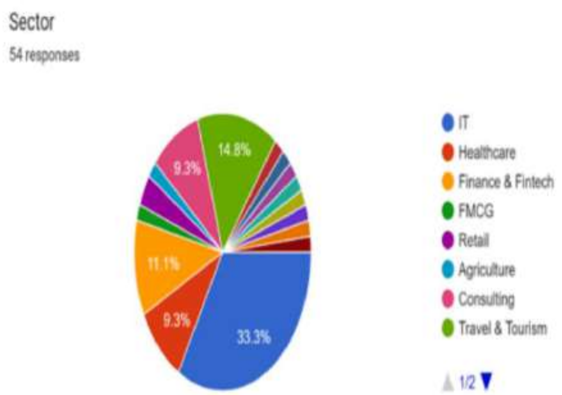
utilized not only in HR but also in marketing campaigns to enhance creativity and sales effectiveness, illustrating its versatility and impact across business functions

- AI's role in recruitment is underscored by its ability to reduce screening costs by 75% and enhance productivity in the workplace by 40%. This efficiency is attributed to AI's automation capabilities in handling repetitive tasks and optimizing workflows, thereby allowing HR professionals to focus on strategic initiatives
- Despite its benefits, concerns persist **among 35% of recruiters that AI may overlook unique talents that do not fit conventional molds**. Additionally, 79% of recruiters foresee AI taking on more decisive roles in hiring and firing decisions soon, indicating the ongoing evolution and integration of AI technologies in HR practices.
- Investment in recruitment automation continues to rise, with 73% of companies allocating resources to AI tools by 2024, up from 67% in 2021. This growth is driven by the proven advantages of AI in enhancing efficiency and effectiveness throughout the recruitment process.
- Larger enterprises allocate a greater proportion of their budgets to AI recruitment technologies compared to medium-sized and small businesses, reflecting varying scales of adoption and investment across different business segments
- Large enterprises allocate the highest expenditures towards AI recruitment.

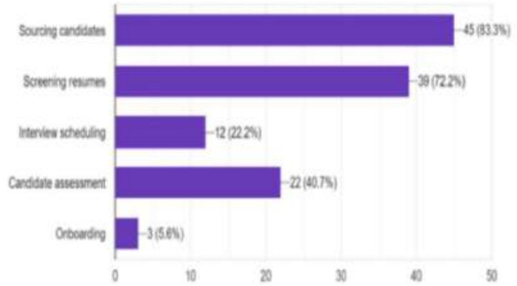
Table 1

Big Enterprises	40.
Medium-sized businesses	35.5%
Small Businesses	24%

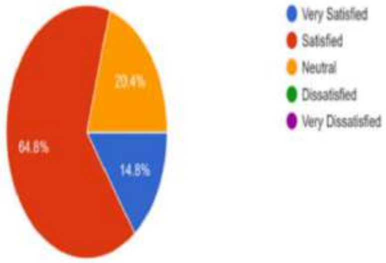
Results and Findings from Primary Research



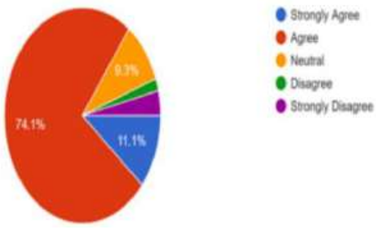
Which stage(s) of recruitment do you use AI for? (Select all that apply)
54 responses



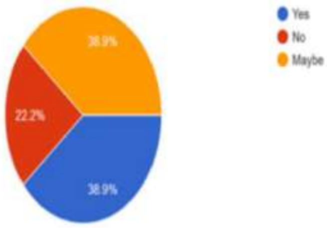
How satisfied are you with the AI tools used in recruitment?
54 responses



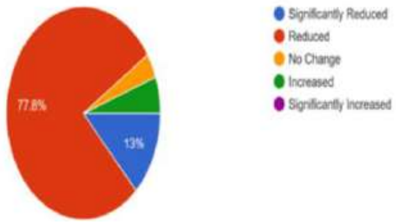
Do you believe AI has improved the efficiency of your recruitment process?
54 responses



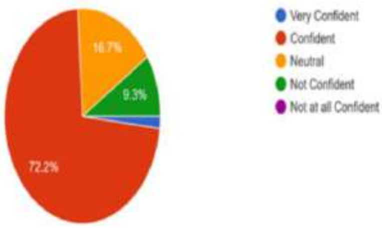
Has AI helped reduce biases in your recruitment process?
54 responses



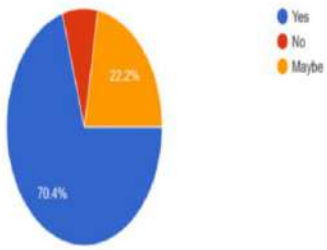
What is the impact of AI on your organization's time-to-hire?
54 responses



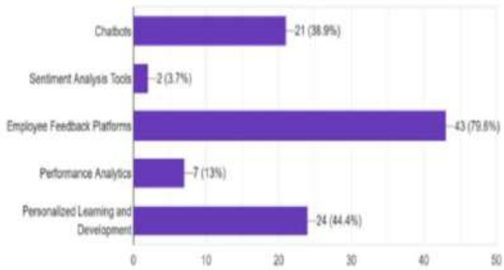
How confident are you in the accuracy of AI-driven candidate assessments?
54 responses



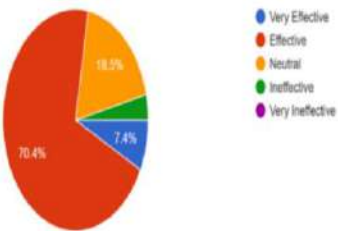
Does your organization use AI to monitor and improve employee engagement?
54 responses



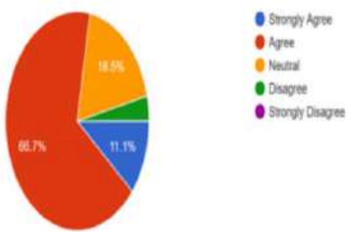
Which AI tools do you use for employee engagement? (Select all that apply)
54 responses



How effective are AI-driven initiatives in enhancing employee engagement?
54 responses



Do AI tools help personalize employee engagement strategies in your organization?
54 responses



Findings from the Primary Research

- From the above primary research, it is clear that AI is being used in HR for recruitment and employee engagement majority of 33.33% in the IT sector.
- Most companies are using AI for recruitment 87%, in recruitment it is used for sourcing candidates 83.3% followed by screening resumes 72.2%.
- There is a dilemma about whether AI reduces biases as 38.9 % believe it has reduced biases in recruitment followed by 38.9% who are not sure whether biases have been reduced.
- AI has reduced time for hire and 72.2% are confident with the accuracy of AI being used in online assessment.
- AI is used in employee engagement in 79.6% of the Employee Feedback Platforms followed by Personalized Learning and Development in 44.4%
- AI-driven employee engagement has positively impacted employee satisfaction but even 48.1% are concerned regarding the privacy of data with AI-driven employee engagement tools.
- Employees are responding positively towards AI-driven engagement tools 53.7% but 55.6% believe that AI will replace human jobs.

8. CONTRIBUTION AND CONCLUSION

This research provides empirical insights into the usage and perception of AI in recruitment and employee engagement across multiple sectors, with significant representation from IT, healthcare, and finance. The findings highlight the adoption rates, key stages of AI application in recruitment, and organization satisfaction levels. Specifically, 87% of organizations use AI in recruitment, with the majority utilizing it for sourcing candidates and screening resumes.

The study also delves into how AI enhances recruitment efficiency, reduces biases, and impacts time-to-hire, revealing that 77.8% report reduced hiring times and 74.1% agree that AI has improved recruitment efficiency. Furthermore, the research explores the role of AI in employee engagement, with 70.4% of organizations using AI tools like employee feedback platforms and personalized learning systems. AI's role in fostering engagement, providing customized strategies, and improving productivity is evident, as 70.4% found AI-driven initiatives effective in enhancing engagement. The study adds to the literature by presenting sector-specific trends and the challenges faced by organizations, such as bias reduction and maintaining data privacy, which are crucial considerations in AI deployment.

The findings of this study underline the transformative impact of AI on HR practices, particularly in recruitment and employee engagement. AI significantly enhances recruitment processes by automating tasks such as resume screening and candidate sourcing, improving overall efficiency, and reducing time-to-hire. However, challenges such as bias in AI algorithms and data privacy remain critical concerns. In terms of employee engagement, AI-driven tools are shown to improve communication, facilitate continuous feedback, and provide personalized development opportunities, contributing to higher engagement levels. Although AI has proven effective in these domains, its full potential is yet to be realized, especially concerning reducing bias and fully addressing ethical considerations. Future research should focus on overcoming these challenges and refining AI systems for broader, more equitable, and ethical HR applications across industries.

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UPI: A Catalyst for Digital Economy

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ABSTRACT

UPI (Unified Payment Interface) is a digital innovation with an instant payment option developed indigenously in India. It serves as a significant platform that enables smartphone users to transfer money online between two parties.

UPI is a multi-channel platform that caters to the varied needs related to digital payment of end-users. This new approach improves the accessibility and effectiveness of payment systems, offering great possibilities for developing countries and emerging markets. With UPI's ongoing growth, an increasing number of Indian individuals are adopting this revolutionary payment platform, pushing India forward into the digital age with remarkable momentum and advancement. The UPI has completely transformed the financial scene in India, acting as a driving force for the digital economy. This paper investigates the growth, execution, and influence of UPI across different industries. By conducting a thorough review of literature, we pinpoint research gaps in relation to the socio-economic implications and technological advancements linked to UPI. The research uses a combination of methods, including analysing quantitative data and conducting qualitative interviews. Research suggests that UPI boosts financial inclusion and spurs economic growth and innovation. This study seeks to offer understanding on how UPI impacts the development of a strong digital economy and to suggest policy suggestions for enhancing future outcomes.

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital economy is a rapidly evolving sector driven by technological advancements and changing consumer behaviours. In order to transform the nation into a digitally empowered society, the Government of India implemented the 'Digital India' initiative. The primary goal of this program is to enable faceless, paperless, and cashless banking transactions throughout the country. UPI is one of the most important open infrastructure solutions that promotes digital payment, addresses ecosystem challenges and increases level of financial inclusion. UPI facilitates real-time interbank transactions, making financial services more accessible to the masses. This paper aims to analyse the critical role of UPI in promoting financial inclusion, enhancing economic activity, and driving innovation across various sectors.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on the topic varies from UPI as a digital innovation, how it plays an important role in solving the issues of digitalization of the payment services to the social impact of the digitalization on the financial services. Studies suggest that UPI has made a significant contribution to the Indian economy by improving financial inclusion. According to Sharma et al. (2022), UPI has facilitated the inclusion of previously unbanked populations into the formal financial system. Additionally, Gupta and Rao (2023) contend that UPI has simplified payment procedures for businesses, leading to increased operational efficiency.

The foundation of UPI's technology relies on immediate payment service (IMPS) and advanced encryption methods, ensuring both security and dependability. Several research studies (e.g., Verma & Jain, 2022) underscore the role of technology in enabling a strong payment infrastructure, while Kumar (2023) explores the potential of integrating UPI with emerging technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence.

In addition to its economic effects, UPI has broader societal consequences. Singh et al. (2021) emphasize how UPI fosters gender equality by empowering women to independently manage their finances. However, certain studies (e.g., Mehta & Sharma, 2022) express concerns about digital literacy and the digital gap, indicating that not all demographic groups benefit equally from UPI.

Information, communication, and technology, or ICT, also promotes economic growth. Along with promoting economic growth, ICT clearly and favourably fosters financial literacy. The data showing that literacy promotes economic development further supports this claim. It is therefore equally appropriate to suggest that UPI promotes literacy. Numerous studies have demonstrated that financial literacy or literacy in general greatly enhances financial inclusion. Nevertheless, there is also proof that financial inclusion and financial literacy are related to financial stability. (Unified Payment Interface: A Digital Innovation and Its Impact on Financial Inclusion and Economic Development). Demonetization as a policy shift also pushed people toward digitization, which in turn supported financial literacy and helped educate people in the end. Covid crisis is another shot in the arm or silver lining in disguise to support the digitalization of payment services.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

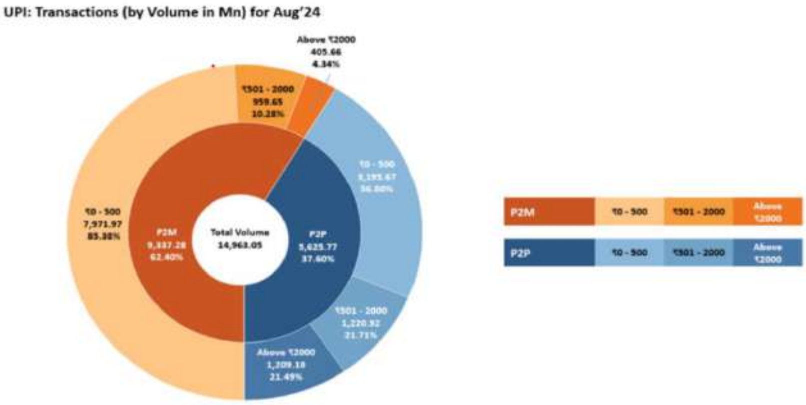
- To examine how UPI affects financial inclusion and transaction efficiency from an economic standpoint.
- To investigate the developments in technology that underpin the operation of UPI.
- To evaluate UPI's social ramifications, especially in light of gender and digital literacy.
- To offer policy suggestions that will improve UPI's ability to advance the digital economy.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to give a thorough understanding of UPI's impact by combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative interviews.

5. DATA COLLECTION

Quantitative Data: As of August 2024, NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India reported significant trends in peer-to-peer (P2P) and peer-to-peer (P2M) transaction volumes presented in a pie chart format.



Pie chart description:

P2P transactions: P2P transactions account for a significant portion of the total transaction volume, reflecting the growing trend of individuals transferring funds directly to each other.

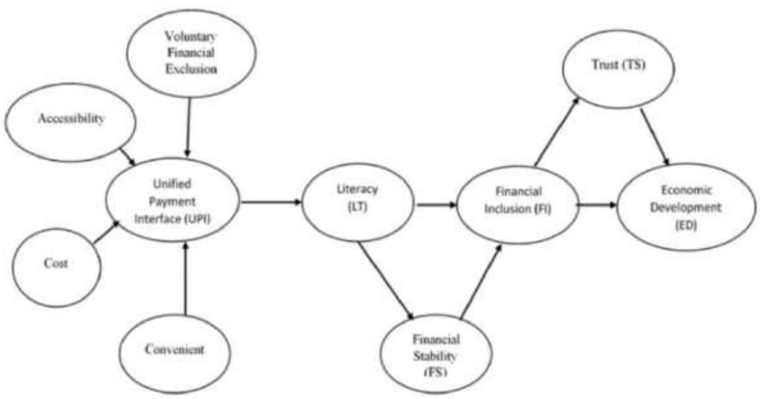
General usage options: This segment mainly includes personal transactions such as division of accounts, sending gifts, and resolving debt between friends and family.

P2M transactions: P2M transactions represent a remarkable share of the total amount, emphasizing the growing awareness of digital payments at retail stores. The factors driving this growth include the rise in e-commerce, increasing adoption of digital payment merchant solutions, and promotional activities encouraging cashless transactions.

Analysis: The increase in transaction volumes in both segments indicate a steady shift towards digital transactions in India, driven by convenience and security.

Future Trends: As more users switch to digital payment methods, P2P and P2M transactions are expected to continue to grow, potentially leading to further innovation in the payments industry.

Further, Researchers conducted descriptive research to gain valuable insights into the impact of UPI on financial inclusion.



Conceptual Model

Researchers considered the six years of data from 2017 to 2022 pertaining to the financial inclusion index value, the banks on UPI and the volume and value of the transaction.

Table 1: Financial Inclusion index developed on the number of banks, the volume of transactions, and the business value among buyers.

Month	Financial Inclusion Index Value	Total No Banks on UPI	Volume (In Million)	Value (In Crore)
March 2022	56.4	314	5405.65	9,60,581.66
March 2021	53.9	216	2731.68	5,04,886.44
March 2020	53.1	148	1246.84	2,06,462.31
March 2019	49.9	142	799.54	133460.72
March 2018	46.0	91	178.05	24,172.6
March 2017	43.4	0	0	0

Source: Combining FII data available in RBI and UPI data available in NPCL

The Financial Inclusion Index has been steadily increasing since March 2017. Similarly, the government and the Reserve Bank of India have called for the number of participating banks to increase which further led to a rise in an overall transaction value.

Researchers were interested to know the UPI value versus volume growth in UPI and its impact on financial inclusion. They conducted a regression analysis to know the impact of UPI value on volume (Table 2)

Table 2: *Regression Statistics of* UPI value versus volume analysis

Multiple R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error	Observations
0.9966	0.99328	0.99315	125.46	Fifty-five days of data across six months.

Adjusted R square value has shown higher significance with 0.99 for 55 days of data across six months of the research scope.

Further, researchers conducted an Analysis of Variance between the value and volume of UPI transactions for inclusion and found that there is a significant influence of the value and volume of the financial transactions.

From the analysis, the cost of UPI transactions can be predicted based on the volume of transactions by applying the above regression equation. Since it is evident that the RBI financial inclusion index is also positively correlated with both the value and volume of transactions, the financial index inclusion strengthens with exponential growth in UPI transactions

Qualitative Data: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three distinct groups: UPI users, merchants accepting UPI payments, and financial experts knowledgeable about digital finance in India.

Participants

1. **UPI Users**: Regular individuals who utilize UPI for personal transactions.
2. **Merchants**: Business owners who have integrated UPI into their payment systems.
3. **Financial Experts**: Professionals with expertise in digital finance and financial inclusion.

Interview Insights on UPI Usage and Impact

Interviews were conducted using a guided set of questions to encourage open-ended responses. Thematic analysis was employed to identify common themes and insights from the qualitative data.

UPI User Insights

The usage of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has become a near-daily activity for many individuals, facilitating a range of transactions such as bill payments and personal transfers. Users consistently highlight the convenience and ease of use as the primary advantages of UPI, noting that its instant payment capabilities significantly enhance their spending habits. This digital payment method often leads to increased spending, as users find themselves less aware of their expenditures due to the intangible nature of these transactions.

Moreover, UPI has greatly improved access to financial services, especially in remote areas. Users can efficiently transfer funds without the barriers that traditional banking methods may present, effectively broadening the reach of financial services to previously underserved populations.

Merchant Insights

From the perspective of merchants, the impact of UPI adoption has been markedly positive, leading to a significant increase in sales. This growth aligns well with consumer preferences that increasingly favour digital payment methods. However, some challenges persist, particularly regarding the initial technical setup and occasional connectivity issues. Fortunately, these problems are diminishing as the infrastructure matures.

Additionally, UPI has successfully attracted a younger customer demographic that values quick and efficient payment options, leading to a notable reduction in cash transactions. This shift not only enhances transaction safety but also improves overall operational efficiency for businesses.

Financial Expert Insights

Financial experts weigh in on the crucial role UPI plays in advancing financial inclusion, particularly among unbanked populations in rural areas. They recognize that the platform offers key benefits such as immediate transactions, low costs, and interoperability among various banks and applications, which are essential for a robust financial ecosystem. Nonetheless, concerns regarding security and the potential for fraud remain prevalent. Experts emphasize the necessity for user education to promote safe practices and mitigate these risks.

Looking to the future, there is anticipation that UPI will continue to evolve, potentially integrating with other financial products. This evolution could transform it into a more comprehensive financial ecosystem, further enhancing its utility for users and businesses a like.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Quantitative Insights

Initial findings indicate a strong correlation between UPI adoption and increased financial inclusion, particularly among marginalized communities that have traditionally faced barriers to accessing financial services.

The data suggests that as UPI usage expands, these communities are experiencing a notable shift towards formal financial participation. Statistical analysis reveals that region with higher UPI penetration not only exhibit a significant increase in the number of savings accounts opened but also see a marked rise in formal loan applications. This trend highlights how the convenience and accessibility of digital payment systems can encourage individuals to engage more actively with formal financial institutions, leading to better financial literacy and greater economic stability.

Furthermore, the ease of conducting transactions through UPI appears to foster a sense of trust and confidence in financial systems, prompting individuals who may have previously relied on informal lending to seek out legitimate banking options.

As a result, the impact of UPI extends beyond mere transactional efficiency; it plays a crucial role in transforming the financial landscape for underrepresented populations, thereby contributing to a more inclusive economy. The growing engagement with formal financial institutions not only empowers individuals but also fosters a sense of community resilience. Ultimately, UPI is not just a tool for transactions; it is a vehicle for economic empowerment, helping to create pathways for individuals and families to improve their financial well-being and secure a brighter future.

Qualitative Insights

Interviews reveal that while many users appreciate UPI's convenience and efficiency, several barriers, including digital literacy and trust in technology, continue to pose significant challenges. Users from rural areas frequently expressed concerns about the security of digital transactions, fearing potential fraud and identity theft. This lack of trust can deter them from fully engaging with UPI, despite its benefits.

Additionally, many rural users described the complexity of digital transactions as a daunting hurdle, leading to hesitancy in adopting the technology. Moreover, women participants reported feeling empowered by UPI, as it offers them greater control over their finances and facilitates easier transactions. However, they also highlighted specific challenges related to accessing smartphones and reliable internet connectivity. Many women noted that limited access to technology can hinder their ability to take full advantage of UPI's features, thereby restricting their financial independence.

These insights illustrate that while UPI has the potential to transform financial behaviour and promote inclusion, addressing these persistent barriers is crucial. Empowering users through targeted educational initiatives and improving infrastructure will be essential in ensuring that the benefits of UPI are equitably accessible to all, especially marginalized groups who may still face obstacles in the digital landscape.

7. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

The combined analysis suggests that while UPI holds significant potential to drive economic growth and promote financial inclusion, targeted interventions are essential to effectively address the challenges faced by underrepresented groups within the population. Various demographic segments, particularly those in rural areas and marginalized communities, experience barriers that prevent them from fully benefiting from UPI's capabilities. To overcome these obstacles, it is crucial to implement comprehensive educational programs that enhance digital literacy and promote an understanding of UPI's functionalities. Additionally, investments in infrastructure improvements are vital to ensure reliable internet connectivity and access to digital devices. By focusing on these targeted interventions, stakeholders can enhance UPI's reach and effectiveness, thereby fostering greater financial inclusion. The insights gathered from this analysis underscore the importance of a multifaceted approach that combines education and infrastructure development to ensure that all segments of society can partake in the benefits of a digital economy powered by UPI.

8. CONCLUSION

UPI has emerged as a vital catalyst for India's digital economy, playing a crucial role in facilitating financial inclusion and enhancing transactional efficiency across various segments of society. By enabling seamless peer-to-peer and peer-to-merchant transactions, UPI has democratized access to financial services, making it easier for individuals and businesses to engage in the digital economy.

However, to fully realize its transformative potential, stakeholders must address the barriers faced by certain demographics, particularly those in rural areas and among women. These groups often encounter challenges such as limited internet connectivity, lack of digital literacy, and socio-cultural constraints that hinder their ability to adopt and effectively utilize UPI. This study provides valuable insights into the multifaceted impact of UPI, highlighting both its successes and the ongoing challenges. Moreover, it underscores the critical importance of continued investment in technology infrastructure, user education, and outreach initiatives tailored to these underserved populations. By prioritizing these areas, stakeholders can ensure that the benefits of UPI are equitably distributed, fostering a more inclusive and robust digital economy for all.

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The Role of Creative Thinking in Business Innovation

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ABSTRACT

In a world where change is constant, businesses must innovate to survive and grow. Today, most CEOs agree that innovation is crucial, but the real challenge is figuring out how to innovate effectively. This research paper explores the essential role of creative thinking in driving business innovation and shows how this often-overlooked skill can lead to remarkable success. As India approaches its 100th year of independence in 2047, the country's vibrant startup scene—already contributing over 30% to the global GDP—demonstrates how creative thinking can lead to significant economic growth. However, even with these successes, a surprising 60% of new products still fail, often because they lack creative ideas. This paper delves into how creative thinking can boost innovation in various areas of business. We'll look at how creativity helps companies embrace new technologies in Industry 4.0, enabling them to adapt and thrive in a digital world. For example, we'll see how creative approaches to technology can help businesses stay competitive and meet changing customer needs. The paper also examines how creative thinking fuels successful digital marketing campaigns. In the crowded digital space, brands that use creative strategies can stand out and make a strong impact. We'll explore real-world examples of how creativity has helped companies capture attention and drive growth online.

Moreover, the paper highlights how creativity can lead to more sustainable and inclusive business practices. We'll discuss how innovative ideas can create business models that are not only profitable but also socially and environmentally responsible. Additionally, we'll explore creative ways to support startups through funding and partnerships, helping them succeed and contribute to economic resilience. As technology and youth become increasingly important, nurturing creative talent is key to fully harnessing new advancements. The paper also addresses the importance of creativity in improving mental health at work, arguing that a culture of innovation is closely linked to better employee well-being and productivity. By combining interesting case studies, clear statistics, and practical strategies, this paper shows that creative thinking is not just useful—it's essential. As India and the global community face new challenges and opportunities, fostering a culture of creativity and innovation will be crucial for building a successful, resilient, and prosperous future.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In a world where technology evolves rapidly and consumer expectations are constantly shifting; businesses must innovate to remain relevant. Traditional approaches to problem-solving no longer suffice in an environment that rewards agility, creativity, and fresh thinking. The ability to think creatively—seeing beyond the obvious and generating new ideas—has emerged as a critical driver of innovation.

Successful companies, from Apple and Google to smaller startups, have harnessed the power of creative thinking to develop new products, enhance customer engagement, and build sustainable business models. These organizations have shown that fostering creativity can lead to innovation that not only keeps them ahead of the competition but also drives long-term growth and resilience.

In the Indian context, creative thinking has played a crucial role in shaping the country's booming startup ecosystem. As India approaches its 100th year of independence, its entrepreneurs have used creativity to solve problems unique to the region, while also making a global impact. However, despite these successes, many businesses still struggle to innovate effectively.

1.2 Defining Creative Thinking

Creative thinking refers to the ability to approach problems or opportunities in new and imaginative ways. It involves questioning assumptions, making unconventional connections between ideas and experimenting with solutions that may initially seem unlikely. In business, creative thinking is essential not just for generating new products or services but for rethinking processes, strategies, and even business models.

1.3 The Importance of Creative Thinking in Business Innovation

Innovation driven by creativity isn't just limited to product development; it spans all aspects of business, including marketing, customer experience, and sustainability. For example, Companies like Tesla have used creative problem-solving to overcome challenges in electric vehicle production and infrastructure, while Spotify's personalized playlists have revolutionized how people discover music. In the digital era, where change is the only constant, businesses that fail to innovate risk becoming obsolete. The ability to creatively navigate challenges, adopt new technologies, and develop customer-centric strategies is what separates successful businesses from those that struggle to survive.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of this study is to explore the role of creative thinking in fostering business innovation. Specifically, the paper seeks to:

1. Examine the theoretical foundations of creative thinking in the context of business innovation.
2. Identify and analyze successful business cases where creative thinking has driven significant innovation.
3. Investigate how creativity can enhance various business functions, including marketing, product development, and operations.
4. Provide actionable strategies for businesses to cultivate a culture of creativity and innovation.
5. Explore the link between creative thinking, sustainability, and workplace well-being in fostering innovation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theories of Creative Thinking and Innovation

Creative thinking has been studied extensively across fields such as psychology, management, and design. One influential theory is Teresa Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity, which argues that creativity arises when individuals possess expertise, motivation, and creative thinking skills. These components, combined with an environment that encourages innovation, result in creative output.

Edward de Bono's Lateral Thinking approach also highlights the importance of stepping outside traditional logical thought processes to develop new ideas. By encouraging alternative ways of thinking, businesses can arrive at innovative solutions that might not be immediately apparent through conventional problem-solving.

2.2 Creative Thinking in Various Business Functions

Creative thinking enhances various business functions by driving innovation and competitive advantage across marketing, finance, operations, HR, and strategic management.

- **Marketing:** Creativity in marketing leads to standout campaigns and product designs. For example, ***Coca-Cola's Share*** a Coke campaign used personalization to build strong emotional connections and increase consumer engagement.
- **Finance:** In finance, creative solutions like financial derivatives and microfinance have transformed risk management and investment strategies, opening new opportunities for both businesses and consumers.
- **Operations:** Creative problem-solving in operations has led to innovations like lean manufacturing and Six Sigma, streamlining processes, cutting costs, and improving efficiency across industries.
- **Human Resources:** Google's creative HR practices, emphasizing collaboration and autonomy, have been crucial in attracting talent and fostering an innovative work environment.
- **Strategic Managemen**t: Creative strategies in companies like Apple and Tesla have disrupted traditional industries and created new market spaces, showcasing the power of innovation in sustaining competitive advantage.

2.3 Case Studies of Creative Thinking in Innovation

Creative thinking has led to groundbreaking innovations in various industries. Below are examples of how companies have applied creativity to solve problems and drive success.

1. Apple: User-Centric Innovation: Apple revolutionized technology by focusing on design and user experience. The iPhone, for instance, transformed the mobile industry with its simplicity and functionality.

2. Tesla: Overcoming EV Barriers: Tesla creatively tackled electric vehicle challenges by developing its ***Supercharger network*** and vertically integrating battery production, which lowered costs.

3. Lego: Crowdsourcing Product Ideas: Through the ***Lego Ideas*** platform, Lego invited fans to submit and vote on new product designs, leading to hits like ***Lego Saturn V***.

4. Zomato: Personalized Engagement: Zomato's creative use of personalized notifications based on customer preferences enhanced user engagement and loyalty. By tailoring messages to individual users, Zomato stood out in the crowded food delivery space.

5. Spotify: Personalized Music Discovery: Spotify transformed how users discover music through its data-driven ***Discover Weekly*** playlist, offering personalized recommendations. This creative use of data increased user retention and disrupted traditional music consumption.

6. Coca-Cola: Emotional Marketing: Coca-Cola's ***Share a Coke*** campaign replaced its logo with popular names, creating a personal connection with consumers.

7. Nike: Product Customization: Nike's ***NikeID*** platform allowed customers to design their own shoes, offering personalized products and strengthening customer engagement. This creative approach differentiated Nike in the competitive sportswear market.

8. Airbnb: Disrupting Hospitality: Airbnb used creativity to turn homes into hotel alternatives, allowing homeowners to rent their spaces and offering travelers affordable, unique lodging experiences. This business model disrupted the traditional hospitality industry.

9. Unilever: Creative Sustainability: Unilever integrated sustainability into its core business through its ***Sustainable Living Plan***, reducing environmental impact while driving growth.

These case studies illustrate that creativity is not limited to product innovation. It influences every aspect of business, from customer engagement to sustainability, and is essential for staying competitive in today's market.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the role of creative thinking in business innovation. This combination allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the impact of creativity on innovation across various sectors.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

The primary data sources include:

1. **Case Studies:** Case studies of companies known for their innovative practices, such as Apple, Tesla, and Google, are examined to identify how creative thinking has been instrumental in driving their success.
2. **Surveys**: The survey aimed to assess the perceived importance of creativity in fostering innovation and its application across different business functions.
3. **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior managers and CEOs from various industries to gain deeper insights into how creative thinking is encouraged within their organizations.

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The qualitative data from interviews and case studies was analyzed through content analysis to identify recurring themes related to creativity and innovation. Quantitative data from surveys was analyzed using statistical tools such as SPSS, focusing on the correlation between creative thinking and business performance.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Comparative Analysis Insights

1. Creative Problem-Solving Approaches:

- **Spotify:** Solved the problem of music piracy by offering a legal and easy-to-use streaming service, using data to recommend songs people will love.
- **Airbnb:** Made travel more affordable and unique by connecting travelers with local hosts, offering alternatives to expensive hotels.
- **Tesla:** Changed how people view electric cars by focusing on performance, creating charging stations and controlling their production to lower costs.
- **Lego:** Brought in fresh ideas by asking fans to suggest new products through its Lego Ideas platform, making people feel part of the process.
- **Starbucks:** Turned a simple coffee order into a more personal experience by writing customer names on cups, making visits feel special and personal.
- **Coca-Cola:** Connected emotionally with customers through its "Share a Coke" campaign, where people could find bottles with their names on them, making them feel unique.
- **Nike:** Let customers design their own shoes with NikeID, making them more loyal by allowing them to create something personal.
- **Oreo:** Used digital tools to let people customize Oreo packaging, creating more interaction with the brand.
- **Cadbury:** Strengthened relationships with customers by delivering personalized experiences through the “Joy Deliveries” campaign, making each moment special.
- **Zomato:** Kept users engaged with personalized notifications, sending food updates that match each person’s preferences.

2. Impact of Innovation and Industry Disruption:

- Each example shows how creative solutions can shake up industries, whether it's in music, travel, cars, and more.
- Companies like Airbnb and Tesla have changed how we behave and think about travel and transportation by making things easier, cheaper, or better for the environment.
- Brands that offer personalized customer experiences, like Starbucks and Nike, not only stand out but also create loyal customers.

3. Use of Data and Technology:

- Data and technology are key in driving innovation. Companies use data to better understand customers, improve operations, and personalize experiences.
- Innovations like Tesla’s electric vehicle technology and Spotify’s music recommendation system shows how advancements in tech can lead to big changes in an industry.

4. Community and Customer Engagement:

- Lego and Oreo show that involving customers in the product creation process can boost creativity and loyalty. By letting customers help develop new products, these brands build strong connections with their audience.

5. Brand Differentiation and Emotional Connection:

- Campaigns like Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" and Cadbury's personalized offerings show how emotional bonds with customers help brands stand out, especially in competitive markets where personal touches matter.

4.2 Data Analysis Insights

1. **Data-Driven Decisions:** Spotify's use of data to recommend songs shows how understanding user preferences can improve experiences and keep users happy.
2. **Community Engagement:** Lego's platform for fan-submitted ideas proves that involving a community in product creation can spark new ideas and build loyalty.
3. **Technological Innovations:** Tesla's electric car development and charging network illustrate how new technology can change an entire industry.
4. **Personalized Experiences:** Small, personal touches like writing names on Starbucks cups or Zomato's custom notifications can greatly improve customer satisfaction.
5. **Global Impact:** Airbnb's worldwide reach shows how sharing economy models can reshape industries and bring people together across cultures.

4.3 Key Takeaways

1. **Creativity Drives Success:** Creative ideas are crucial for solving problems, driving innovation, and engaging customers across different industries.
2. **Technology Integration:** Companies like Tesla and Spotify have used cutting-edge technology to change their industries and offer personalized services.
3. **Customer-Centric Strategies:** Brands that focus on personalizing customer experiences, like Starbucks and Zomato, create loyal customers by making each interaction memorable.
4. **Community and Collaboration:** Brands like Airbnb and Lego have succeeded by involving their communities, fostering a sense of ownership and sparking new ideas.
5. **Brand Differentiation:** Companies like Coca-Cola and Nike have used creative marketing campaigns and personalized products to stand out from the competition and build strong customer loyalty.

4.4 How Creative Thinking Fuels Innovation

1. **Solving Problems:** Creative thinking helps businesses tackle big challenges, like how Airbnb provided affordable alternatives to traditional hotels or how Tesla transformed the electric car market.
2. **Improving Customer Experience:** By being creative, companies can offer unique and personalized experiences that make customers feel valued and keep them coming back.
3. **Disrupting Industries:** Creative ideas allow companies to change traditional industries by offering new models, products, or services that better meet customer needs.

4. **Inspiring a Creative Culture:** Companies that encourage creativity within their teams are more likely to take risks, experiment, and find new ways to grow and improve.
5. **Standing Out in the Market:** Creative strategies help brands differentiate themselves in competitive markets, keeping them relevant as customer preferences evolve.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Implications of the Findings for Businesses

The findings from the research underscore several critical implications for businesses:

1. **Strategic Imperative:** Creative thinking is not merely a supplementary aspect but a strategic imperative for businesses aiming to innovate and stay competitive in dynamic markets.
2. **Customer-Centricity:** Emphasizing personalized customer experiences, as seen in case studies like Starbucks and Zomato, enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty, crucial for long-term profitability.
3. **Technological Integration:** Integrating advanced technologies, such as AI and data analytics (exemplified by Spotify and Tesla), enables businesses to optimize operations and deliver innovative solutions.
4. **Community Engagement:** Engaging communities in product development, as evidenced by Lego and Airbnb, fosters co-creation and strengthens brand affinity among diverse consumer groups.
5. **Market Disruption:** Creative approaches drive market disruption, enabling businesses to lead industry transformation and establish themselves as market leaders, as seen with companies like Coca-Cola and Nike.

5.2 How Businesses Can Foster a Creative Culture?

To cultivate a creative culture within organizations, businesses can consider the following strategies:

1. **Leadership Commitment:** Senior leadership should champion creativity and innovation, setting the tone for the entire organization and promoting a culture that values experimentation and novel ideas.
2. **Encouraging Diversity:** Embrace diversity of thought and perspectives within teams to foster creativity, as diverse teams are more likely to generate innovative solutions and approaches.
3. **Providing Resources:** Allocate resources and time for employees to explore creative ideas, experiment with new technologies, and pursue innovative projects without the fear of failure.
4. **Rewarding Innovation:** Implement reward systems that recognize and incentivize creative contributions, whether through formal recognition programs, bonuses, or career advancement opportunities.
5. **Collaborative Environment:** Foster collaboration across departments and teams to encourage cross-functional brainstorming and idea generation, promoting synergy and innovative thinking.

5.3 Potential Challenges and Solutions

While fostering a creative culture can yield significant benefits, businesses may face challenges such as:

1. **Resistance to Change:** Address resistance by emphasizing the benefits of creativity in driving innovation and maintaining competitiveness in evolving markets.
2. **Resource Constraints:** Mitigate resource constraints by prioritizing innovation initiatives and seeking external partnerships or funding opportunities to support creative endeavors.
3. **Risk Aversion:** Encourage a culture that embraces calculated risk-taking by providing a safe environment for experimentation and learning from failures.
4. **Siloed Mindsets:** Break down silos and encourage open communication and collaboration across departments to facilitate idea-sharing and cross-functional innovation.

6. Final Thoughts on the Importance of Creative Thinking in Business

Creative thinking not only fuels product and service innovation but also enhances customer experiences, fosters employee engagement, and strengthens competitive advantage. As businesses continue to evolve in a rapidly changing global landscape, embracing creativity will be essential for adapting to new challenges, anticipating consumer needs, and maintaining relevance in the marketplace.

Suggestions for Future Research:

- Exploring the impact of emerging technologies, such as blockchain and augmented reality, on fostering innovation in specific industries.
- Investigating the role of cultural diversity in enhancing creativity and innovation within multinational corporations.
- Analyzing the long-term effects of creative initiatives on organizational performance and market positioning.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this summer internship project has shown how important creative thinking is for driving business innovation. By looking at different case studies and analyzing data, we've seen how companies in various industries use creativity not just to meet customer needs, but also to change the way their industries work and grow in a sustainable way. Examples like Spotify revolutionizing music streaming, Tesla leading the charge with electric vehicles, and Airbnb transforming the travel industry show how powerful creative thinking can be in shaping successful business strategies.

The project also highlights how crucial it is for companies to build a culture that encourages creativity. When businesses promote new ideas and are willing to take risks, they become more flexible, adaptable, and competitive in today's fast-changing world. However, building this this kind of culture isn't always easy. Companies may face obstacles like resistance to change, limited resources, and the need for strong leadership. To overcome these challenges, businesses need to focus on continuous learning, teamwork across different departments, and creating an environment where experimenting and thinking outside the box are encouraged.

Looking forward, this research emphasizes that creative thinking will continue to be a key factor in business success. As industries evolve and new technologies come up, companies that make creativity a priority will be better prepared to handle uncertainties, take advantage of new opportunities, and stay ahead of the competition. The findings from this project call on businesses to make creative thinking a core part of their operations, ensuring that they not only meet today's needs but also anticipate and shape the future.

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Study of Modern Tea Café's in Reference to the Business Model Canvas

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on analyzing the business models of modern tea cafés using the Business Model Canvas framework. In recent years, the tea café industry has evolved from traditional setups to dynamic, experience-driven establishments. This shift is influenced by changing consumer preferences, lifestyle trends, and the increasing demand for premium and diverse tea offerings. The Business Model Canvas, with its nine essential building blocks customer segments, value propositions, channels, customer relationships, revenue streams, key resources, key activities, key partnerships, and cost structure – provides a comprehensive tool to understand how these modern tea cafés operate and sustain profitability. By applying this framework, the study explores how these cafés differentiate themselves in a competitive market, how they create and deliver value to customers, and what strategic partnerships or operational models they rely on to maintain growth. The findings of this study are intended to offer insights into the unique positioning and innovation strategies employed by modern tea cafés, with implications for entrepreneurs, investors, and industry analysts.

KEYWORDS
Modern Tea Cafes, Business Model Canvas, Experience Driven Cafes, Lifestyle Trends, Innovation in Cafes

1. INTRODUCTION

The tea industry, one of the oldest and most traditional sectors globally, has undergone a significant transformation over the past decade. With the rise of modern tea cafés, a new wave of tea culture has emerged, offering consumers a fresh and engaging experience. These cafés are no longer limited to serving standard tea varieties; they have evolved into vibrant social spaces that reflect contemporary trends in health, sustainability, and experiential consumption. This shift is driven by a growing consumer demand for premium tea blends, artisanal beverages, and the desire for unique, curated experiences that go beyond the conventional café setting.

Modern tea cafés represent a fresh approach to the traditional tea-drinking culture by blending innovation, customization, and community engagement. They have evolved into vibrant gathering spaces for diverse audiences, including health-conscious consumers, young urban professionals, and wellness enthusiasts, all seeking high-quality beverages in a relaxing environment. Unlike traditional tea outlets, these cafés emphasize not just the product but the overall experience, combining premium tea offerings with aesthetically designed spaces and personalized service. In an industry often dominated by coffee chains and fast-food brands, modern tea cafés have leveraged the growing global focus on wellness and natural products to position tea as a trendy and healthier alternative.

This study applies the Business Model Canvas (BMC) framework to understand how modern tea cafés create, deliver, and capture value. It examines key elements such as customer segments, value propositions, channels, customer relationships, key activities, partnerships, cost structures, and revenue streams. Through this analysis, the study highlights how these cafés use strategic partnerships, innovation, and operational efficiency to sustain profitability and growth. The findings offer valuable insights for entrepreneurs, industry professionals, and investors who are keen to explore the evolving dynamics of consumer preferences, product innovation, and experiential service design within the food and beverage sector. Ultimately, modern tea cafés showcase a successful model of blending tradition with innovation.

1.1 अमृततुल्य

Amrut Tulya tea stalls are a cherished part of Maharashtra's vibrant tea culture, deeply woven into the daily routines and social life of many locals. These stalls are renowned for serving a unique variety of strong, spiced tea that has become an essential part of daily life for a wide demographic—from students to office workers, and even the elderly. The name "Amrut Tulya," which translates to "as sweet as nectar," reflects not only the flavorful and rich nature of the tea but also the sense of comfort and warmth it provides. These tea stalls, with their simple setup and affordable prices, have a timeless appeal, continuing to attract tea lovers across generations.

A Look at What Makes Amrut Tulya Tea Stalls Special:

The experience of visiting an Amrut Tulya tea stall goes beyond just enjoying a cup of tea. These stalls represent a tradition that has been passed down over generations, with each vendor carefully perfecting their craft. The tea, prepared using loose leaf tea, milk, and a blend of spices, offers a distinctive taste that stands apart from the more commercial or modern varieties found in larger cafés. For many, stopping at an Amrut Tulya stall for a quick cup of tea is not just a break—it's a cherished ritual.

Whether nestled in a bustling market or quietly serving tea in a neighborhood corner, Amrut Tulya tea stalls embody a sense of community and tradition, providing both a flavorful tea and a place to connect with others.

1.2.1 Key Features

- **Bold Flavor**: Long boiling of loose tea leaves extracts deep flavors.
- **Spiced Tea**: Balanced spices like cardamom, ginger, and cloves enhance the taste.
- **Creamy Texture**: Full-fat buffalo milk gives it a rich, smooth consistency.
- **Sweetness**: Generously sweet, true to its name "Amrut Tulya" (nectar-like).

1.2.2 Brewing Process

Tea leaves, milk, spices, and sugar are simmered together in large pots, creating a deep golden brew, full of aroma and richness. Multiple boils intensify flavor, and it's served hot in glass or clay cups.

1.2.3 Distinctiveness

Made with high-quality loose leaves, spices, and buffalo milk, Amrut Tulya stands apart from café teas using tea bags, offering a bold, aromatic, and comforting cup.

1.2.4 Ambiance and Stall Setup

- **Minimalist Stalls**: Simple counters, often with standing space or plastic stools.
- **Traditional Equipment**: Large kettles and open flames.
- **Serving Style**: Tea served in small glasses or clay kulhads, adding rustic charm.

1.2.5 Cultural and Social Importance

Amrut Tulya stalls are community hubs where people meet, talk, and take breaks, creating strong social bonds over tea.

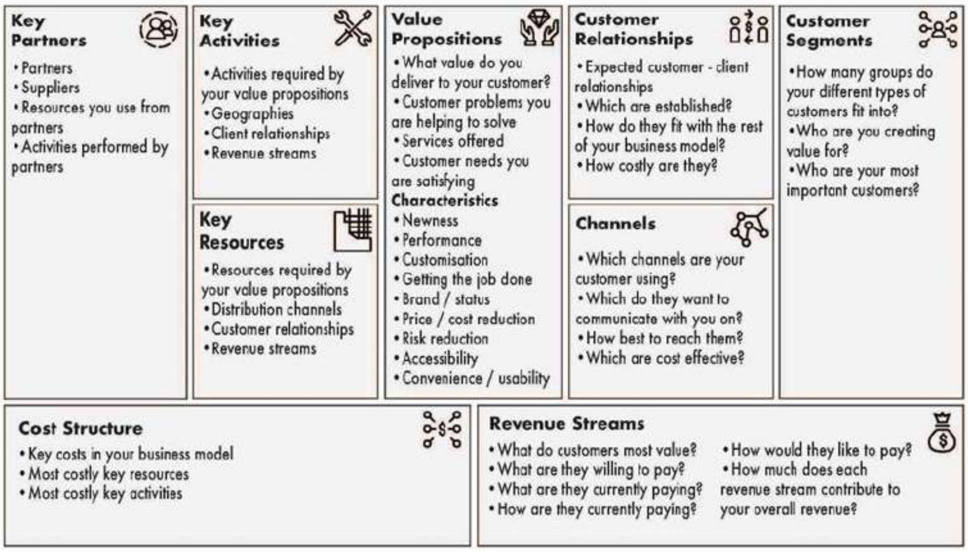
1.2.6 Regional Variations and Notable Stalls

- **Pune**: Stronger, spicier tea with historic, popular stalls.
- **Mumbai**: Quick, strong tea for the fast-moving crowd.

1.2.7 Affordability and Accessibility

Amrut Tulya tea is pocket-friendly, making it accessible to people from all walks of life.

1.3 Business Model Canvas (Explained)



The Business Model Canvas (BMC) is a strategic management tool that helps entrepreneurs and businesses conceptualize, describe, and analyze their business models. Created by Alexander Osterwalder, the canvas provides a visual framework of nine building blocks that show how a business creates, delivers, and captures value.

Here's a breakdown of the nine elements:

1. **Customer Segments:** Defines the different groups of people or organizations a business aims to serve. These could be mass markets, niche markets, segmented markets, or diversified groups.

2. Value Propositions: Describes the unique bundle of products or services that create value for a specific customer segment. What problem are you solving or what need are you fulfilling?

3. Channels: Outlines how a company communicates with and reaches its customer segments to deliver its value proposition. Includes: sales channels, distribution methods, marketing platforms, etc.

4. Customer Relationships: Defines the type of relationship a company establishes with specific customer segments, ranging from personalized service to automated systems.

5. Revenue Streams: Identifies how the company makes money from each customer segment. These could be one-time transactions, subscription services, licensing fees, or other models.

6. Key Resources: Lists the most important assets required to make the business model work. These can be physical, intellectual, human, or financial resources.

7. Key Activities: Describes the most important things the company must do to make its business model function, such as production, problem-solving, or platform management.

8. Key Partnerships: Identifies the network of suppliers and partners that help the business operate. Partnerships can include strategic alliances, joint ventures, or supplier relationships.

9. Cost Structure: Details the most significant costs involved in operating the business model. It highlights whether the business is cost-driven or value-driven and the major expenses.

The BMC is often used to compare and refine business ideas, offering a concise and easy-to understand snapshot of a business model. It's highly useful for startups, like the one you're coordinating through the Innovation Council, as it helps structure and visualize different aspects of the business. Why is the BMC Useful for Startups?

It allows teams to:
- Visualize all aspects of their business on a single page, promoting clarity.
- Test and iterate different strategies quickly, which is essential for lean startups.
- Identify gaps in their business plan that may need further development.
- Facilitate collaborative discussions between team members, mentors, and investors.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiple studies have been conducted by numerous researchers around the globe to determine the entrepreneurial intentions of the youth.

The objective of **Saurav Kumar's (2024)** study titled *"Story of Top Tea Companies and Top Chai Startups in India: What Makes Them to Keep it Big?"* is to analyze the economic impact of the Indian tea industry, focusing on employment and export revenues. It explores the historical evolution of industry from colonial times to today. The study also assesses changing consumer trends, particularly among Gen Z and Millennials, highlighting their health-conscious choices and the rising demand for different types of tea. Additionally, it evaluates technological advancements in production and marketing. Emerging business models like chai startups and their effect on traditional markets are examined.

Ridhima Bhanot Sharma's (2016) study titled *"Chaayos: Leveraging the Power of Digital Media to Increase Fan Following and Brand Awareness"* analyzes the formation and growth of Chaayos, started by two IIT graduates. It assesses tea consumption trends in India and the role of hygienic tea shops. The study focuses on how Chaayos uses digital media to grow rapidly and explores their content-sharing strategies across platforms. It highlights how engaging with fans helps in gathering feedback and building a strong brand community. The study also discusses Chaayos' expansion plans to open 50 new stores across India, aiming to boost growth significantly.

Dr. A. Shaji Georg's study titled *"The Scale and Scope of India's Vital Chai Industry"* explores how psychological and behavioral traits influence entrepreneurial intentions among secondary school students. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), the study found that need for achievement, self-confidence, and personal attitude positively impact entrepreneurial intentions. It emphasizes that understanding psychological factors can advance entrepreneurship education. The study recommends promoting an enterprise culture through educational reforms and suggests directions for future research.

The article ***"Tea with Benefits"*** by **Juhi Sharma (2010)** explores the shift in Indian consumer preferences toward healthier tea varieties. It examines how product diversification has led to the rise of flavored and value-added teas. The study highlights the influence of urban consumers in popularizing health-oriented teas and discusses challenges faced by companies in predicting evolving tastes. It also compares the limited flavor options in India with those available internationally, using expert insights to support its analysis.

The study ***"Consumer Preference Analysis on Attributes of Milk Tea: A Conjoint Analysis Approach (2021)"*** by **Ardvin Kester S. Ong and others** explores the role of culture in shaping entrepreneurial intentions across countries. Conducted with university students from Germany, Iran, Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain, and the UK, the study examines how cultural and individual factors impact entrepreneurial activity. It emphasizes the need for cross-cultural studies to better understand global entrepreneurship patterns.

The article **"Consumer Buying Behavior in Relation to Consumption of Tea – A Study of Pune City"** by Munmun Ghosh and Arindam Ghosh (2013) explores the social, economic, and cultural significance of tea in India. It analyzes consumer behavior patterns in Pune, focusing on factors like brand popularity, loyalty, aroma, color, and price. Using the Chi-square test and parametric estimation methods through SPSS, the study identifies key attributes influencing tea brand choices. It also develops a model to predict consumer decisions, offering insights into the association between consumer behavior and tea consumption trends.

2.2 RESEARCH GAP

The existing literature on tea consumption in India primarily focuses on traditional consumption patterns, consumer behavior, and the factors influencing brand loyalty and preferences. While significant research has been conducted on the attributes affecting consumer choices, there remains a notable gap in understanding how modern tea cafés operate within the broader context of the Business Model Canvas. Specifically, there is limited exploration of how these contemporary establishments integrate innovative business strategies, customer engagement techniques, and unique value propositions that differentiate them from traditional tea vendors. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of the modern tea café segment, which often combines elements of lifestyle branding, experiential marketing, and health-oriented offerings, has not been thoroughly examined in relation to traditional tea consumption behaviors.

This research aims to fill this gap by analyzing modern tea cafés through the lens of the Business Model Canvas, providing insights into their operational frameworks, revenue streams, and customer relationships, while also highlighting how they adapt to changing consumer preferences and trends in the tea market. By focusing on this intersection, the study will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the evolving tea landscape in India and the strategies that drive the success of modern tea cafés.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 MEANING OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the systematic and scientific approach used to collect, analyze, and interpret data to answer research questions or test hypotheses. It involves a range of techniques and procedures, such as data collection methods, statistical analysis, and research design, which are chosen based on the nature of the research problem and the goals of the study.

3.2 NEED OF STUDY

First, the café culture in India, particularly the rise of tea-centric establishments, reflects changing consumer preferences towards unique experiences and quality products. Understanding these dynamics can help entrepreneurs and existing businesses adapt to market demands effectively.

Second, utilizing the Business Model Canvas framework allows for a comprehensive analysis of how these cafés create and deliver value. This framework facilitates the identification of critical success factors and potential pitfalls within the industry. By examining aspects such as customer relationships, revenue streams, and key partnerships, the study can uncover best practices that can be replicated or improved upon.

Additionally, as Pune evolves into a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship, a detailed understanding of the tea café business model can contribute to the local economy. It can inform stakeholders about the viability of tea cafés as a business venture, encourage investment in the sector, and stimulate job creation.

Finally, the insights gained from this study will not only benefit potential café owners but also enrich the academic discourse on modern food and beverage trends in India, making it a timely and relevant investigation.

3.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

What are the key factors influencing consumer preferences and purchasing behavior in modern tea-selling cafes, and how do these elements impact the overall success of these establishments?

3.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The study was designed to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To understand what makes modern tea cafés unique in their offerings and customer experience.
2. Understand future trends like sustainability and technology in the tea café industry.
3. To study the consumer preference for Modern Tea Café over Traditional Amrut-Tulyas

3.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study aims at finding out:

- Demographic patterns of tea consumers (age, gender, occupation, income levels) and their preferred cafe attributes.
- Consumer preferences for tea and the factors influencing their choice of tea cafes (taste, ambiance, variety, price).
- Operations based on 'Business Model Canvas' for selected cafes, covering key partners, activities, value propositions, customer segments, and revenue streams.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The researchers used a combination of primary as well as secondary data collection methods to complete the study.

PRIMARY

The primary data was collected through an online close-ended questionnaire which was made with the help of Google Forms. The questionnaire was administered to tea consumers from various age groups. An open-ended questionnaire was also administered through personal interviews with the Owners or the representatives of various Modern Tea Cafes.

SECONDARY

Various sources were referred to gather secondary data for the survey. These sources include:
 Research Papers/Journals News Articles Books and Publications

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF CONSUMER PREFERENCE DATA GATHERED THROUGH GOOGLE FORMS QUESTIONNAIRE

Data about the consumer preferences for the modern tea cafes over the traditional Amrut Tulya's was collected through Google Forms. The researchers floated G-Forms on platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram to the Tea consumers in the city and encouraged the consumers to fill out the questionnaire circulated.

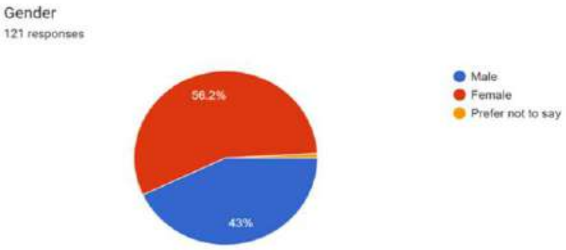
4.1.1 Consumer preference for Modern Tea Cafes based on demographic factors -
Demographics such as age, gender and income play a crucial role in shaping the appeal of modern tea cafés. Preferences for ambiance, menu variety, and pricing often vary across different groups, significantly influencing how cafés design their spaces and offerings. For instance, younger patrons may be drawn to vibrant and trendy settings with Instagram-worthy aesthetics, while older customers might prefer more subdued and comfortable environments that emphasize relaxation. Similarly, families may seek spacious seating arrangements and kid-friendly menu options, whereas working professionals may look for a cozy spot to conduct meetings or enjoy a quiet workspace.

By understanding the unique needs and tastes of various demographic segments, tea cafés can create tailored experiences that attract and engage a diverse clientele. For example, cafés that recognize the increasing popularity of wellness among younger consumers can offer organic and herbal tea options, alongside nutritious snacks that appeal to health-conscious individuals. Likewise, understanding income levels can help cafés adjust their pricing strategies, ensuring that their offerings are accessible while still maintaining a premium feel.

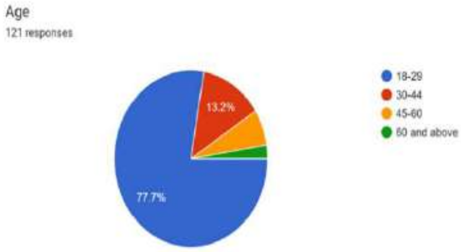
A consumer survey was conducted to gain deeper insights into the demographics of patrons visiting modern tea cafés. The findings reveal distinct patterns in gender, age groups, and 32 occupational segments, indicating preferences and trends that can shape business strategies. For instance, the survey might show that female patrons tend to favor cafés with a strong emphasis on aesthetics and social media presence, while male patrons may prioritize the quality of tea and variety of beverages available. Age group analysis could indicate that younger consumers are more likely to experiment with unique flavors and tea blends, while older generations may prefer traditional offerings.

Additionally, insights into occupational segments can inform cafés about the types of promotions or events that would resonate with their customers, such as networking nights for professionals or family-oriented events during weekends. By leveraging these demographic insights, tea cafés can strategically design their marketing campaigns, menu items, and ambiance to align with the preferences of their target audience, ultimately enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. In an increasingly competitive market, understanding and catering to the diverse demographics of patrons will be essential for modern tea cafés seeking to differentiate themselves and thrive in a dynamic landscape.

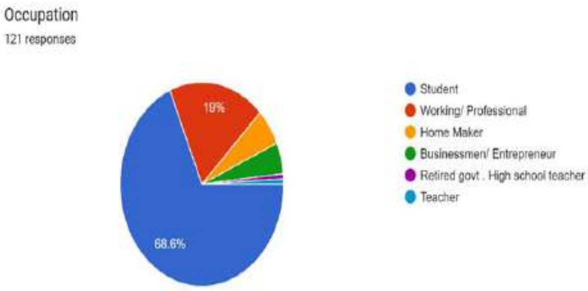
i. Gender Distribution:



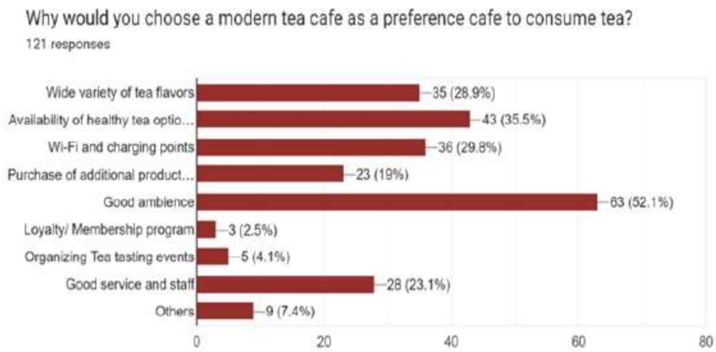
ii. Age Group Analysis:



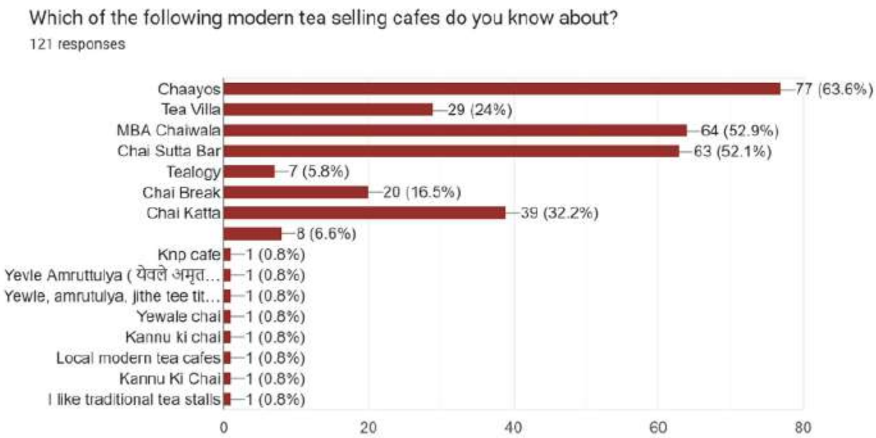
iii. Occupational Segmentation:



iv. Preferences and reasons of consumers for modern tea cafes over the traditional ones.



v. Consumers awareness/knowledge about different brands in the market.

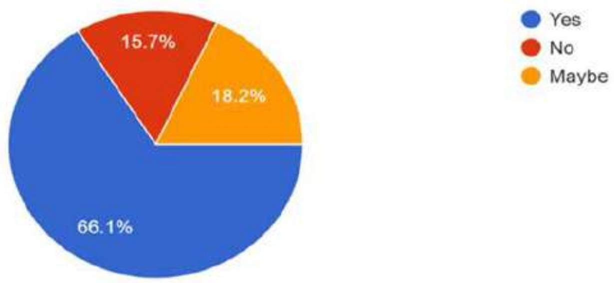


vi. Economic conditions that are influential to the consumer preference for Modern Tea Café

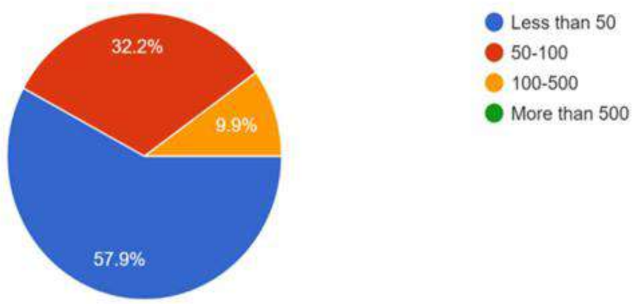
Modern tea cafés justify their premium pricing (₹100–₹400 per cup) through high-quality ingredients, innovative brewing, and immersive customer experiences. Unlike traditional economical tea options, these cafés offer artisanal blends, aesthetically pleasing spaces, and exceptional service, making tea drinking a social and lifestyle experience.

With diverse menus catering to health-conscious consumers and a focus on ambiance, modern tea cafés attract patrons seeking quality, creativity, and community. This shift reflects a cultural trend where experiences are valued over price, positioning modern tea cafés as a thriving choice for tea enthusiasts.

vii. Is the price of tea a deciding factor when choosing a tea café?

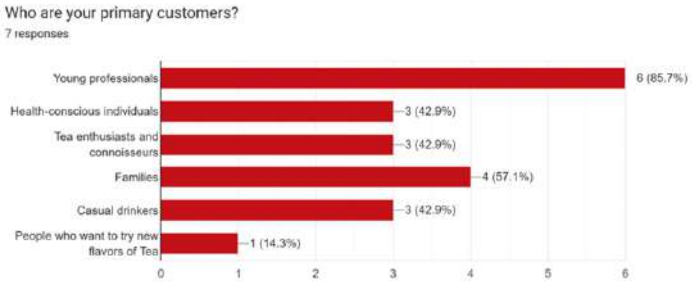


viii. What price would a consumer pay for a cup of tea in a Tea Café -

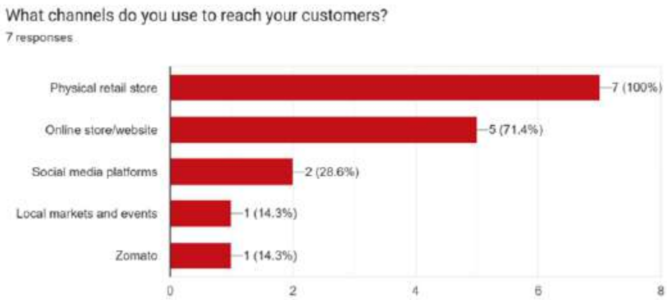


4.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF CONSUMER PREFERENCE DATA GATHERED THROUGH PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

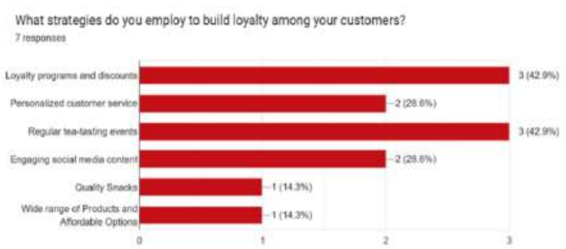
i) Understanding the target consumers of the café

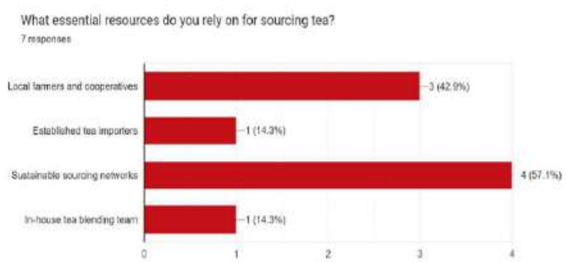


People Who Want to Try New Flavors of Tea (14.3%): This is the smallest segment, representing those with adventurous tastes who are looking to explore unique or seasonal tea flavors. Although this group is currently small, marketing exclusive or limited-time flavors might boost its size, potentially increasing overall interest in new or exotic tea experiences.



Zomato Only (1 response): Zomato, a food delivery platform, is used by one respondent exclusively as a way to reach customers. This suggests that for some businesses, food delivery services play a key role in accessing a broader customer base, especially for those who prioritize convenience. To maximize this channel, the business could focus on optimizing its Zomato listings, offering delivery deals, or promoting exclusive menu items available only via the platform.





5. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 FINDINGS

Findings from the Analysis of the Consumers

1. **Gender Distribution** – 56.2% female, 43% male, suggesting cafés should tailor marketing to women.
2. **Age Group** – 77.7% are 18-29 years old, highlighting the need for trendy, social spaces.
3. **Occupation** – 68.6% students, 19% professionals; students seek social/study spaces, professionals prioritize quality.
4. **Consumer Preferences** – Ambiance (52.1%) is key, followed by health-conscious options (35.5%) and tea variety (28.9%). Amenities like Wi-Fi (29.8%) are valued.
5. **Price Sensitivity** – 66.1% consider pricing important; 57.9% prefer tea under ₹50, while 32.2% are willing to pay more for quality.
6. **Brand Awareness** – Chaayos (63.6%) leads, followed by MBA Chaiwala (52.9%) and Chai Sutta Bar (52.1%), indicating a competitive market.

Cafés should align offerings with young, price-conscious consumers who value ambiance, affordability, and convenience.

Findings from the Analysis of the Interview with Tea Café Owners

1. **Product Innovation** – Unique blends, seasonal flavors, and health-conscious options keep the menu fresh and diverse.
2. **Customer-Centric Approach** – Personalized service and engagement build loyalty and enhance satisfaction.
3. **Strong Branding & Ambience** – Consistent décor, packaging, and aesthetics attract customers and boost recognition.
4. **Operational Challenges** – Supply chain management, quality control, and scalability remain key hurdles.

Success in the tea café industry hinges on innovation, customer focus, and efficient operations.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The survey highlights the growing preference for modern tea cafés over traditional tea shops, driven by factors such as inviting atmospheres, health-conscious options, and diverse tea flavors. With majority of respondents citing good ambiance as a major draw, it's clear that modern cafés offer spaces conducive to relaxation and social interaction. Additionally, the availability of unique tea blends and essential amenities like Wi-Fi further enhance the appeal of these establishments.

Brand awareness is another crucial aspect, with Chaayos leading in recognition at 63.6%, followed closely by MBA Chaiwala and Chai Sutta Bar, indicating strong market presence. The insights gathered suggest that modern tea cafés can capitalize on their strengths in service, quality, and environment to cater effectively to a youthful and diverse clientele.

Overall, these findings underscore the evolving tea-drinking culture and the potential for modern cafés to thrive by aligning their offerings with consumer preferences. The analysis of the interview with the tea café owner provided a well-rounded view of what it takes to run and grow a successful café business. Key themes such as product innovation, quality consistency, and creating a unique customer experience emerged as pivotal strategies.

The owner's focus on diverse tea blends, seasonal specialties, and branding through the café's ambiance demonstrated the importance of differentiation in a saturated market. Customer engagement and personalized service were highlighted as crucial for fostering strong relationships and building a loyal customer base. The owner's candid discussion of challenges like managing operations and scaling without compromising quality showcased the complexities of sustaining growth. Future plans included expanding through partnerships and diversifying offerings while maintaining brand integrity.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS FROM THE RESEARCHERS

While conducting a study of modern tea cafés using the Business Model Canvas (BMC) framework, it's essential to analyse each of the nine building blocks thoroughly. Here are suggestions on how to approach this research effectively:

1. Customer Segments

- Identify target customers (e.g., young professionals, health-conscious consumers, tea enthusiasts).
- Segment based on preferences for traditional vs. innovative tea flavors.

2. Value Propositions

- Highlight unique selling points like organic ingredients, special brewing methods, or a cozy ambiance.
- Emphasize health benefits with specialty teas for wellness (e.g., detox, stress relief).

3. Channels

- Balance between physical cafés and online ordering/delivery.
- Understand how customers discover and interact with the café (social media, word of mouth).

4. Customer Relationships

- Build community through events, workshops, and loyalty programs.
- Personalize experiences by customizing orders or remembering customer preferences.

5. Revenue Streams

- Generate revenue from tea sales, merchandise, catering, events, and subscriptions.
- Offer membership models for exclusive perks.

6. Key Resources

- Maintain strong supplier relationships for unique, high-quality teas.
- Employ knowledgeable staff to educate customers and enhance experiences.

7. Key Activities

- Focus on efficient daily operations (inventory, brewing, service).
- Promote through marketing campaigns, seasonal specials, and local collaborations.

8. Key Partnerships

- Collaborate with local artists, musicians, and wellness experts for events.
- Partner with local farms for fresh, sustainable ingredients.

9. Cost Structure

- Manage fixed (rent, salaries) and variable (ingredients) costs.
- Explore economies of scale through expansion to improve margins.

6. REFERENCE

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Heritage meets Economy Vishram Baug Wada: A Study of Local Business

Ojasvi Wartikar, Ayushi Khetle, Ruchika Singh
Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce, Pune

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the role of the heritage economy through tourism at the historic site of Vishram Baug Vada in Pune, India. It assesses the overall historical, cultural, and architectural character of the site as well as its impact on local tourism. Questionnaires were provided to thirty businesses near Vishram Baug Vada, in order to better evaluate the areas experiencing economic impact in areas of retail, food, handicraft, and tourism. This research investigates the steady flow of tourists in relation to the region's economic turnover, including a deeper investigation into the proportion of tourist business, annual sales, and their relationships with local artisans. Even with the benefits of tourism, challenges remain including seasonality, competition, limited infrastructure, and environmental issues. There were challenges collecting data as many owners were reluctant to provide, and there is quality - of life restrictions pertaining to the site. Among other things, the research suggests improving the access to the site, working in conjunction with local artisans, and managing the seasonality of business, in a place-based global conversation of balancing protecting heritage while supporting place-based economic development.

1. Introduction

The main aim of this research paper is to analyse the monetized shadow value of Vishrambaug Wada, Pune to organizations. Heritage tourism is emerging as a significant factor in Pune, a city that has a strong historical and cultural background. As Pune evolves to be the center for travelers interested in new and old civilizations, cultures, and arts, it is crucial to determine the role of preserved historical structures such as Vishrambaug Wada in the region's economy. Such understanding will be vital in determining the future course of managing the heritage and in the overall planning for tourism in the city. Pune is known as the cultural capital of Maharashtra, it has a number of history evidence that is related to Maratha, Peshwa and British rule. In the case of the city, they chose the heavy reliance on the past, which makes historical preservation a critical component of development. In an economic sense these heritage areas can promote tourism development, increase business outlets and augment the overall growth of the area. This is why the restoration of such places is not only ethical but also a potential business venture that should not go unnoticed.

Vishrambaug Wada the chosen structure for this study, is a splendid example of Maratha architecture and has immense historical significance. It was constructed in the first 10 years of nineteenth century as the palace of Peshwa Baji Rao II and is actually symbolic of the Peshwa structure and power. Nowadays, the architectural design of the Wada and carved woods and spacious yard areas still draw history lovers. Unfortunately, even though Vishrambaug Wada has great cultural and architectural significance, it still remains a village with a hidden gem for a much larger tourist traffic. This research explores the managerial issues affecting Vishrambaug Wada, which contribute to the low number of tourist visits. While the local businesses around the area operate smoothly, their success is not driven by the tourists visiting Vishrambaug Wada, as there are very few visitors to the site. This mismanagement has resulted in minimal economic returns from tourism-related activities. Despite being a culturally rich and aesthetically appealing location, Vishrambaug Wada has not been effectively promoted, remains under-financed, and is poorly utilized as a potential source of income. The lack of tourist engagement limits local interactions with foreign visitors and impacts the site's economic potential. Therefore, this study seeks to explore these issues in an effort to understand the economic value that remains unrealized due to the current status of Vishrambaug Wada.

1.1 Site Description

Historical Background and Importance:

Vishrambaug Wada, a historic 200-year-old mansion in Sadashiv Peth, Pune, was built in 1807 and took six years to complete at a cost of approximately Rs 2 lakhs. It served as the residence of Peshwa Baji Rao II for 11 years, as he considered Shaniwar Wada unlucky. Covering 20,000 sq. ft., the three-storeyed mansion is an architectural masterpiece featuring intricate wooden carvings, suru-shaped teak columns, a terracotta facade, and a stone floor. The chief architects, Mansaram Laxman and Daji Suthar, designed it in the Peshwa style. Notable elements include the darbar hall, where musicians once performed, Mastani Mahal—a grand dancing hall—and the nagarkhana (Meghadambari), a musical complex. In 1880, a fire severely damaged the wada, leaving only the facade intact, which was later reconstructed. Over time, it was repurposed as an educational institute, initially hosting Hindoo College in 1821, which evolved into Poona College and is now Deccan College in Yerawada. Despite its transformations, Vishrambaug Wada remains a symbol of Pune's rich heritage.

During British rule in India, the wada was even used as a jail. The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) bought the wada from British authorities in 1930 for Rs 1,00,000 and used it as their office until 1958. The wada is recognised as a Grade I heritage site by the PMC. Today, a part of the wada is open to the public and the rest is being used as government offices like the Birth and Death Registration Office of the PMC. Another section is used as a post office. The premises also house a handicraft shop by Savitri Marketing Institution for Ladies Empowerment (SMILE). SMILE is an umbrella organisation created by the Sfurti Mahila Mandal and the Urban Community Development Department of the PMC to sell products made by underprivileged women and physically or mentally disabled people. Since 2001, the wada houses a permanent exhibition hall curated by historian Babasaheb Purandare, called 'Punawadi te Punyanagari'. It is dedicated to artefacts from the Maratha Empire and depicts the history of the city. A staircase made of wood and stone leads to the exhibition hall. The wada lacks proper maintenance and one can find broken tiles and rods lying in the premises.

1.2 Architectural Significance

Vishram Baug Vada represents quintessential Maratha architecture with striking elements of Mughal design-the fusion that was there between the cultures during this period. It measures an area of approximately 20,000 square feet and is constructed primarily of teak wood. The wada consists of multitiers with ornate teak-wood columns, balconies, and windows. The extensive use of wood is coupled with minute details in the carvings, which are a hallmark of artisans from that era. It is designed with a typical central courtyard of traditional Indian architecture, allowing room for congregations and events along with cross-ventilation and natural lighting. The carved wooden pillars and the arches on the facade of the wada display motifs depicting scenes from Hindu mythology and Peshwa history. The carvings, besides the grand durbar or assembly hall, give the wada an appearance of a kingly residence.

However, architectural disposition also had a functional raison d'être in that it represented a certain lifestyle the Peshwas wanted to live. While public meetings and discussions were held in the main hall, the upper floors, reserved for the Peshwa, housed his residence. It also housed guesthouses for visitors, thus serving as a social bastion in Pune.

Age and other environmental factors have taken a mighty toll on the architectural features of Vishram Baug Vada through wear and tear over the years. Yet, it remains one of the finest examples of wooden architecture in India, reflecting back the design sensibilities of the time along with the craftsmanship that went into making it.

1.3 Cultural Relevance

Vishrambaug Wada apart from being a reminiscence of the Peshwa reign is a culturally prominent structure in the city of Pune. Even though it was constructed as the dwelling place of Peshwa Baji Rao II in the first half of the nineteenth century, it is historically significant for different eras up to the present day in terms of the cultural landscape of Pune. Education is one of the most important parameters because Vishrambaug Wada holds immense cultural value – as not only a reference to traditional knowledge. The Wada was once home to a Ved Shala—a school to learn about the scriptures of ancient India which was particularly embraced in the Veda. This connects the site to the tradition of scholarly learning and development which the city is known for thus underlining its importance as a learning hub. Pune has earned the epithet the 'Oxford of the East' and structured like Vishrambaug Wada symbolizes the city's honorable resolve to protect and propagate such systems of education. Thus, Vishrambaug Wada was of greater importance during the freedom movement of India. It was used as a meeting point for several political functions and meetings that led to the fight against British colonization. It had large halls and open spaces, which were important for the leaders to gather, plan, and rally people for the revolt.

Today, Vishrambaug Wada symbolizes the multi-generational history of the city of Pune, where the building characterized by Maratha architecture belongs to the current historical phase of education and politics. Today the Wada is used as a municipal office and contains a museum which gives information of the historical and cultural background of the city. It continues to function as a place for cultural activities and shows and thus preserves the link to the city's ever-changing persona. Nevertheless, Vishrambaug Wada, although having a strong cultural background, has not remained an active lively heritage component. Promotion and poor management have contributed to low awareness of tourists, thus making them fail to explore its many possibilities of history.

Indeed, more attention and investment need to be given to this Wada as it has acted as an educational institute, political heirloom, and a venue for contemporary cultural preservation. Only with an acknowledgement of these many roles, Pune can fully understand how Vishrambaug Wada can serve as both a cultural and economic asset.

1.4 Current Condition

Vishrambaug Wada, once a historical and cultural landmark of Pune, is now in a state of neglect despite being under reconstruction for the past seven years. The ongoing work has led to restricted access, limiting public engagement with its architectural beauty and heritage. A lack of promotional efforts means that even locals remain unaware of its significance, further reducing footfall.

Additionally, inadequate visitor amenities such as seating, clean washrooms, and guided tours diminish the experience for those who do visit. The absence of parking facilities adds to accessibility issues. Surrounded by commercial structures, the Wada blends into the urban landscape rather than standing out as a heritage monument. Without proper signages or historical explanations, visitors are left disconnected from its rich past, making it a lost treasure rather than a celebrated landmark.

2. Literature Review

Heritage Conservation: Theoretical and Global Trends

Heritage conservation goes beyond preserving historical structures; it safeguards cultural identity, traditions, and historical narratives that shape contemporary societies (Lowenthal, 1985). It plays a crucial role in maintaining national heritage, fostering cultural diversity, and preserving collective memory. However, balancing conservation with economic development, particularly through tourism, remains a challenge (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Sites like Vishrambaug Wada face the dual pressure of attracting visitors while ensuring structural integrity and historical authenticity. Sustainable conservation efforts should integrate local communities, ensuring they benefit economically and socially, as emphasized by UNESCO.

Economic Effects of Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism serves as a key driver of economic and cultural sustainability, generating employment and supporting small businesses (World Bank, 2013). In India, historic sites attract millions of domestic and international visitors, boosting sectors like hospitality, retail, and local handicrafts (Ministry of Tourism, 2020). Pune’s heritage sites, including Vishrambaug Wada and Shaniwar Wada, not only contribute to tourism revenue but also provide a platform for local artisans specializing in wood carving, pottery, and weaving. Studies suggest that heritage tourism fosters demand for traditional crafts, preserving centuries-old skills while providing artisans with financial stability (Eicher, 1990; Bhardwaj, 2012).

Cultural Sites of Pune and Tourism Research

Pune’s rich cultural heritage, with sites like Vishrambaug Wada, Shaniwar Wada, and Aga Khan Palace, attracts over a million tourists annually, significantly boosting the local economy. Tourism supports businesses such as eateries, handicraft stalls, and tour operators. Research by Kulkarni highlights how heritage tourism benefits local shop owners, while initiatives like Swadesh Darshan promote cultural tourism. However, challenges persist, including inadequate infrastructure and poor signage (Joshi, 2017). Additionally, a disconnect between tourism projects and community-led development limits opportunities for sustainable growth, highlighting the need for better management and integration strategies.

Literature in Vishram Baug Vada

There are very few specific studies of Vishram Baug Vada, although the site is often highlighted in relation to wider issues of Pune's cultural heritage. In Deshmukh's study on the urban development of Pune, Vishram Baug Vada is briefly analyzed as one of the principal historical points that are grossly underutilized for tourism. Here, the writer emphasizes that overall infrastructure, including the further development of adjacent areas, is critical in order for the developing tourist population to be accurately served. Patwardhan, writing on Maratha architecture in 2016, states that 'Vishram Baug Vada is amasterpiece of the Maratha style of designing'; yet reflects that it has the potential to be a great source for tourism only if the official machinery gets more involved in its preservation. He feels that public-private partnerships may play a significant role in helping to revive this place of tourist attraction. He also underlines that the nearby cultural heritage sites in Pune make this site an extremely suitable candidate to be included in circuits of heritage tourism.

3. Methodology

This paper relied on data collection through questionnaires, which were handed out among 30 business owners in and around Vishram Baug Vada. The questionnaire is toward the economic impact of tourism at the site, with questions about business operations, customer demographics, and challenges arising due to tourism. Data analysis was based on percentage- based calculation of how patterns regarding business operations and local economic activity emerge. The analysis was based on percentage-based calculation of how patterns regarding business operations and local economic activity emerge. The questionnaire structured was the primary data gathering tool. It covered almost all aspects of the business going around Vishram Baug Vada. The questions were divided into sections focusing on basic information on the businesses (business type, years in business) company demographics by customers, for example: percentage of tourists, age groups Economic impact of tourism, for example: impact of Vishram Baug Vada on sales, seasonal fluctuations, income from tourist sales, Number of employees in operation, operating costs, Problems of the businesses involved with competition and otherwise involving problems with the infrastructure, Collaboration of local artisans with a description of source and benefits the collaboration, Tourism behavior, products or services in demand, different promoting strategies, Environmental impact of tourism operations, otherwise undesirable ones, Govt. support that they received, for local businesses, incentives for SHG.

These questions were constructed for gathering specific data regarding how Vishram Baug Vada influences business performance and local economic activity. The data was categorized and analyzed based on common themes so as to determine trends and contributions to the economy.

4. Results

Years in Business: The average business in this area is around 25 years old, with a median of 20 years. This would imply that most of these businesses are quite established and experienced with some degree of strong presence within the local market. The mode of 20 years suggests that a high proportion of these businesses have existed for about two decades, reflecting a stable commercial environment. This still suggests that these companies have not really changed much from the past, but this may be a bad omen in that they are not really growing.

Income from Tourists: Tourism seems a rather insignificant source of revenue for most businesses. The average percentage in tourist revenues is 6.8%, while the median is 7.5%. The modal answer was that one earns 12.5% of their income from tourists, that is, a very small percentage of the total income depends on visitors. This would mean that even though Vishram Baug Wada has been able to attract a few tourists, it hasn't changed the economic scene in the mindset of most business owners. Most probably, most businesses are served more by local patrons than tourists.

Number of Employees: Most businesses around are small-scale enterprises. It has an average of 1.6 employees and a median of 0, which implies that most of these businesses are owned and managed personally by the owners without any other staff members on board. The mode of 0 employees further confirms the same, showing that most businesses are owner- managed. This articulates in the commercial ecosystem's personalized, small-business nature, where most shops are probably family-owned or individually managed.

Seasonal Fluctuations: Most business owners claimed seasonal effects in sales trends, which they said are heavily influenced at least during important festivals like Diwali and Ganpati. This suggests that even though tourist activities are not among the significant influencers of business fluctuations at large, the local culture and celebrations play a big role in influencing business trends. The peaks at festival times would represent short, sharp spikes in demand; likely enough to balance otherwise stable or low periods of business activity.

Tourism and Competition:
The majority of businesses do not realize increased revenue from the presence of tourism, but competition has generally increased significantly due to the increased numbers of people and hawkers. While businesses benefit in light of the incoming tourist, they are still facing problems such as an infestation of parking and congested traffic, as well as increased informal sector pressure that reflects unregistered or unsafe business practices, including hawking. To cut it short, businesses in and around Vishram Baug Wada have been sound enough to withstand for hundreds of years. Tourism may provide some additional income, but most of the businesses here depend on locals and are, therefore, seasonally vulnerable and often ferociously competitive. Not to be forgotten that many of these businesses are self-sufficient and run with minimal staff further emphasizing the requirement for home-town patronage and personal service. This exemplifies a local, small scale nature of the businesses with heavy dependence on word-of-mouth and seasonal fluctuations tied to festivals like Diwali and Ganpati.

5. Challenges and Issues

Collecting data on the Vishrambaug Wada presented several significant challenges. The primary issue was the lack of proper facilities within the wada for the comfort of tourists, including insufficient parking, inadequate washroom facilities, and the absence of tour guides or information portals. Also the local tourism bus in Pune has stopped visiting the location after the COVID-19 pandemic. This deficiency in amenities likely contributes to the reduced visitor engagement and overall experience.

Moreover, the wada has been undergoing renovation for the past seven years, restricting access to most of the property and complicating efforts to gather comprehensive data. This prolonged renovation has limited our ability to explore and document the wada's full scope, affecting the accuracy and depth of our findings. Interactions with the wada staff further complicated data collection. The staff were notably uncooperative, displaying a level of arrogance that hindered our research efforts. Their reluctance to assist and their attempts to expel us only underscored the challenges faced in engaging with the wada's operational team. The ban on photography and videography further restricted our ability to collect visual evidence, which could have been crucial for a more detailed analysis.

In terms of primary data collection, several respondents were uncooperative. Many were unwilling to provide detailed answers, with some perceiving the questions as intrusive and refusing to respond. Others answered vaguely, seemingly eager to conclude the interaction without engaging meaningfully. A few even expressed frustration, attributing the decline in visitor numbers to our presence. These factors collectively hindered the quality and comprehensiveness of the data gathered, presenting a substantial challenge to the research process.

6. Recommendations

This restriction can be in terms of photography prohibition, as well as restrictions placed on the free access of certain areas such as the upper floors of Vishram Baug Wada. Controlled access, especially to the upper floors, will improve the cultural experience since better coverage will take place regarding historical architecture at the site While the basic facilities like parking, toilets, and portals of information are better improved, it will create a comfortable and informative visit for tourists. Proper parking spaces near the site often face inconvenience and hamper potential visitors. Thus, guided tours, either through live guides or interactive information portals, would better explain the rich history of Vishram Baug Wada. Moreover, well maintained washrooms and rest areas would ensure that a lot of time could be spent visiting the heritage site by the family category of tourists.

This has been going on for the past seven years, thus significantly slowing down its preservation and limiting its appeal. The swift completion of restoration work is pertinent not only to maintain the integrity of the structure but also to enhance its appeal as a fully restored historical site. Movement at this pace will allow restricted sections to be reopened while serving up a more cohesive and attractive site for visitors.

There is scarce public transport to Vishram Baug Wada, and fewer parking facilities. Developments in the local transport infrastructure, including instituting shuttle services or connecting the site to the local transportation nodes, will make accessing the site easier for the residents and visitors. This may imply a trend toward more frequent visits to the site thus supporting the sustainable tourism model as increased accessibility without flooding the local traffic system appeals to a greater number of visitors.

7. Conclusion

The information gathered about the economy influenced by Vishrambaug Wada leads to the fact that although the local business at the place Tulshibaug is quite booming, it has little contribution of the Wada. Though the heritage value of Vishrambaug Wada is highly immense, its economic benefits cannot be used up fully due to inadequate maintenance and preservation. With greater maintenance of the Wada and utilization of historical significance, there would be an increased probability for tourism and cultural relation-most importantly, to help local businesses and keep the legacy alive in Pune.

The outcomes seem to show an opportunity to increase the preservation of Vishrambaug Wada and upgrade it as a more significant landmark of culture. Appropriately conserving the monument along with its historical value can increase tourism, thus making the Wada even more interlinked with the local economy. The unity between heritage sites and local businesses can produce mutual benefits in relation to culture preservation and economic development. Unless committed action is taken to preserve the Wada, the influence in the adjacent business ecosystem would not go beyond its interdependence

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A Study of Challenges and Opportunities Faced by Women Entrepreneurs of Small-Scale Businesses

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the business operations, marketing strategies, challenges, and growth opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs leading small-scale businesses in India. Through a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods, the research highlights the increasing participation of women in entrepreneurship while identifying gender-specific barriers that hinder their business growth. Key challenges include limited access to funding, societal expectations, and the need to balance personal and professional responsibilities. Despite these hurdles, the study uncovers several growth opportunities, driven by the resilience and adaptability of women entrepreneurs, along with emerging support systems such as government schemes, mentorship programs, and access to networks. The research also delves into several key areas, including: an introduction to women entrepreneurship, different types of women entrepreneurs, challenges faced by them, government schemes supporting their efforts, the growth of women entrepreneurs in India, and organizations and exhibitions promoting women-owned businesses. The findings emphasize the importance of tailored institutional support, skill development, and community-driven initiatives in fostering an enabling entrepreneurial ecosystem for women. These insights provide valuable implications for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders committed to supporting women entrepreneurs.

KEYWORDS: Meaning of women entrepreneur, MSMEs, problems faced by Indian women entrepreneurs, Indian women-entrepreneurs

1. INTRODUCTION

Running a business is challenging, especially for women. Despite their skills and efforts, women entrepreneurs often struggle more than men due to limited access to capital, networks, and societal bias. According to a World Bank report, only 7% of entrepreneurs in India are women, many starting businesses out of necessity rather than ambition.

However, progress is visible. Women now own 13.5–15.7 million agribusinesses and MSMEs in India, with female entrepreneurship growing from 14% to 20% over the last decade. Education plays a key role, equipping women with the skills and confidence they need to succeed. Women entrepreneurs, once restricted to household roles, are now leading businesses and creating jobs. Family support, education, and institutional initiatives like incubation centers and mentorship programs have been vital to their success. Despite persistent challenges like funding gaps and competition, women entrepreneurs are steadily increasing in number, driven by financial independence and the desire to create social impact. This research explores their motivations, challenges, and the policies needed to foster a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

1.1 GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Women entrepreneurs in India face numerous challenges that hinder their business growth and success. Some of the key challenges include:

1. **Lack of Funding & Financial Support** – Women often struggle to secure funding due to a lack of collateral and stringent lending criteria, relying heavily on personal savings or family support.
2. **Balancing Home & Business Responsibilities** – As primary caretakers, women face difficulty managing both family and business, leading to stress and time constraints.
3. **Gender Inequality & Limited Industry Access** – Despite progress, male-dominated industries, pay gaps, and discrimination continue to limit women's opportunities and recognition in entrepreneurship.
4. **Limited Networks & Industry Knowledge** – Many women lack access to professional networks, mentorship, and industry expertise, making it difficult to find vendors, collaborators, and growth opportunities.
5. **Fear of Risk & Competition** – Women entrepreneurs often hesitate to take risks due to societal pressures and fear of failure, while also facing tough market competition with limited resources.
6. **Safety & Mobility Issues** – Concerns about personal safety, restrictions on solo travel, and limited access to transportation hinder women's ability to expand and manage their businesses effectively.

1.2 HOW EXHIBITIONS HELP IN EMPOWERING AND PROMOTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Exhibitions play a vital role in empowering women entrepreneurs by offering them visibility, networking opportunities, skill development, and access to new markets. Here are four key ways exhibitions contribute to their growth:

1. **Market Exposure & Customer Engagement** – Exhibitions provide women entrepreneurs with a platform to showcase their products, reach new markets, and gain direct customer feedback. This exposure helps them refine their offerings, expand their customer base, and test new products before large-scale investment.
2. **Networking & Business Growth** – These events facilitate connections with investors, buyers, suppliers, and industry experts, enabling women to form valuable partnerships, secure funding, and gain mentorship. Such networks are crucial for long-term business sustainability and expansion.
3. **Skill Development & Confidence Building** – Through hands-on experience, women entrepreneurs improve their business acumen, sales strategies, and customer interactions. Participation also boosts their confidence, helping them overcome barriers and tackle longer entrepreneurial challenges.
4. **Access to Resources & Market Expansion** – Exhibitions connect women to government programs, financial aid, and training workshops. They also help women entrepreneurs break geographical constraints, allowing them to compete in broader, more competitive markets.

1.3 MARKETING STRATEGIES USED BY THESE SMALL-SCALE WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Women entrepreneurs use various marketing strategies to grow their businesses effectively. Here are four key approaches:

1. **Social Media & Online Marketing** – Platforms like Instagram and Facebook help showcase products, engage customers, and run targeted ads. Having a website or selling on e-commerce platforms expands their reach beyond local markets.
2. **Exhibitions & Word of Mouth** – Participating in trade shows and exhibitions provides direct customer interaction and immediate sales. Positive customer experiences and testimonials further enhance credibility and attract new buyers.
3. **Collaborations & Community Engagement** – Partnering with influencers, local businesses, and community organizations boosts visibility. Engaging in local events and social causes fosters brand trust and customer loyalty.
4. **Content & Email Marketing** – Sharing valuable content like blogs, how-to guides, and newsletters helps build brand authority, nurture customer relationships, and drive repeat business.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiple studies have been conducted by numerous researchers to determine the entrepreneurial journey of women entrepreneurs.

The objective of *Ms. Yogita Sharma's (2013)* study titled **"Women Entrepreneurship in India"** provides an in-depth look at the rising presence of women in entrepreneurship, despite the many challenges they face. Women entrepreneurs currently represent 10% of the entrepreneurial landscape, but their growth is hindered by societal constraints, family responsibilities, limited access to education, and financial barriers. Push factors, such as financial need, and pull factors, like the desire for independence and self-fulfillment, motivate women to start their own businesses. The government has taken steps to support women entrepreneurs through various initiatives under the Five-Year Plans, including vocational training, credit schemes, and special programs aimed at empowering women in rural and urban areas.

The study of *Dr.B.Ramesh (2018)* titled **"Problems and Prospects of Women Entrepreneurship in India"** emphasizes the increasing importance of women entrepreneurs in contributing to economic development. While women are actively entering various industries, they face a range of challenges, such as limited access to finance, lack of family support, and societal constraints like male dominance and mobility restrictions. These challenges hinder their ability to compete effectively with male entrepreneurs. The government has introduced several programs to support women entrepreneurs, including vocational training and financial assistance through institutions like the National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) and regional financial institutions.

The article **"Empowering Women through Entrepreneurship Development in Emerging Economies: An Overview"** offers valuable insights into women's entrepreneurship's role in global empowerment. Strengths include emphasizing women's economic empowerment, highlighting the growing importance of women business owners, and recognizing entrepreneurship development as a tool for empowerment. However, limitations include a desk study scope, a lack of primary research, and a general overview without specific case studies. Key takeaways underscore women entrepreneurship development's vitality, business ownership's self-fulfillment benefits, and emerging economies' gains from women's economic participation. Future research should prioritize empirical studies, case analyses, and policy implications. This article provides a foundational understanding, recommending in-depth analyses for policy decisions.

"Women Entrepreneurship in India: Challenges and Opportunities" by *Hiba Ahsan* highlights the article's strengths, including its comprehensive overview, examination of challenges, analysis of influencing factors, and real-life case study insights. However, limitations include a lack of depth, empirical data, and clear recommendations. Key takeaways emphasize women entrepreneurship's impact on economic growth, gender equality, and social development, and the role of cultural norms, access to finance, education, and support systems. Future research suggestions include gathering empirical data, analyzing specific challenges, examining government policies, and investigating NGOs' and women's groups' roles. The article provides a solid foundation for understanding women's entrepreneurship in India.

The study **"A Study on Challenges of Women Entrepreneurs in India"** by *Dr. G. Yoganandan and G. Gopalselvam* highlights key challenges women face in India's liberalized economy, shaped by patriarchal norms. While it offers strong contextual insights, it lacks empirical data, has a narrow focus, and defines women's entrepreneurship restrictively. Key takeaways include the growing role of women entrepreneurs, societal barriers, and the need for education. Future research should consist of data, success stories, and policy analysis to build on this foundation.

2.2 RESEARCH GAP

The research gap highlighted in the reviewed studies focuses on several areas. While existing literature covers the general challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, there is a lack of empirical data and region-specific case studies that delve into the unique issues encountered in various parts of India. There is also limited exploration of the long-term impact of government policies and programs on women's entrepreneurship. Future research should prioritize in-depth investigations, including surveys, case studies, and analyses of the roles of NGOs and women's support groups, to create a comprehensive understanding.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Research design encompasses the general approach that a researcher uses to integrate different components of a study logically and coherently. It provides a blueprint for conducting research and serves as a roadmap for the entire research process.

3.2 Need for this Study

The need to study this is critical for several reasons. First, women entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in driving economic growth and job creation, particularly in developing economies. Understanding the specific challenges they face—such as limited access to funding, societal biases, and inadequate support systems—can inform targeted interventions. Additionally, the study can uncover opportunities for growth and innovation that women-led businesses can leverage, ultimately contributing to gender equality and sustainable development. By providing data-driven insights, this research can guide policymakers, stakeholders, and support organizations in creating an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs to flourish. This focus on empirical evidence will be essential in shaping future policies and programs aimed at empowering women in the entrepreneurial landscape. Establishing mentorship programs that connect women entrepreneurs with experienced business leaders can offer valuable guidance and support. Additionally, creating dedicated funding initiatives and financial literacy programs tailored for women can help bridge the access-to-capital gap. Finally, implementing networking platforms and workshops can foster collaboration and skill development among women entrepreneurs, enhancing their ability to thrive in competitive markets. One method to improve support systems is to establish mentorship programs that connect experienced entrepreneurs with newcomers, providing guidance and encouragement.

3.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The study was designed to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To explore businesses operated by small-scale women entrepreneurs
2. To understand various marketing strategies used by women entrepreneurs
3. To understand the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs
4. To explore the opportunities for their growth

3.5 SAMPLING UNIT

The primary data for this study were collected through field visits and personal interviews conducted at **Kalagram**, a regional exhibition platform dedicated to showcasing local arts, crafts, and small-scale businesses, particularly those led by women. Kalagram serves as a marketplace for artisans and entrepreneurs to directly interact with customers, network with peers, and gain visibility for their ventures. It is known for promoting traditional and innovative products made by local talent, fostering cultural entrepreneurship, and empowering women-led businesses.

As part of the research, the team visited Kalagram and interviewed approximately **50 women entrepreneurs** participating in the exhibition. These women represented a diverse range of small-scale enterprises, including handicrafts, textiles, home décor, organic products, food and beverages, fashion accessories, and more. This sampling approach enabled a richer, ground-level understanding of their lived entrepreneurial experiences, challenges, marketing strategies, and perceptions of growth opportunities. The findings gathered through these interviews form a crucial component of this study's empirical analysis.

3.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The studies have certain limitations, which have been mentioned below, so that the findings of the study can be looked at from the proper perspective.

1. **Scope of Discussions:** Due to the researchers' limited prior experience in conducting research and writing extensive academic papers, the scope and depth of the discussions in this study may not reach the same level as those produced by more seasoned scholars. Nevertheless, the researchers have made a concerted effort to maintain the integrity and quality of their research throughout the process.
2. **Content:** The sample used for the survey is limited to women entrepreneurs who participated in the exhibition, which may restrict the diversity of perspectives and experiences represented in the study. Consequently, the findings may not capture the full range of challenges and opportunities faced by women in different contexts, limiting the applicability of the results to a wider audience.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA GATHERED THROUGH INTERVIEW

Women entrepreneurs primarily rely on personal savings, community-based financial programs, and microfinance institutions to fund their businesses. Many struggle with accessing formal credit due to a lack of collateral or financial history, making alternative funding sources like self-help groups and government grants crucial. Despite these challenges, their passion for business drives them forward, although many face difficulties in marketing and communication, which limit their business growth.

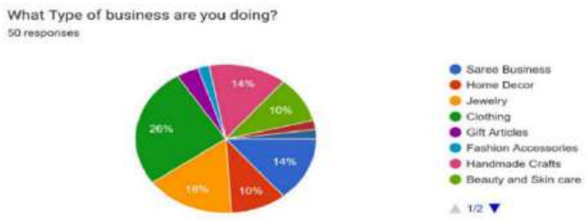
Market access for women entrepreneurs is evolving, with many selling in local markets, community fairs, and small retail outlets. However, a shift toward digital platforms is evident, as social media and online marketplaces help them reach broader audiences. Exhibitions and trade shows also provide essential opportunities for visibility, networking, and customer engagement, enabling them to refine their products based on direct feedback.

Financial literacy remains a key challenge, with many women relying on basic bookkeeping methods. Some benefit from government-led financial training, improving their budgeting and investment skills. Support from women's cooperatives, mentorship programs, and business associations further strengthens their resilience, offering both financial aid and guidance.

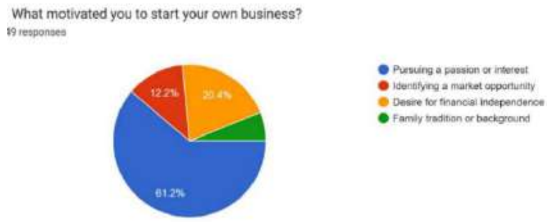
As digital marketing and alternative financing options expand, these entrepreneurs are finding new ways to sustain and scale their businesses despite ongoing financial barriers.

4.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA GATHERED THROUGH QUESTIONNAIRE

1. **What Type of business are you doing?**

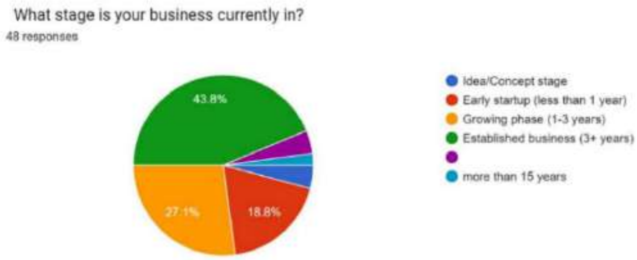


2. **What motivated you to start your own business?**

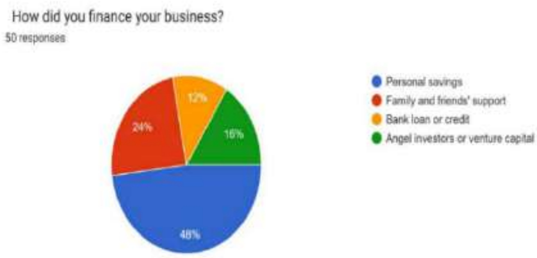


3. **Do you think being an entrepreneur has given you a unique identity?**

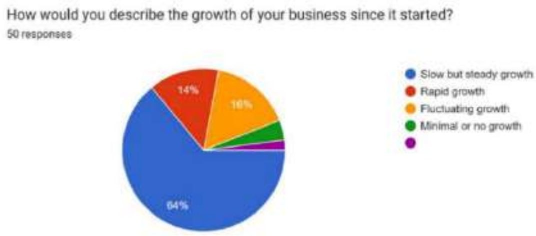
4. **What stage is your business currently in?**



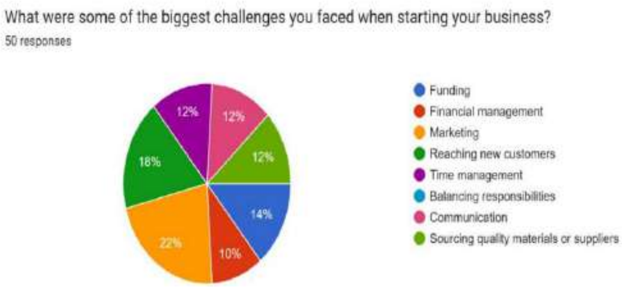
5. **How did you finance your business?**



6. **How would you describe the growth of your business since it started?**



7. **What were some of the biggest challenges you faced when starting your business?**



5 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 FINDINGS

This research investigates the challenges and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs in today's business landscape. By understanding these dynamics, we aim to highlight the unique experiences of women entrepreneurs and provide recommendations for fostering their success.

- **Top Challenges:** Marketing (22%) and reaching new customers (18%) are the biggest hurdles for women entrepreneurs. Funding (14%), time management (12%), sourcing quality materials (12%), communication (12%), and financial management (10%) also pose difficulties.
- **Funding Sources:** Most women entrepreneurs rely on personal savings (48%) and family/friends (24%). External funding options like investors (16%) and bank loans (12%) are less common.
- **Family Support:** 75.5% received strong family support, 16.3% had mixed reactions, and a small percentage faced indifference.
- **Marketing Barriers:** Key issues include affordable marketing (22%), customer communication (22%), market competition (16%), and managing marketing alongside other tasks.
- **Sales Channels:** Social media (46.9%) is the most preferred, followed by exhibitions (32.7%). Word of mouth (8.2%), personal websites (6.1%), and online marketplaces (4.1%) are used less frequently.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Our research highlights several critical challenges and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs. Marketing and reaching new customers emerged as the most significant obstacles to growth, alongside struggles with funding, time management, and operational concerns like sourcing quality materials and financial management.

- Key challenges include marketing and reaching new customers, which are essential for growth.
- Additional obstacles include funding, time management, sourcing quality materials, and financial management.
- These challenges highlight both operational and personal hurdles that impact business success.
- Most women entrepreneurs rely on personal savings and support from family and friends to finance their businesses.
- Angel investors and bank loans are less common, emphasizing a reliance on self-funding and close networks.
- Exhibitions are valuable for increasing sales and revenue.
- They also help enhance brand visibility, provide networking opportunities, and offer access to new markets.
- These events support both business growth and learning.
- The majority of women entrepreneurs receive strong family support when starting their businesses.
-

5.3 SUGGESTIONS

As Sheryl Sandberg once said, “We need women at all levels, including the top, to change the dynamic, reshape the conversation, and make sure women's voices are heard and heeded, not overlooked and ignored.”

- Develop women-centric financial products like character-based loans or revenue-based financing that don’t rely on collateral.
- Simplify loan application processes and offer lower interest rates to encourage women to seek formal credit.
- Implement robust financial literacy programs focusing on budgeting, cash flow management, and bookkeeping.
- Collaborate with NGOs, government bodies, and educational institutions to provide accessible workshops, online courses, and mentoring.
- Launch targeted awareness campaigns using local radio, social media, and community outreach to inform women about available government programs.
- Simplify the application process for government schemes to encourage greater participation.
- Provide financial assistance or subsidies to help women entrepreneurs participate in local, regional, and national exhibitions.
- Enable women to showcase their products and services, gain exposure, and benefit from networking opportunities that can lead to partnerships, mentorship, and sales growth.
- Implement these initiatives to create a supportive environment that enhances women entrepreneurs' capacity to succeed and contribute to economic growth.

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The Commerce of Heritage: A case study of Economic dynamics around Shaniwar Wada, Pune

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ABSTRACT

The historical fort, Shaniwar Wada, was once the home of the Peshwas from the Maratha Empire. The study examines the socio-economic impact of vendors and workers in and around Shaniwar Wada. The research points out that most of the workers around the site are 'men' and examines how tourism at Shaniwar Wada impacts local artisans. Through field observations and interviews, we discovered that the number of tourists, especially during holidays and special events like the Indian Independence Day, and Republic Day, greatly increases economic activity. While many artisans gain from the rise in visitors, some vendors struggle with the competition. This study highlights the economic influence of heritage tourism and its uneven effects on the local economy.

Keywords: *Socio-economic impact, Local commerce, Tourism, Heritage tourism, Economic influence*

1. Introduction

Shaniwar Wada is a historic fort in Pune, Maharashtra, that stands as a testament to the Maratha Empire and also acts as a lively center for local business. Built in the 18th century, this famous landmark draws in thousands of visitors annually, including history enthusiasts to local residents.

1.1. Overview

Over time the area surrounding Shaniwar Wada has transformed significantly showcasing the complex relationship between heritage, tourism, and economic growth. This research studies the economic activities surrounding Shaniwar Wada, looking into how its historical importance influences modern trade and the lives of the community.

In the past few years, tourism has significantly transformed the economy surrounding Shaniwar Wada, leading to growth in sectors like retail, and hospitality, but mostly food services. Local vendors, artisans, and small business owners have adjusted their products and services to satisfy a more diverse range of customers. It's important to understand and accept these changes because they not only improve the local economy but also help maintain the cultural identity of the area.
This research plans to investigate these dynamics using both qualitative and quantitative methods, shedding light on how local commerce flourishes alongside its historical importance. The link between heritage tourism and the development of local economies is complex. More visitors can mean more sales and limelight for local shops, but it might also lead to refurbishment and the loss of cultural traditions. By exploring how different groups, tourists, local businesses, and government bodies work together economically and aim for sustainable business practices and community growth uncut.

1.2. Site description

Built in 1732, Shaniwar Wada, was the prominent seat of the Peshwas of the Maratha Empire until 1818. This site is important not only for its impressive architecture but also for its role in Indian politics during the 18th century. The foundation stone of Shaniwar Wada was laid by Peshwa Baji Rao I on January 10, 1730. The term 'Shaniwar' means 'Saturday' in Marathi, while 'Wada' refers to a 'residential complex'. Originally planned as a seven-story stone structure, construction faced resistance from the people of Satara, who believed that only the emperor could permit such a monument. As a result, after the base floor was completed, the upper stories were constructed using bricks.

By 1758, Shaniwar Wada was home to at least a thousand residents and became a significant political center. However, it was marked by tragedy when Narayanrao Peshwa was assassinated in 1773 within its walls. After the Peshwas were defeated by the British East India Company in 1818, Shaniwar Wada fell into neglect and was largely destroyed by a fire in 1828.

Today, Shaniwar Wada remains a key tourist destination, even though much of it is in ruins. The structures that still stand include robust granite ramparts and sturdy teak gateways, preserved for visitors to explore. The site spans about 625 acres and is enveloped by lively markets and neighborhoods that showcase Pune's rich cultural heritage. Visitors can partake in light and sound shows that recount the history of Shaniwar Wada and its importance during the Peshwa era. The site is also said to be haunted; local folklore claims that one can hear the cries of Narayanrao on 'Purnima,' nights when the moon is full. Shaniwar Wada is not only an architectural wonder but also a testament to Pune's history, legacy and cultural depth.

1.3. Objectives

The goals of this research are the following:

- First, to identify the economic activities that flourish near Shaniwar Wada.
- Second, to analyze the effects of tourism on local businesses.
- Third, to propose strategies for improving the sustainability of local businesses within this historical framework.

2. Literature Review

Many people view heritage restoration and tourism as two-pronged initiatives that combine economic development with cultural preservation. The body of existing research emphasises the necessity of balanced strategies to prevent cultural integrity from being overshadowed by economic gains. Long-term sustainability and fair benefit sharing in heritage-driven tourism, however, are still poorly understood, indicating areas that require more research.

Patil (2020) analyses the economic impact of Shaniwar Wada's rehabilitation using quantitative methodologies and an analytical tone. In a similar vein, Khanna (2020) used a mixed-methods approach to investigate Maharashtra's regional heritage tourism, highlighting its contribution to local company expansion and entrepreneurship. Both studies concentrate on economic factors and offer complementary perspectives on how regional growth and heritage management are related.

Datta (2024) turns the attention to socio-cultural effects by analysing religious tourism at Nepal's Boudhanath Stupa using statistical methods like regression and correlation. In order to preserve cultural integrity, the study places a strong emphasis on sustainability and community involvement. Collectively, these pieces demonstrate a range of methodological stances and common goals, promoting comprehensive tactics that incorporate cultural, economic, and social factors.

3. Research Methodology

The study examines the socio-economic impact of Shaniwar Wada tourism on local craftspeople, focusing on the impact of men and women on the workforce. It highlights that tourism significantly boosts economic activity, especially during holidays and special occasions. However, some merchants struggle to compete, highlighting the varying consequences of heritage tourism on the local economy.

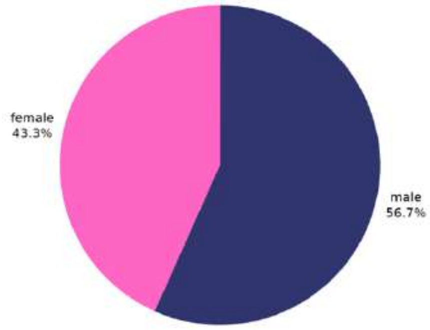
In the respective study, which uses a quantitative research technique, factors such as the number of years a person has been following a particular profession, average sale per day, annual income, daily footfall, and the significance of Shaniwar Wada in their business were analyzed. Apart from these, demographic variables such as age, gender, education, location, and number of family members were also analyzed. The sample size of the respective study is 30 small and medium entrepreneurs in and around Shaniwar Wada. An offline survey was conducted on 5th September 2024, to collect perspectives from the selected individuals. The questionnaire for the survey consisted of 25 questions dealing with all the selected variables. The survey was conducted among individuals of age interval between less than 20 and above 34 years. The views of each individual have been considered as one unit. The web of relationships between these variables were analyzed using statistical tools after the completion of data collection.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Based on the data collected from 30 individuals earning their livelihoods in the vicinity, several conclusions can be drawn. On weekdays, the site attracts approximately 300 to 400 visitors. The influx of tourists saw a notable rise following the release of the Bollywood movie, ‘Bajirao Mastani,’ which also led to an increase in ticket prices from ₹5 to ₹25, a whooping ₹20 increase. This surge in tourism has resulted in the creation of new employment opportunities, including roles such as tourist guides. The highest visitor turnout occurs during national festivals, with an estimated attendance of around 15,000. The initiative of Digital India has streamlined the ticket purchasing process; however, it poses challenges for older citizens, necessitating the employment of assistance personnel.

Among the 30 individuals surveyed, the male-to-female ratio stands at 17:13, with ages ranging from 19 to 69 years, and an average age of 46.4 years. Notably, only 8 out of the 30 individuals are under the age of 35.

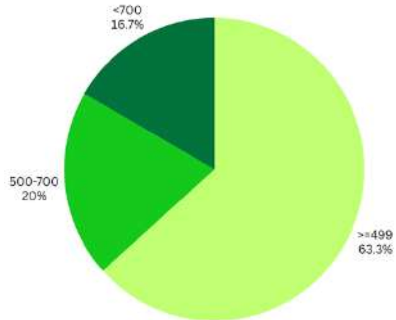
Figure 1: Gender divide in employment



(Source: Primary survey conducted by the author)

Most workers prioritize immediate financial needs over career advancement, resulting in general satisfaction with their earnings. Income levels vary significantly, ranging from ₹11,000 to ₹1,00,000 with an average income of ₹47,448.27.

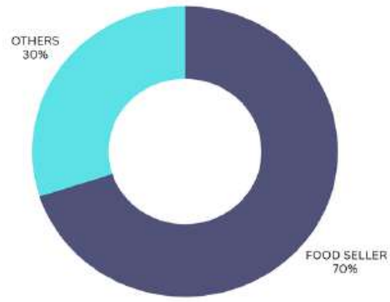
Figure 2: Income Distribution



(Source: Primary survey conducted by the author)

Approximately 90% of the vendors offer various food items, with an average daily profit of ₹650 on weekdays. Tourist guides report the highest earnings, typically ranging from ₹2,000 to ₹3,000 on regular days.

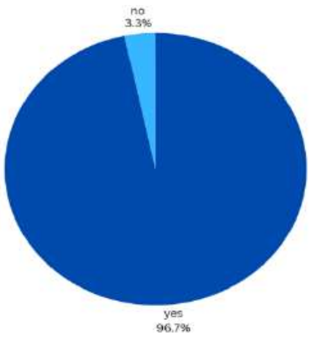
Figure 3: Occupational Distribution



(Source: Primary survey conducted by the author)

Profits increase by 30-40% on weekends and can rise by 90-100% during festive seasons due to higher visitor numbers. While the historical significance of the location may not be recognized by all, the majority of respondents expressed a favorable view regarding the influence of Shaniwar Wada on their businesses. The sole exception was the goggle hawker, for whom Shaniwar Wada does not yield positive outcomes, this vendor operates between Dagdusheth Ganpati Mandir and Shaniwar Wada, yet it is Dagdusheth that draws the highest volume of customers for his business.

Figure 4: Livelihood Viability



(Source: Primary survey conducted by the author)

Profits increase by 30-40% on weekends and can rise by 90-100% during festive seasons due to higher visitor numbers. The most lucrative period for these vendors spans from September to January, while the least profitable months are from April to July. Government support appears limited, as street vendors are required to obtain licenses to operate, and rental costs for shops in the area are comparatively high. Additionally, vendors benefit significantly from the proximity of several historical sites within a short distance, including Lal Mahal, Nana Wada and Dagdusheth Mandir. Lastly, to conclude, if we talk about the mode and median of the monthly income of all the people whose data has been collected, it's ₹45,000.

5. Findings and Conclusion

5.1. Challenges

In any vibrant urban setting, street vendors, and local, and small businesses have a significant role to play as they are vital contributors to local as well as national economy and community life. But, they encounter hardships and tough challenges that hinder their growth and sustainability. From dealing with complex regulatory policies to facing financial constraints and competition, these individuals need to keep changing their strategies to progress. Through our research, we looked closely into challenges and issues faced by street vendors, small businesses, and workers employed in and around the heart of the city, Shaniwar Wada to understand their difficulties and find ways to help them improve.

1. Regulatory Issues

a. <u>Licensing and permits</u>: The process of obtaining the necessary licenses and permits can be a complex and time-consuming endeavor. Local regulations often require multiple approvals, which can vary widely from one jurisdiction to another. Delays in this process lead to significant financial consequences, including fines, operational interruptions, or even forced closures.

b. <u>Harassmen</u>t: Frequent inspections and perceived harassment from local authorities can create an atmosphere of instability for small businesses. Continuous investigation not only lead to stress and distraction from daily operations but also results in additional costs associated with compliance and legal advice.

2. Competition

a. Crowded Market: In markets with a high level of competition, many vendors and small businesses compete for the same group of customers, resulting in fierce rivalry. As a result, businesses might need to reduce their prices to draw in customers, potentially causing a substantial decrease in profit margins.

b. Market Saturation: Limited physical space can lead to market saturation, where too many businesses offer similar products or services. This oversupply makes it increasingly challenging for any single business to capture a significant share of the market.

3. Infrastructure

a. Poor Infrastructure: Inadequate infrastructure, such as insufficient sanitation facilities, waste disposal systems, and transportation options, can severely hinder business operations. For example, a lack of reliable waste disposal can lead to health and safety violations.

4. Economic Factors

a. Pricing Pressures: Rising costs of goods and services, including raw materials, utilities, and transportation, exert significant pressure on businesses to maintain profitability. When input costs increase, businesses may have to choose between raising prices - potentially reducing the number of customers - or absorbing costs, which can lead to reduced profit margins. This delicate balancing act can force businesses to rethink their pricing strategies and operational efficiencies, often at the expense of quality and service.

b. Economic Downturns: Economic fluctuations, such as recessions or inflationary periods, can lead to decreased consumer spending as households tighten their budgets.

5. Workers' Rights And Conditions

a. Job Security: Workers often encounter unstable employment situations, as their contracts provide minimal to zero job stability. This lack of security can result in high rates of employee turnover, which can have a negative impact on morale and productivity.

b. Low Wages**:** A significant number of workers are employed at or near minimum wage, making it challenging to cover basic living expenses such as housing, food, and healthcare.

6. Seasonal Variability

a. Dependence On Festivals and Events: Sales fluctuate greatly based on local festivals and events, creating uncertainty. As per the research, Shaniwar Wada attracts the most number of tourists on days like Independence Day and Republic Day leading to economic fluctuations.

b. Limited Foot Traffic: Fluctuations in visitor numbers impact sales particularly during off-peak seasons (in this case, mostly from June to August during the annual monsoon). Businesses often struggle to maintain consistent revenue during slow periods.

5.2. Recommendations

As we explored the challenges faced by street vendors and small businesses, it became evident that proactive measures are essential for fostering their growth and resilience. To address these issues effectively, a range of recommendations can be implemented.

1. Regulatory Support
   a. Simplified Licensing: Streamlining the licensing and permitting process can significantly lower barriers to entry for new businesses and help existing ones thrive.
   b. Protection from Inspection: Establishing policies to safeguard vendors from excessive inspections and harassment by local authorities is crucial for maintaining a fair operating environment.

2. Infrastructure Improvements
   a. Develop Public Amenities: Investing in essential public amenities such as sanitation, waste management, and improved transport links is vital for creating a conducive environment for businesses to flourish.

3. Financial Assistance
   a. Access to Microloans: Developing microfinance programs that offer low-interest loans can empower small businesses and vendors to invest in their operations and expand their offerings.

4. Workers' Rights And Conditions
   a. Fair Wage Initiatives: Promoting fair pay is crucial to guarantee that all workers can satisfy their fundamental requirements and uphold a respectable standard of living. This may include championing regulations that institute a livable income, performing salary assessments to uncover inequalities, and backing collaborative negotiation initiatives.

5. Safety Measures
   a. Insurance Options: Promoting affordable insurance options is crucial for protecting small businesses from risks such as theft, damage, and liability claims.

6. Diversification
   a. Unique Offerings: Businesses can diversify their product lines to significantly enhance their resilience and appeal to a broader customer base. Seasonal promotions, and unique offerings, also adds an economic advantage.

While conducting the research, we came across an inspiring elderly women, named Shobha, who exemplified resilience and resourcefulness. She sells cut fruits as a street vendor and spent almost ₹10K to get her license, navigating a complex regulatory landscape. She also realized that by selling seasonal fruits, she could attract more customers, showing her creativity and adaptability. Her story highlights the critical need for streamlined licensing processes, fair wage initiatives, and access to resources that empower vendors like her. By implementing these recommendations, we can foster a more equitable and vibrant economic ecosystem.

5.3. Conclusion

Thirty people who work in the vicinity of Shaniwar Wada , a well-known tourist destination provided data that painted a complete picture of the ways in which tourism has affected the local economy, employment prospects, and demography. Their feedback has led to the emergence of a number of significant trends and results that illustrate the advantages and disadvantages of the recent surge in tourism. The notable rise in visitors after the release of the movie 'Bajirao Mastani' is among the most noteworthy observations. A significant number of visitors were drawn to the historical site as a result of this well-known film. Because of this, the number of visitors on weekdays is between 300 and 400, with a sharp increase during special events, especially on national holidays . The local economy has clearly improved as a result of this spike in tourist, which has also raised awareness of the location. The rise in tourism has directly led to the creation of new job opportunities for the local population. For example, there is a growing need for tour guides, which offers a reliable source of income for people who can help visitors and provide historical context. With an average age of 46.4, the respondents, who range in age from 19 to 69, reflect a variety of age groups within the workforce.

In conclusion, the data collected from the individuals working in the vicinity of the tourist site paints a clear picture of the socio-economic impact of the rise in tourism. While the influx of visitors has brought increased employment opportunities and boosted the local economy, there are challenges that need to be addressed, particularly in terms of inclusivity for older citizens. Additionally, as tourism continues to grow, it will be essential to balance the benefits of increased revenue and job creation with the need to preserve the site's cultural and historical significance, ensuring that it remains accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic status or technological proficiency.

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"Critical Study of Training and Development Program's Designed by MNC's for Freshers"

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ABSTRACT

Starting a career in a multinational company (MNC) can be both exciting and intimidating for newcomers. While companies dedicate significant resources to training programs for their new workforce, the question persists—are these programs truly preparing them for the corporate environment? This research examines the training and development efforts in MNCs and how effectively they bridge the gap between academic learning and industry requirements. Based on surveys and interviews with new employees and HR representatives, we explore what works, what doesn't, and where the critical gaps exist. Our findings reveal that formal, interactive training methods—such as classroom sessions and mentorship—lead to higher engagement and confidence levels. However, many companies struggle with consistency, evaluating long-term effectiveness, and keeping pace with emerging technologies like AI and machine learning.

In the end, unless MNCs adopt more flexible, interactive, and technology-driven learning approaches, training programs will fail to empower new hires successfully. By focusing on individualized learning, continual growth, and increased involvement from leadership, organizations can transform the workplace into a setting where newcomers not only survive but excel.

KEYWORDS:
Training and Development, MNCs, Employee Training, Corporate Learning, HR Practices, Learning & Development, AI in Training, Technical Skills, Workforce Readiness, Employee Engagement, Talent Development, Performance Management, Workplace Adaptation, Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI).

1. INTRODUCTION

Embarking on a career with a multinational corporation signifies a significant change for new graduates, filled with both excitement and apprehension. As they step into a promising work environment, they encounter the difficulties of adjusting to job expectations, necessary skills, and the organizational culture. This is where training and development programs play a crucial role, bridging the gap between academic knowledge and industry requirements. But how effective are these programs in preparing fresh graduates for the workforce?

This research meticulously examines the training and development initiatives within multinational companies, assessing their structure, effectiveness, and potential areas for enhancement. We investigate the true impact of these programs through interviews with industry professionals and surveys conducted with recent graduates. Key aspects of the investigation include skill deficiencies, preferred learning methods, and the influence of technology on the role of corporate trainers.

Experts such as Mr. Abhideepta Mukherjee, a seasoned HR specialist, emphasize the importance of organized training frameworks, employee involvement, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in cultivating a competent workforce.

Multinational corporations allocate substantial funds for training, aiming to prepare new graduates right from the start. Typically, these programs encompass technical skills, behavioral development, and financial literacy to create a comprehensive learning experience. However, as industries progress at a rapid pace—particularly in the IT sector, where innovations like artificial intelligence, machine learning, and big data are transforming job functions—training models need to evolve continuously. The employee journey is crucial, and companies strive to foster equitable environments for diverse backgrounds by shifting toward learning frameworks informed by DEI principles. Through this study, we intend to evaluate how well MNC training programs align with industry benchmarks and identify improvements to enhance their effectiveness. By analysing industry reports, expert insights, and employee feedback, this research provides an in-depth assessment of how training can better prepare new graduates for enduring success.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Transitioning from higher education to professional settings poses challenges for new graduates, particularly within multinational corporations (MNCs) where there are substantial productivity expectations from Day 1. To address this issue, companies invest in Training & Development (T&D) programs aimed at improving both technical and soft skills. This literature review explores a variety of research studies, expert observations, and surveys focusing on the effectiveness of these programs, the existing skills gap, and evolving trends in corporate training methods.

2.1 Skills Gap and Industry Expectations

The disparity between the skills of recent graduates and the demands of industries is a persistent global challenge. Research articles indicate that many fresh graduates, despite holding degrees, lack the necessary job-ready skills, especially in fields like Big Data, Machine Learning, and AI analytics. This issue is particularly noticeable in the IT sector, where rapid technological changes necessitate continual upskilling. Studies show that while educational institutions emphasize theoretical knowledge, employers prioritize practical skills—ranging from professional email etiquette to financial literacy and analytical thinking. Further research reveals that manufacturing industries often follow standardized Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), whereas the information technology sector is more dynamic and, therefore, requires tailored training initiatives.

2.2 Training Programs and Their Effectiveness

A variety of training models are utilized globally to enhance the skills of fresh graduates:

NIIT Limited and the Tata Management Training Centre (TMTC) are leading examples of structured training approaches that emphasize practical learning. Surveys utilizing the Likert Scale have demonstrated that organized training significantly enhances employee experiences and boosts confidence. Organizations such as Wipro and L&T Infotech allocate resources towards employee engagement and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives to ensure that newcomers from various backgrounds have equal opportunities to succeed.

2.3 Learning & Development (L&D) as a Long-Term Strategy

Research indicates that L&D initiatives in MNCs encompass not just onboarding but also continuous skill enhancement. Experts suggest that training should not be viewed as a singular event but rather as a lifelong journey. Companies generally adopt a two-phase approach:

2.3.1 Initial Training (before or alongside onboarding)

2.3.2 On-the-Job Learning (through practical exposure and mentoring)

Campus placements, as highlighted in multiple studies, represent only the "tip of the iceberg," while the actual development of skills occurs once freshers enter the workforce.

2.4 Employee Viewpoints on Training Programs

Interviews with HR professionals emphasize that both technical expertise and interpersonal skills are essential for the success of newcomers. Research indicates that training efforts aimed at fostering confidence, adaptability, and resilience yield the best long-term results. Additionally, corporate policies are increasingly leaning towards Equal Opportunity Employment (EOE), ensuring equitable training access for employees from all backgrounds. Research points out that companies are increasingly adopting DEI-focused training frameworks to promote inclusivity.

2.5 Challenges and Future Directions

Despite a robust foundation for training programs, several challenges persist:

Assessing the direct impact of training on employee performance and retention.

Finding a balance between training expenses and the effectiveness of training programs.

Keeping up with technological advancements to ensure skills remain relevant.

Nonetheless, MNCs are progressively incorporating AI-driven training modules, gamified learning experiences, and data-centred performance evaluations to enhance T&D initiatives.

Literature suggests that well-structured Training & Development (T&D) programs significantly reduce the skills gap and improve the productivity of entry-level professionals. Companies that invest in systematic, ongoing learning experiences often see heightened employee motivation, retention, and sustainable growth. Training methods must adapt as industries evolve to maintain the competitiveness of fresh graduates in an ever-changing global job market.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

For newly onboarded employees in multinational corporations (MNCs), training and development initiatives play a vital role in bridging the gap between organizational requirements and higher education. This field study thoroughly examines the design, approach, and effectiveness of such initiatives, focusing on their influence on skill development, job performance, and career advancement. Besides evaluating existing industry reports and training documents, the study will collect primary data through surveys, interviews, and direct observation. Key areas of focus include learning design, instructional strategies, and the integration of technology. The project aspires to offer insights and recommendations on improving training effectiveness by identifying strengths, challenges, and opportunities for enhancement. This will lead to increased employee engagement, productivity, and retention.

3.1 Evaluate Training Outcomes: Assess the impact of training and development activities on fresh graduates in MNCs to determine their success in addressing skill deficiencies.

3.2 Identify Skill Shortcomings: Pinpoint the essential skills where recent graduates lack proficiency and how organizations address these deficiencies with structured onboarding and continuous learning programs.

3.3 Assess Industry Standards: Investigate the technical skills, soft skills, and adaptability that MNCs in various sectors, including IT, manufacturing, and consultancy, expect recent graduates to possess.

3.4 Explore Training Frameworks: Analyse different training and development methodologies, such as training from the ground up, mentorship programs, and AI-driven training modules, to determine which approaches yield the best results.

3.5 Gather Employee Feedback: Solicit input from recent graduates and HR professionals to evaluate their experiences, challenges, and satisfaction levels regarding corporate training programs.

3.6 Compare Traditional and Modern Training Methods: Investigate the shift from conventional classroom instruction to engaging, interactive, and data-driven learning experiences.

3.7 Propose Enhancements: Based on the findings, suggest enhancements for more effective, engaging, and inclusive training models that align with the evolving needs of newcomers in the corporate environment.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study critically analyses Training and Development Programs formulated by Multinational Corporations (MNCs) for freshers. The aim of this study is to evaluate the performance, design, and influence of such programs on the professional development and skill enhancement of newly recruited employees.

In order to attain this aim, a quantitative research process was utilized in combination with qualitative findings from unstructured questionnaires. The study particularly concerns the experiences and impressions of freshers who have benefited from corporate training in MNCs.

4.1 Research Design

The research adopts a descriptive research design, whose objective is to present a vivid description of training and development programs. This kind of design is appropriate for assessing the impact of these programs on freshers' skills, employability, and career development.

A survey-based method was selected because of its capability to access a large and wide group of respondents effectively. The survey approach assists in gathering measurable information as well as giving respondents the opportunity to provide their qualitative comments regarding training effectiveness.

4.2 Data Collection Means

4.2.1 Primary Collection of Data

The primary data for this research was gathered via an online survey conducted via Google Forms.

The survey had:

Closed-ended questions (Multiple Choice, Likert Scale) for measuring responses.

Open-ended questions to elicit qualitative inputs on challenges, areas of improvement, and individual experiences in training programs.

The survey questionnaire was framed to include important points like:

Structure of training programs – duration, content, mode of training (online/offline).

Effectiveness – skill development, job readiness, learning outcome.

Problems encountered – deficiencies in training, insufficient practical exposure, time issues.

Improvement suggestions – what freshers think should be included or changed in these programs.

A personal interview with industry expert was also one of the primary sources of data for study. The interview included:

One-on-one discussion with the industry expert through which we gained insights on the topic.

His experience and suggestions were also considered as a part of primary data.

4.2.2 Secondary Data Collection

Apart from primary data, secondary research was carried out by studying:

Academic literature on corporate training and development.

Reports on MNCs' official websites regarding their training policies.

Case studies and industry surveys on employee training.

4.3 Sampling Methodology

Non-probability convenience sampling method was adopted, where the respondents were chosen based on their willingness and availability.

4.3.1 Target Population & Sample Size

Target Group: Freshers who have undergone MNC training programs.

Geographical Scope: Responses were collected from participants across different cities in India.

Sample Size: The survey aimed to reach at least 30-50 respondents to ensure diverse insights.

4.4 Data Analysis Methods

The collected data was analysed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques:

4.4.1 Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistics (percentages, mean scores) were used to identify common trends in training effectiveness.

Responses from Likert-scale questions were analysed to determine overall satisfaction and effectiveness levels.

Graphs and charts were applied in visually summarizing key results

4.4.2 Qualitative Analysis

Answers for open-ended questions were examined based on thematic analysis.

Learnings from personal interview were examined.

4.5 Limitations of the Study

This study although brings with it meaningful findings have some limitations:

Self-reported data – The response relies on perceptions that individuals hold, which may be filled with bias.

Limited diversity of the sample – As the survey was conducted online, the sample might not be representative of all MNCs or sectors.

Generalizability – Results are limited to the freshers who responded and might not be generalizable to the experiences of all trainees across the world.

Variability in training programs – Various MNCs have different training models, and hence direct comparison is challenging.

4.6 Ethical Issues

Voluntary Participation – The respondents were not compelled to be part of it and could withdraw at any point.

Anonymity & Confidentiality – No individual information was gathered, which maintained data privacy.

Informed Consent – The participants were made aware of the aim of the study prior to answering the survey.

Correct Citation – Any secondary information used from published works has been correctly cited.

5. DATE ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Findings and Analysis of the Interview on Critical Study of Training and Development Program's Designed by MNC's for Freshers

Overview of Data Analysis:

The interview was centred on several development programs created by MNCs for freshers, such as effectiveness, issues, the HR role, and comparison with MBA pass-outs. Qualitative interview data were analysed to determine major trends, prominent themes, and areas for improvement.

Most Significant Results of the Interview:

Importance of Development Programs has gained more acceptance: The interviewees all agreed that Training and Development programs are becoming more of an accepted standard of employee induction in MNCs.

Lack of Consistency: While some organizations have well-defined programs, some view Training and Development programs as add-ons or secondary.

Stigma Still Exists: Even with enhancements, some freshers are reluctant to approach for help because they fear judgment from managers and seniors.

Effectiveness of Training Programs:

High Involvement in Well-Schedule Programs: Organizations that carry out interactive sessions, role-playing, and group work among peers have higher levels of involvement.

Short-Term Benefits Perceived: Most of the freshers report lower levels of stress and enhanced flexibility after attending Training and Development sessions.

Limited Measurement of Long-Term Effect: Limited number of organizations track the long-term effectiveness of such initiatives, and group-level long-term benefits cannot be estimated.

HR's Role in Training and Development Programs:

Future-focused HR Functions Guarantee Success: Companies where HR actively advocates and aligns training programs have improved employee well-being statistics.

Absence of Standardized Policies: Most companies lack a standard training and development policy, resulting in variability in training quality and availability.

Feedback Mechanisms Must be Enhanced: Although some HR departments gather feedback, it is not utilized to the maximum for program improvement.

Challenges Identified:

Time Constraints: The freshers generally have to go through technical and functional training, and thus they hardly have any time for other types of self-development sessions.

Budget Restraints: Some organizations have constrained budgets to spend on training, impacting availability and quality.

Leadership Buy-In Issues: Leadership in some instances is more concerned about performance measures than worker welfare, and hence it is not easy to undertake holistic training and development initiatives.

Comparison: MBA Graduates and Freshers:

Freshers Require More Ground-Level Training: They require formal programs emphasizing workplace acclimatization, stress management, and rudimentary coping mechanisms.

MBA Grads Are Exposed to Performance Pressures: They are exposed to feeling leadership demands and dealing with high-stakes responsibilities, which necessitate different kinds of training support.

Support System Variations: MBA graduates have better peer networks and work experience; hence they are more stable than freshers.

Effectiveness Measures Identified:

Measures that companies use to determine the effect of training:

Employee Feedback Surveys – Comparing productivity levels pre- and post-training.

Attrition Rates – Stronger initiatives are followed by lower early turnover of new employees.

Productivity Indices – Increased contribution and lower absence among employees undergoing training and development services.

Use of Counselling Services – Increasing numbers of employees using counselling reflect a demystified and compassionate workplace.

5.1 <u>Data Interpretation and Insights</u>

Greater awareness but still patchy awareness.

Greater standardization of training is needed.

Program Effectiveness:

Short-term gains are reported, but long-term follow-up is absent.

Companies must have better monitoring systems.

HR Involvement:

Active HR leads to better outcomes.

HR needs to include training in key policies.

Challenges:

Time, money, and leadership support are typical barriers.

Top management commitment and additional investment are necessary.

Freshers vs. MBA Graduates:

Freshers need training in the first place, while MBAs need leadership management.

Programs should be designed accordingly.

Success Measures:

Universal measures are employee surveys, retention rate, and productivity levels.

Companies need to enhance data gathering in order to enhance outcomes.

Recommendations Based on Findings

Standardizing Policies: Properly formulated policies should be formulated by the companies so that freshers are treated alike.

Integration with Other Training Programs: Rather than individual sessions, training should be incorporated in leadership and orientation programs.

Greater Leadership Commitment: Active involvement and support from top management in training programs.

Long-Term Monitoring & Data Analysis: Companies need to monitor employee well-being in the long term and modify accordingly based on actual data.

Personalised Support Systems: Various groups of employees should be offered tailored training as per their career stage and concerns.

The study concludes that MNC freshers' training and development is beneficial but needs improvement in consistency, how it can be measured, and leadership support. With these problems solved and evidence-based knowledge used, organizations can design a healthier, more supportive workplace for new hires.

5.2 <u>MCQ Survey:</u>

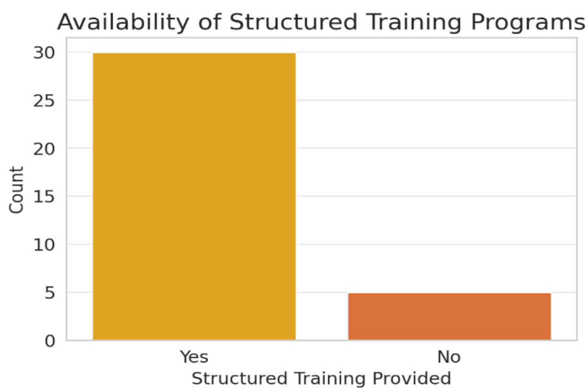

Fig.1

Fig. 2

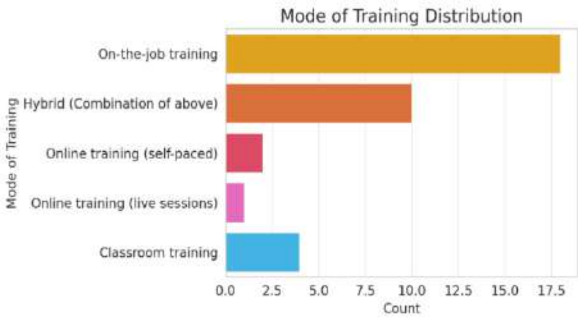

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

5.2.1 <u>The visual analysis reveals several important observations</u>:

Formal Training Programs: A majority of participants indicated that their organization offered a formal training program.

Training Duration: There is a range in the lengths of training programs, with some spanning a few days while others last more than a month.

Training Mode: The most common methods are on-the-job training and blended approaches (a combination of various techniques).

Effectiveness Ratings: The assessment of training programs shows mixed results, with most scores clustered between 3 and 5, indicating moderate to high levels of satisfaction.

5.2.2 Detailed Statistical Analysis:

Summary Statistics

Effectiveness Rating (On a Scale of 1-5):

Mean: 3.8 (overall favourable feedback)

Median: 4 (the majority rated the training as effective)

5.2.3 Training Mode Compared to Effectiveness

Training Mode\Average Effectiveness Rating

Classroom Training\4.25 (Most effective)

Online Training (Live Sessions) \4.00

Hybrid (Mixed Methods)\3.80

On-the-Job Training\3.72

Online Training (Self-Paced) \3.50 (Least effective)

Classroom training emerged as the most effective, while self-paced online training was the least effective.

5.2.4 Impact on Career Growth Compared to Training Duration

Short training (1-2 weeks) typically led to moderate career growth, while longer training (over 1 month) showed a considerable positive impact on growth.

5.2.5 Major Conclusions

More organized and interactive training formats (like classroom and live sessions) lead to greater effectiveness.

Short training programs (1-2 weeks) are common but tend to result in only moderate career growth impacts.

Longer training programs (over 1 month) are linked to significant career advancement.

There is a strong relationship between perceived effectiveness and the likelihood of recommending training programs.

6. CONCLUSION AND KEY FINDINGS

The study highlights that while Training and Development (T&D) programs in multinational corporations (MNCs) are necessary for onboarding new workers, there exists a significant gap in skills, particularly in emerging technologies such as Big Data and Artificial Intelligence (AI), and their practical applications. Structured training systems that incorporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives enhance the proficiency and confidence of recent graduates.

However, the fast-changing business landscape necessitates that training strategies are consistently refined and developed further. Integrating AI-driven features, gamification, and analytics-based assessments can greatly improve the effectiveness and relevance of T&D programs. Therefore, organizations need to adopt agile, varied, and technology-enhanced training approaches to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and industry requirements, thereby promoting greater productivity, employee motivation, and long-term success.

6.1 Skill Gaps & Importance of Training: MNCs allocate resources to Training & Development (T&D) to assist new entrants in aligning their academic backgrounds with business demands, particularly in fields such as Big Data, AI, and analytics. Nonetheless, a majority of new hires still lack essential job-related skills.

6.2 Effectiveness & Obstacles: In-person training tends to be more effective than self-paced online courses, although the latter offers advantages like reduced stress and improved adaptability. However, the long-term impacts of these training methods remain unmeasured by most organizations. Financial limitations and a lack of support from leadership also hinder training quality.

6.3 HR & Standardization Issues: When HR plays an active role, the outcomes improve, yet many companies do not have standardized training procedures or efficient feedback mechanisms, leading to inconsistent quality across training programs.

6.4 New Hires & MBA Graduates: New hires require general workplace training, such as skills in stress management and adapting to corporate environments. In contrast, MBA graduates need training focused on leadership but often possess better networks and prior experience.

6.5 Recommendations for Improvement: MNCs should work towards standardizing training programs, incorporating leadership development, evaluating long-term impacts, and utilizing AI-driven and gamified learning methods to create more engaging and effective training experiences.

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Sustainable Entrepreneurship: Paving the Way for a Resilient Future in Amrit Kaal

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ABSTRACT

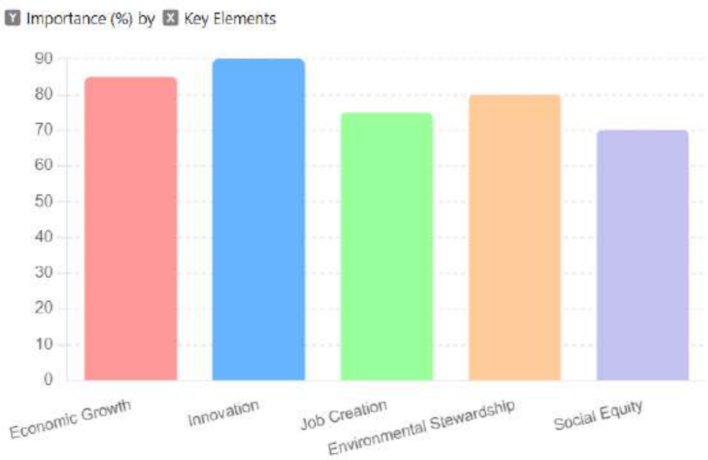
Sustainable entrepreneurship is pivotal for driving economic growth, fostering innovation, and creating jobs while addressing global challenges such as climate change and socio- economic inequalities. This paper explores the integration of economic, social, and environmental goals within business practices, positioning sustainable entrepreneurship as a cornerstone for India's vision of Amrit Kaal by 2047. It highlights how adopting sustainable practices can lead to inclusive development, leveraging advanced technologies (Industry 4.0), and benefiting from government incentives and funding opportunities. The paper also discusses the challenges faced by sustainable entrepreneurs, including regulatory hurdles, funding access, and the need for consumer awareness. By aligning with the goals of Amrit Kaal, sustainable entrepreneurship not only ensures long-term profitability but also promotes social equity and environmental stewardship. This approach paves the way for a resilient and prosperous future, contributing significantly to the vision of a Vikasit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship stands as the cornerstone of economic growth, fuelling innovation, creating jobs, and reducing poverty. Amid global challenges such as climate change and socio-economic inequalities, the concept of sustainable entrepreneurship has emerged as a transformative force. This innovative approach seamlessly blends economic, social, and environmental goals, fostering business practices that are both profitable and ethically sound.

In the context of India's visionary framework for 2047, known as Amrit Kaal, sustainable entrepreneurship is positioned to be a crucial driver of national transformation. Amrit Kaal envisions a future where rapid economic growth, technological advancements, and enhanced living standards coalesce to forge a resilient and inclusive society.

Figure 1: **Introduction to Sustainable Entrepreneurship**



Source: **United Nations. (n.d.). "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".**

Sustainable entrepreneurship will play a crucial role in this transformation, emphasizing the importance of responsible business practices that prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term profits. Entrepreneurs who embrace this model will lead the way in developing innovative solutions that drive economic prosperity while also benefiting society and the environment. These forward-thinking business leaders will focus on creating products and services that minimize environmental impact, promote social equity, and ensure economic growth. By balancing profitability with ethical responsibility, sustainable entrepreneurs will help build a resilient and inclusive economy, paving the way for a sustainable future for all.

The Significance of Sustainable Entrepreneurship

Sustainable entrepreneurship embodies the essence of responsible business, prioritizing profit alongside societal and environmental contributions. This innovative approach aligns seamlessly with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visionary Amrit Kaal, aiming to shape a "New India" by 2047. Amrit Kaal emphasizes the importance of rapid economic growth, enhanced living standards, and technological progress, all within a framework of trust and inclusivity.

By adopting sustainable entrepreneurship, businesses can lead the charge towards this vision, creating solutions that drive economic prosperity while fostering social equity and environmental stewardship. This dual focus on profitability and ethical responsibility ensures that the path to growth is not only robust but also sustainable, paving the way for a future where economic success and societal well-being go hand in hand.

Aligning with Amrit Kaal's Vision

Amrit Kaal signifies a transformative era for India, marked by profound economic restructuring and renewal. This visionary period aims to drive sustainable growth, enhance infrastructural development, and spur technological innovation. Central to this vision is sustainable entrepreneurship, which plays a pivotal role in balancing economic ambitions with environmental and social responsibilities.

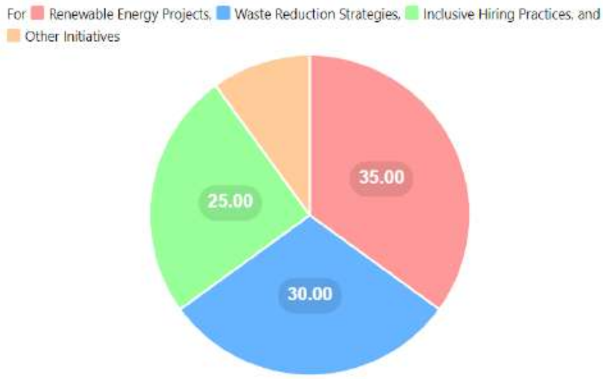
By embracing sustainable practices, businesses can significantly contribute to a resilient and prosperous India, aligning with the aspirations of Vikasit Bharat @2047. Sustainable entrepreneurship provides innovative solutions that ensure economic progress while safeguarding the environment and promoting social equity. This approach not only supports robust economic development but also fosters a holistic and inclusive growth model, positioning India as a global leader in sustainable innovation and prosperity.

Exploring Key Themes in Sustainable Entrepreneurship

- **Sustainable and Inclusive Development**

Sustainable entrepreneurship is vital for fostering inclusive development that uplifts all societal segments. By integrating practices focused on environmental sustainability and social equity, businesses can generate value far beyond mere profits. This encompasses initiatives such as renewable energy projects, comprehensive waste reduction strategies, and inclusive hiring practices that provide equal opportunities to marginalized communities.

Figure 3: **Distribution of Sustainable Development Initiatives**



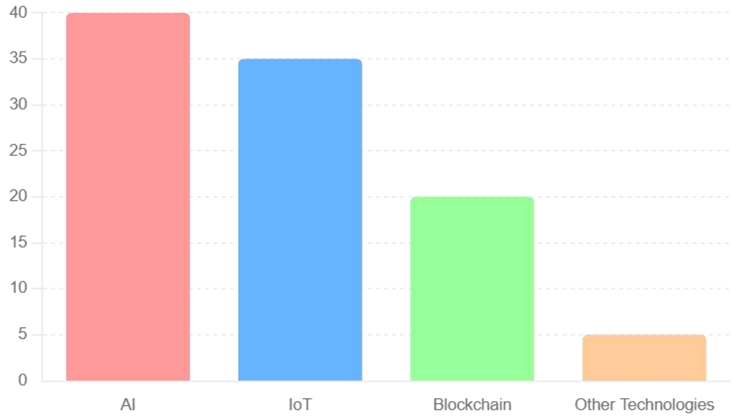
Source: **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Report**

Such efforts ensure that economic growth is not only robust but also equitable and environmentally responsible. Sustainable entrepreneurship thus transforms businesses into powerful agents of change, driving progress that benefits society as a whole. This holistic approach not only enhances corporate reputation and resilience but also contributes significantly to a more just and sustainable world, demonstrating that profitability and positive social impact can go hand in hand.

- **Technology and Innovation in Entrepreneurship (Industry 4.0)**

The integration of cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), and blockchain is revolutionizing the entrepreneurial landscape. These advancements empower businesses to optimize their operations, minimize waste, and develop innovative products and services that tackle critical environmental and social challenges. Industry 4.0 technologies are pivotal in propelling sustainable entrepreneurship, as they significantly enhance efficiency and drive continuous innovation.

Figure 4: Impact of Industry 4.0 Technologies on Entrepreneurship



Source: World Economic Forum, Industry 4.0

By leveraging these advanced tools, companies can not only achieve remarkable operational improvements but also pioneer solutions that promote sustainability and social responsibility. This technological synergy transforms traditional business models, enabling a new era of entrepreneurship where economic success is intricately linked with positive environmental and societal impact. Through this, Industry 4.0 becomes a cornerstone of the future, fostering a more sustainable and inclusive global economy.

- **Government Incentives for Startups**

The Indian government has rolled out a suite of incentives aimed at nurturing startups, especially those committed to sustainability. These incentives encompass tax breaks, grants, and easier access to funding, creating a fertile ground for innovative ventures. By capitalizing on these opportunities, sustainable startups can amplify their operations, driving significant economic growth while steadfastly adhering to eco-friendly practices.

Figure 5: Government Incentives for Startups

Incentive	Benefits	Eligibility Criteria
Tax Breaks	Reduced tax liabilities for startups	Registered startups
Grants	Financial support for innovative projects	Startups with innovative projects
Funding Access	Easier access to venture capital and loans	Startups meeting funding criteria

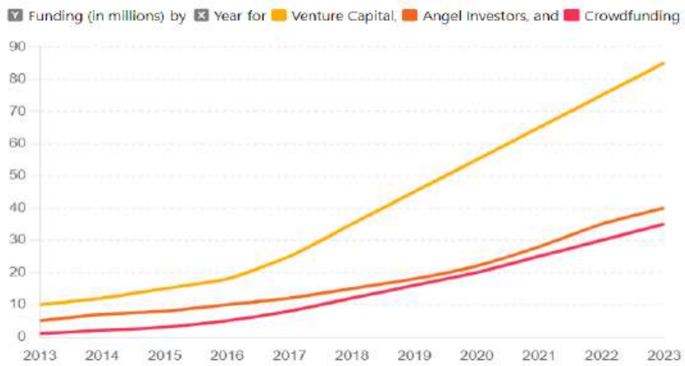
Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Startup India Initiative

This strategic support not only propels the startups towards scalability but also aligns with the national vision of sustainable development. By fostering a conducive environment for green innovation, the government ensures that the entrepreneurial ecosystem thrives, leading to a robust, sustainable economy. These measures empower startups to lead the way in creating impactful solutions that balance profitability with responsibility, cementing India's position as a leader in sustainable innovation.

- **Funding for Startups**

Securing funding is paramount for the success of sustainable startups. A diverse array of funding options, including venture capital, angel investors, and crowdfunding, is now available to bolster green businesses. These financial avenues furnish the essential capital that enables startups to innovate, scale, and implement sustainable solutions.

Figure 6: **Growth of Funding for Sustainable Startups (2013-2023)**



Source: **CB Insights, Startup Funding Trends Report**

By tapping into these resources, startups can drive transformative change, pioneering eco-friendly technologies and practices that address pressing global challenges. The availability of such funding not only fuels growth but also catalyses the development of impactful, sustainable innovations. This financial support empowers startups to lead the way in creating a balanced blend of economic prosperity and environmental stewardship, ensuring their pivotal role in building a greener, more sustainable future.

- **Public Finance and Investment**

Public finance is pivotal in nurturing sustainable entrepreneurship. Government investments in sustainable infrastructure, renewable energy, and green technologies create a fertile environment for businesses to flourish. These strategic investments lay the foundation for an ecosystem where sustainable ventures can thrive and innovate.

Moreover, public-private partnerships amplify the impact of these initiatives by combining resources and expertise from both sectors. Such collaborations ensure a robust and holistic approach to addressing environmental challenges while promoting economic growth. By fostering these synergies, public finance not only supports the development of green technologies but also paves the way for a sustainable future, driving progress that benefits both the economy and the environment. This strategic alignment of public investment and private innovation propels the nation towards a resilient and sustainable economic landscape.

- **Digital Economy and United Payments Interface**

The digital economy, driven by platforms such as the United Payments Interface (UPI), revolutionizes seamless transactions and promotes financial inclusion. For sustainable entrepreneurs, this digital framework provides a powerful foundation for scaling operations, accessing broader markets, and maintaining transparent financial practices.

With the UPI at its core, the digital economy enables businesses to process payments swiftly and securely, fostering trust among consumers and partners. This infrastructure not only enhances operational efficiency but also democratizes access to financial services, allowing sustainable startups to thrive in a competitive market. By leveraging these digital tools, entrepreneurs can innovate responsibly, expand their reach, and contribute to a transparent, inclusive, and sustainable economic ecosystem. This synergy between technology and entrepreneurship propels India towards a future where economic growth is both equitable and environmentally conscious.

- **Sustainability-focused Entrepreneurship**

At the core of sustainable entrepreneurship lies a steadfast commitment to environmental stewardship. This ethos drives the adoption of circular economy models, where waste is minimized, and resources are continuously reused. Sustainable entrepreneurs are dedicated to designing products and services that boast minimal environmental footprints, ensuring that their ventures contribute positively to the planet and society.

These forward-thinking entrepreneurs prioritize innovation that benefits both the environment and communities, creating solutions that address ecological challenges while fostering social well-being. By embracing sustainable practices, they lead the charge in redefining business success, integrating profitability with responsibility. This approach not only paves the way for a greener future but also inspires a global shift towards more ethical and sustainable business practices, demonstrating that economic growth and environmental care can go hand in hand.

Challenges and Opportunities in Sustainable Entrepreneurship

Sustainable entrepreneurship is a powerful force for positive change, offering immense potential to revolutionize how businesses operate. However, this path is not without its challenges. Key obstacles include regulatory hurdles, limited access to capital, and the imperative need for consumer awareness and education. Despite these challenges, the opportunities presented by sustainable entrepreneurship far outweigh the difficulties, providing a promising avenue for innovation and growth.

Regulatory Hurdles

Navigating the intricate landscape of regulations can be daunting for sustainable entrepreneurs. Adhering to environmental standards, securing necessary certifications, and staying updated with evolving policies demand substantial time and resources. However, these regulatory frameworks offer a vital structure for responsible innovation. Entrepreneurs who adeptly maneuver through these regulatory challenges not only comply with legal requirements but also position themselves as industry leaders in sustainability.

Figure 7: Common Regulatory Challenges and Solutions for Sustainable Entrepreneurs

Regulatory Hurdles	Solutions
Environmental Compliance	Adopt best practices and technologies
Certification Processes	Seek guidance from experts
Policy Changes	Stay updated with policy news and engage in advocacy

Source: International Finance Corporation, Regulatory Practices

By embracing these regulations, businesses can set high standards, pioneering practices that others in the industry can follow. This proactive approach to compliance and sustainability enhances their reputation, attracting environmentally conscious consumers and investors. Furthermore, meeting stringent regulatory requirements often leads to operational efficiencies and opens up new market opportunities. In essence, overcoming regulatory hurdles is not just about meeting legal obligations but about driving the entire industry towards more sustainable and responsible practices.

Access to Capital

Securing funding is a significant challenge for sustainable startups, as traditional investors often hesitate to support ventures that don't promise immediate high returns. However, the emergence of impact investing, green bonds, and sustainable finance initiatives is opening up new funding avenues. These innovative financial instruments prioritize long-term societal and environmental benefits alongside economic returns.

Entrepreneurs who can clearly articulate their mission and demonstrate the potential for long-term profitability and positive societal impact are better positioned to attract investment from these burgeoning capital pools. By showcasing the enduring value and transformative potential of their ventures, they can appeal to a growing segment of investors dedicated to fostering sustainability. This strategic alignment not only helps secure the necessary capital but also propels sustainable startups into the forefront of industry innovation, driving both financial success and meaningful change.

Consumer Awareness and Education

Building consumer awareness and educating the market about the value of sustainable products and services presents a significant challenge. Shifting consumer behavior and preferences is a gradual process that demands consistent, transparent communication. However, as environmental consciousness rises, so does the demand for sustainable options.

Businesses that excel in engaging and educating their customers on the benefits of sustainability can cultivate strong loyalty and trust. This engagement involves highlighting the tangible positive impacts of sustainable products on both the environment and society. By effectively communicating these benefits, businesses not only foster an informed customer base but also drive sustained growth. As consumers increasingly seek out responsible choices, companies that prioritize education and transparency will position themselves as leaders in the market, reaping the rewards of a dedicated and environmentally-conscious clientele.

Opportunities

The opportunities in sustainable entrepreneurship are vast. By fostering a culture of sustainability, businesses can tap into new and expanding markets driven by eco-conscious consumers. This shift not only opens doors to innovative products and services but also allows businesses to differentiate themselves in competitive markets. Enhanced brand reputation is another substantial benefit, as companies committed to sustainability are often viewed more favourably by both consumers and partners.

Furthermore, sustainable practices contribute to building a more resilient economy. By reducing reliance on finite resources and minimizing waste, businesses can lower costs and improve efficiency. This resilience is crucial in an era where environmental and economic uncertainties are prevalent. Companies that embed sustainability into their core operations are better equipped to adapt to changing conditions and emerging challenges.

In conclusion, while sustainable entrepreneurship faces significant challenges, the potential rewards are compelling. By overcoming regulatory obstacles, securing innovative funding, and educating consumers, sustainable entrepreneurs can drive profound change. The opportunities to enter new markets, build strong brands, and contribute to a resilient economy make sustainable entrepreneurship not only a viable path but a necessary one for future business success.

Conclusion

Sustainable entrepreneurship is the cornerstone for unlocking a prosperous and resilient future for India. In alignment with the visionary framework of Amrit Kaal, businesses have the potential to drive substantial economic growth while simultaneously ensuring environmental sustainability and social equity. This integrated approach not only addresses immediate challenges but also establishes a foundation for enduring success and widespread prosperity.

Amrit Kaal, as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, outlines a roadmap for India's transformation leading up to 2047, the centennial year of India’s independence. It emphasizes the need for rapid economic advancement, technological innovation, and enhanced living standards, all underpinned by sustainability and inclusivity. Sustainable entrepreneurship is pivotal to this vision, offering innovative solutions that seamlessly integrate economic, environmental, and social goals.

Businesses embracing sustainable entrepreneurship can lead the charge in creating a dynamic and inclusive economy. They have the capacity to innovate responsibly, adopt green technologies, and implement practices that significantly reduce environmental impact while enhancing social welfare. By committing to these principles, businesses not only contribute to economic development but also promote social justice and environmental stewardship. One of the critical components of sustainable entrepreneurship is the adoption of circular economy models. These models prioritize the minimization of waste and the continual reuse of resources, ensuring that products and materials remain in use for as long as possible. This approach not only reduces the environmental footprint but also creates economic opportunities through the development of new markets and industries focused on recycling and remanufacturing.

Furthermore, sustainable entrepreneurs prioritize creating products and services that are designed to address pressing societal challenges. This includes developing renewable energy solutions, innovating in waste reduction technologies, and promoting inclusive hiring practices that provide equal opportunities for marginalized communities. The journey towards 2047 necessitates a concerted effort from entrepreneurs to embed sustainability into their core operations. This commitment will drive significant progress across various sectors, from renewable energy to waste management, and from inclusive hiring practices to ethical supply chains. Sustainable entrepreneurs will play a pivotal role in transforming India's economic landscape, making it more resilient and adaptable to future challenges.Government policies and initiatives play a crucial role in supporting sustainable entrepreneurship. The Indian government has introduced various incentives to support startups, particularly those focused on sustainability. These incentives include tax breaks, grants, and access to funding, creating a conducive environment for green innovation. By leveraging these opportunities, sustainable startups can scale their operations, drive economic growth, and adhere to sustainable practices.

Access to capital is another critical factor for the success of sustainable startups. A diverse array of funding options, including venture capital, angel investors, and crowdfunding, is now available to bolster green businesses. These financial avenues provide the essential capital that enables startups to innovate, expand, and implement sustainable solutions. By tapping into these resources, startups can drive transformative change, pioneering eco-friendly technologies and practices that address pressing global challenges.

Public finance also plays a significant role in fostering sustainable entrepreneurship. Government investments in sustainable infrastructure, renewable energy, and green technologies create a fertile environment for businesses to flourish. These strategic investments lay the foundation for an ecosystem where sustainable ventures can thrive and innovate. Public-private partnerships amplify the impact of these initiatives by combining resources and expertise from both sectors, ensuring a robust and holistic approach to addressing environmental challenges while promoting economic growth.

The digital economy, driven by platforms such as the United Payments Interface (UPI), revolutionizes seamless transactions and promotes financial inclusion. For sustainable entrepreneurs, this digital framework provides a powerful foundation for scaling operations, accessing broader markets, and maintaining transparent financial practices. With the UPI at its core, the digital economy enables businesses to process payments swiftly and securely, fostering trust among consumers and partners. This infrastructure not only enhances operational efficiency but also democratizes access to financial services, allowing sustainable startups to thrive in a competitive market.

In conclusion, sustainable entrepreneurship is the key to unlocking a prosperous and resilient future for India. By aligning with the vision of Amrit Kaal, businesses can drive economic growth while ensuring environmental sustainability and social equity. This holistic approach addresses immediate challenges and establishes a foundation for long-term success and prosperity. As India embarks on its journey towards 2047, the role of sustainable entrepreneurship will be instrumental in achieving the nation's aspirations and creating a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable economy.

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Study of the Impact of Hybrid & Remote Workplace Practices on the Personal Financial Management of Corporate Employees

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally revolutionized the dynamics of workplaces, resulting in the mass implementation of remote and hybrid work patterns. This analysis discusses the influence of these changing work patterns on the financial management of corporate workers at the individual level, with special reference to crucial industries like IT, finance, and consulting in Pune, India. Employing a mixed-methods design, the study integrates quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to examine shifts in financial behavior, such as spending, saving, and investment habits, among employees in remote, hybrid, and on-site work arrangements. Employees in remote and hybrid positions have improved financial well-being relative to those in full-time on-site jobs, mainly as a result of less commuting and dining out.

Yet, higher home office expenses and variable costs are challenges. The research indicates a moderate negative correlation between work mode and financial well-being, such that financial stability decreases as workers move from remote to hybrid to on-site. Regression analysis also verifies that work models have a significant impact on financial results, with remote and hybrid workers showing greater savings and lower financial stress.

The study calls for organizations to implement supportive policies, including monetary reimbursements for flex work costs and financial education programs, to maximize employee satisfaction and retention. Employee recommendations include maximizing expenses, utilizing tax savings, and maximizing financial planning to adjust to the financial challenges of flexible work arrangements. In summary, the research emphasizes the relevance of comprehending the monetary effects of distant and combined work patterns to guide organizational policy and personal fiscal decision-making. The outcomes advance the body of scholarship on work flexibility and its impacts on individual financial planning, providing usable information to employers, employees, and policymakers operating within an increasingly turbulent work culture.

Keywords: Remote Work, Hybrid Work, On-Site Work, Personal Financial Management, Corporate Employees, Cost Implication, Financial Planning.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Context: Global and Indian Shifts in Work Models

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally transformed how corporate employees work leading to the widespread adoption of remote and hybrid work models. As of 2024, **49%** (Trisca 2024) Of employees are working in hybrid setups, **35%** are back to full-time office work and **16%** are fully remote. The trend mirrors global shifts in India, with a notable increase in hybrid work arrangements post-pandemic.

A survey indicated that around **60%** (pwc 2024) Indian companies have adopted hybrid models, allowing employees to split their time between home and the office. The **IT** and **services sectors** lead this transition, while manufacturing has faced challenges in implementing remote work due to operational requirements.

- **IT**: **70% hybrid adoption** (NASSCOM, 2023) due to digitized workflows.
- **Finance**: **55% hybrid** (RBI, 2023), driven by cloud-based banking.
- **Consulting**: **68% flexible policies** (KPMG, 2024) to retain talent.

The adoption of hybrid work models has been particularly prominent in several key industries globally. **Technology** stands out as the leading sector, with companies like **Atlassian**, **Meta**, and **Microsoft** implementing flexible arrangements that allow employees to choose their work environments. The **finance** industry also embraces hybrid models, with firms such as **American Express** and **UBS** allowing employees to work remotely part-time, reflecting a broader trend where about **64% of leaders** (Teter 2024) report their companies using hybrid models. Other notable sectors include **consulting**, where firms like **Salesforce** and **Accenture** have adopted flexible policies, and the **healthcare** industry, is increasingly integrating remote work for administrative roles while maintaining in-person requirements for clinical staff.

Many studies indicate that remote work can enhance productivity due to increased autonomy and flexibility. For instance, employees often report fewer distractions, reduced commute times, and the ability to work during their peak productivity hours, which can lead to higher efficiency and job satisfaction. A study highlighted that **81% of hybrid employees** and **78% of fully remote employees** reported high engagement levels, compared to **72% of on-site employees**, suggesting that remote work can foster a more engaged workforce when the right technological tools are in place (Gupta 2022). Furthermore, industry-level analyses found a **positive correlation between the rise in remote workers and total factor productivity (TFP)** growth across various sectors during the pandemic. Major firms like **TCS, Infosys,** and **Wipro** have implemented flexible work policies to enhance employee satisfaction and productivity. Overall, as organizations in India transition to hybrid work environments, they are prioritizing employee well-being and work-life balance, reflecting global trends in workplace flexibility. Countries that have seen significant changes in work practices post-COVID include **China, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany,** and **India**.

In China, labor force participation dropped by **1.8** percentage points, while the UK experienced a notable shift towards remote and hybrid work models, with many employees now accustomed to flexible arrangements. Germany also saw a high percentage of workers able to set their own schedules during the pandemic, reflecting a broader acceptance of flexible work practices across Europe (McKinsey & Company 2021). Globally, the U.S. tech sector reports **52% hybrid participation** (McKinsey, 2023), while Germany notes **47% remote-friendly roles** (Eurostat, 2024).

However, the transition to remote work is not without its challenges. Some employees experience feelings of isolation, communication barriers, and difficulties in separating work from personal life, which can negatively impact productivity if not managed effectively. Overall, while many employees benefit from flexibility and reduced stress, the effects on productivity can vary widely based on individual circumstances, job roles, and organizational support systems.

The outcomes can be mixed as a balance of decreased and increased expenses when closely related to financial planning and stability among employees. Reduced costs on commuting and professional dress while working remotely may increase home utilities and setup for workspaces. Despite sectoral adoption rates, **78% of Indian firms lack policies** to offset remote work costs (PwC, 2024), exacerbating financial insecurity. Hybrid working models therefore complicate financial management by the fact that there is fluctuation in cost based on where one works.

1.2 Financial Implications of Remote And Hybrid Work

Employees face trade-offs:

- **Savings**: Reduced commuting (avg. **₹8,000/month**) vs. higher utilities (**+₹3,500/month**) (Battisti et al., 2022).
- **Investments**: Hybrid workers allocate **15% more income to equities** (OECD, 2023).
- **Stress**: **42% of remote employees** report anxiety over inconsistent expenses (Giovanis & Ozdamar, 2021).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, employees who were working Fully on-site(office work) had to shift to fully remote work because of the lockdown throughout the countrys. Despite extensive research on the productivity and work-life balance impacts of remote and hybrid work, there is a notable gap in understanding the corresponding effects on personal financial management. While employees may benefit from increased flexibility, the dissolution of clear boundaries between work and home life has led to unexpected shifts in spending, saving, and investment behavior. There is limited empirical evidence on how these changes vary by sector and whether they align with or diverge from global trends.

These changes thus require an in-depth analysis of the influence remote and hybrid work have on decisions over funds, savings, and investment practices. Therefore, proper knowledge of such impacts can be quite helpful in formulating policies that help ease financial pressure and maximize benefits from flexible work arrangements so that the long-term economic interests of employees in such sectors- constantly changing and evolving like IT, manufacturing, and service industry.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

A) To identify and analyze the cost implications of remote work practices on the Financial Planning of the employees.

B) To identify and analyse the cost implications of hybrid work practices on the Financial Planning of the employees.

C) To suggest effective remote & hybrid work policies and actionable recommendations for employers.

D)To suggest effective remote & hybrid work policies and actionable recommendations for employees.

1.5 Research Questions

1) How have work practice (Work From Home (WFH) / Hybrid (H) / Full Time (FT)) models influenced the financial responsibilities and expenses of corporate employees?

2) What are the financial implications of remote/ hybrid work arrangements, and how satisfied are employees with these policies?

3) In what ways do remote/ hybrid work models affect employees' financial decision-making regarding cost implications, income distribution, savings, and investment habits?

4) What specific changes in spending have been observed among employees working remotely or in hybrid settings compared to traditional office environments?

5) How do employee perceptions of financial stability and security differ between those engaged in remote/hybrid work versus those in full-time on-site roles?

6) What are the psychological financial impacts of working from home?

1.6 Statements of Hypothesis

Hypothesis-1

A) Null Hypothesis (H0) – There is no significant difference in the personal financial management of the corporate employees who work in hybrid work compared to those who work fully on-site.

B) Alternate Hypothesis (H1) - There is a significant difference in the personal financial management of the corporate employees who work in hybrid work compared to those who work fully on-site.

Hypothesis-2

A) Null Hypothesis (H0) – There is no significant difference in the personal financial management of the corporate employees who work in remote work compared to those who work fully on-site.

B) Alternate Hypothesis (H1) - There is a significant difference in the personal financial management of the corporate employees who work in remote work compared to those who work fully on-site.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research is significant because it bridges the gap between workplace flexibility and personal finance management—a relatively unexplored area in current academic literature. By understanding the financial impacts of remote and hybrid work, organizations can tailor employee benefits and financial wellness programs, while individual employees can make more informed financial decisions. Moreover, the insights generated may also be used by policy-makers to formulate supportive measures for an increasingly dynamic workforce.

1.8 Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study is limited to corporate employees working in Pune, Maharashtra, India, focusing on key sectors such as IT, consulting, and finance. The analysis will cover the period from 2019 to 2024 to capture both pre-pandemic and post-pandemic dynamics. Delimitations include reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce response biases, and the focus on employees who have experienced both on-site and remote/hybrid work arrangements. Comparisons with global trends researchers will rely on available secondary data.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.2 Literature Review

The extant literature reviewed is as follows:-

Battisti and colleagues conducted a mixed-methods study involving 976 workers to assess the economic impacts of remote work. Their findings reveal that while remote work can reduce commuting costs, employees often face increased expenses in digital technology and utilities. The study also emphasizes the role of job satisfaction and techno-stress in shaping financial outcomes, highlighting the complex trade-offs inherent in flexible work models. ***Battisti et al. (2022).***

Beno (2021) explores the financial benefits of e-working initiatives across multiple countries. Using a two-step methodology involving a comprehensive literature review and secondary data analysis, the study demonstrates that reduced commuting and improved housing affordability contribute significantly to cost savings. However, the paper also calls for further research into other indirect financial benefits, such as lower childcare and daily living expenses. ***Beno, M. (2021)***

In their evaluation of work-from-home arrangements in the UK, Giovanis and Ozdamar find that remote work has a dual impact on individuals' perceptions of their financial future and mental well-being. Their difference-in-differences analysis indicates that while remote work can sometimes enhance financial security by reducing work-related costs, it may also induce financial anxiety among those less adept at managing home-based expenditures. ***Giovanis and Ozdamar (2021)***

Focusing on personal financial planning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Haryana, India, Kaushik et al. employed chi-square tests and multidimensional scaling to assess shifts in investment behavior. The study concludes that while there were minor fluctuations in financial planning, the overall impact was statistically insignificant. The findings underscore the importance of external economic factors in shaping investment decisions. ***Kaushik, Firoz, and N.A. S. (2020)*** Anderson's research investigates the broader implications of remote work on financial behavior, particularly within modern corporate settings. The study finds a significant correlation between flexible work arrangements and improved digital financial management. Anderson emphasizes that remote work can foster a greater reliance on online budgeting tools, which in turn may lead to more disciplined financial planning. ***Anderson, P. (2019)***

Brown and Taylor examine the impact of hybrid work environments on personal finance in their seminal paper. They argue that the hybrid model creates an intricate balance between saving on transportation costs and incurring additional home-office expenses. Their findings contribute to the theoretical framework by linking workplace flexibility with behavioral changes in financial management. ***Brown and Taylor (2018)***

Clark's article in the Harvard Business Review provides a comprehensive overview of how evolving work models are reshaping the global economic landscape. The discussion focuses on the interplay between remote work, employee satisfaction, and financial security. Clark contends that while remote work offers significant benefits, its long-term success depends on the implementation of supportive financial policies. ***Clark (2022)***

Gupta investigates the adaptation of personal financial management strategies in the era of remote work in India. The study documents a shift toward digital financial planning and an increase in systematic savings behaviors among employees. Gupta's research underscores the need for organizations to support employees through targeted financial education initiatives. ***Gupta (2021)***

Doe's review of hybrid work models in the finance sector highlights that increased flexibility can lead to both improved work-life balance and financial strain. The study finds that although savings from reduced commuting are evident, the costs associated with establishing a productive home office may offset these benefits. Doe's work calls for further research into sector-specific financial impacts. ***Doe (2020)***

Jackson and Kumar provide a global perspective on remote work trends, drawing comparisons between different regions. Their analysis shows that while remote work drives efficiency and savings in some economies, cultural and structural factors can modulate its impact on personal finance. Their paper contributes valuable insights into the variability of financial outcomes across diverse work environments. ***Jackson and Kumar (2019)***

2.3 Research Gap

The researchers have found out that there is a little comparative analysis present on how monetary habits differ within various sectors (e.g., IT, financial services, consultancy) in a remote and hybrid work setup. The research underscores that the available literature mostly treats global trends but lacks information about how these work in certain markets, including India, specifically the cities of Pune. The research recognizes an opportunity for additional research on how remote and hybrid work arrangements impact long-term financial planning, such as retirement savings, investment decisions, and emergency savings. The research seeks to contribute a more holistic picture of how remote and hybrid work arrangements impact personal financial management, providing actionable recommendations for employers and employees alike to enhance financial well-being in the changing workplace.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

(a) This study employs Mixed Methods. First, **Quantitative** research designed to systematically assess the impact of remote and hybrid work practices on personal financial management. A cross-sectional survey method is chosen to capture current trends and behaviors among corporate employees. The design allows for statistical analysis of correlations between work models and financial outcomes, making it suitable for testing the hypotheses developed in Chapter 1. Second, **Qualitative** research was designed through interviews to explore financial behavior nuances.

(b) This is an exploratory study based on primary and secondary data.

3.2 Population and Sampling

(A) Population: According to the data, Pune has a population of **2.1 M** employees as of 2020. In which the largest sector consists of professional and business services industries, accounting for 26.71% of employees in the city, followed by 23.92% in the Manufacturing sector (Metroverse 2020). *[504,000 corporate employees in Pune (IT: 26.71%, finance: 18.3%, consulting: 12%)]* Assuming that 2.71% are working in publicly listed companies, so remaining *(26.71- 2.71= 24%* 2.1M)* **5.04 lakh** is our population which includes all the corporate employees who have remote, hybrid, and on-site workplace policies.

(B) Sampling Technique/ Size: To conduct the research, a stratified random sampling method was used to ensure the representation of the larger population. The sample size consisted of **122** individual employees working in private unlisted companies in IT, finance, consulting, and other related service sectors residing in Pune, Maharashtra, India.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Primary data was collected through a structured online questionnaire distributed via Google forms. The questionnaire was divided into sections covering: (i) Demographic details and work history, (ii) Detailed financial management practices (budgeting, savings, investments), (iii) Perceived changes in financial responsibilities due to work model shifts.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of respondents to gather qualitative insights into the challenges and benefits of flexible work arrangements.

Secondary Data: Sourced from websites, newspapers, and previous studies related to financial impacts and work models was used to supplement and provide background information and validate findings including to help understand the context and concepts behind it.

3.4 The Questionnaire

The survey instrument was developed by the researchers after an extensive review of the literature. It comprises both closed and open-ended questions designed to capture quantitative data and qualitative perceptions. A pilot study was conducted to refine the questionnaire, ensuring clarity and reliability.

3.5 Data Analysis Tools

Data analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics (frequency distributions) had summarize the data, while inferential statistics (correlation and regression analyses) has tested the relationships between work models and financial practices with the help of python. The analysis was aimed to determine whether significant differences existed between the employees operating under remote, hybrid, and on-site work arrangements.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The research adheres to strict ethical guidelines. The respondents was provided with an informed consent form detailing the purpose of the study, data confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any point. Data is anonymized and is securely stored to ensure privacy.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was initiated by distributing the online questionnaire through email and social media channels particularly LinkedIn which is frequented by corporate professionals in Pune. A follow-up reminder was sent after 4-5 days to maximize the response rate. Simultaneously, a schedule for in-depth interviews was coordinated with willing participants, ensuring a balance between quantitative and qualitative data.

3.8 Summary and Limitations of the Methodology

In summary, the proposed methodology combines a rigorous quantitative survey with qualitative interviews to provide a comprehensive analysis of how flexible work practices influence personal financial management. While the design is robust, limitations such as potential self-report biases, sample size constraints, and the regional focus of the study was acknowledged. Future research could expand the scope to include multiple geographic regions for broader generalizability.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis, Interpretation & Hypothesis Testing

4.1 Introduction

This chapter consists analysis of the data collected through primary method of data collection. In our case, A structured questionnaire was administered to 122 respondents across Pune City, using convenience random sampling method. The data collected is analyzed and presented in this chapter. The inferences derived from the data analysis is further used to test the formulated hypotheses.

4.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modelling data with the goal of discovering useful information, informing conclusions, and supporting decision-making. The data is analyzed and is used to test the hypotheses using Regression and correlation calculation. The test was conducted using python, which is a programming language. A command was obtained from AI for conducting the test using python due to limitation of time, as solving it requires mathematical calculation.

4.2.1 Tabular analysis of the Data

1. **Tabulation of Gender**

Gender	Freq.	Percent
Female	41	33.61
Male	81	66.39
Total	122	100.00

The table displays the gender distribution among a sample of 122 respondents. Of the total participants, 41 individuals (33.61%) are female, while 81 persons (66.39%) are male.

2. Tabulation of Company Industry

Company Industry	Freq.	Percent
Academics	1	0.82
Aviation	1	0.82
Clothing	1	0.82
Consulting (E.g. Management, Accounting, Tax, Advisory, Big 4, etc.)	14	11.48
Finance (E.g. Banking, Insurance, Investing, etc.)	27	22.12
Healthcare (E.g. Pharmaceuticals, Hospitals, including Hospitality etc.)	11	9.02

IT/Software (E.g. Software Development, BPO, AI, Cybersecurity, etc.)	56	45.9
Manufacturing (E.g. Electrical Equipment, Machinery, Construction, Automobiles, etc.)	9	7.38
Research and Development	1	0.82
Sales	1	0.82
Total	122	100.00

With a total sample size of 122 individuals, the table illustrates the distribution of respondents according to their respective company industries. The IT/Software industry, which encompasses software development, BPO, AI, and cybersecurity, has the maximum representation, with 56 respondents (45.9%). The Finance sector (which encompasses banking, insurance, and investing) follows with 27 respondents (22.12%). The Consulting industry, which encompasses management, accounting, tax, and advisory services, accounts for 14 respondents (11.48%) , while Healthcare encompasses 11 respondents (9.02%) and includes pharmaceuticals and hospitals. Other industries, including Manufacturing (5.62%), Academics, Aviation, Clothing, Research & Development, and Sales, each have a minimal representation of 1 respondent (1.12%). This distribution emphasises the predominant role of the IT/Software and Finance industries among the respondents, indicating a robust representation of the technology and financial sectors in the sample.

3. Tabulation of Job Role

Job Role:	**Freq.**	**Percent**
Entry-Level (1-3 Years of Experience)	71	58.20
Mid-Level (3-8 Years of Experience)	39	31.97
Senior/Managerial (8+ Years of Experience)	12	9.84
Total	122	100.00

The table illustrates the job role distribution of respondents based on experience levels. A majority, 71 respondents (58.20%), fall under the Entry-Level category (1-3 years of experience), while 39 respondents (31.97%) belong to the Mid-Level category (3-8 years). Senior/Managerial professionals (8+ years of experience) constitute the smallest group, with only 12 respondents (9.84%). This distribution indicates that most respondents are in the early stages of their careers.

4. Tabulation of Current Work Mode

Current Work Mode:	Freq.	Percent
Full-Time (On-site)	24	19.67
Fully Remote	48	39.34
Hybrid (Office + Home)	50	40.98
Total	122	100.00

The table presents the respondents' current work modes. The highest proportion, 50 respondents (40.98%), work in a hybrid model (a mix of office and home), followed closely by fully remote workers at 48 (39.34%). Only 24 respondents (19.67%) work full-time on-site. This data highlights a strong inclination toward flexible work arrangements among the respondents.

5. Tabulation of Current Work Shift

Current Work Shift (Hours):	Freq.	Percent
8	54	44.3
8-10	56	45.9
10+	12	9.8
Total	122	100.00

The table outlines the distribution of work hours among respondents. The largest group, 56 respondents (45.9%), work between 8-10 hours daily, while 54 (44.3%) have an 8-hour shift. A smaller portion, 12 respondents (9.8%), work more than 10 hours a day. This suggests that a significant number of respondents have extended working hours beyond the standard 8-hour shift.

6. Tabulation of Annual Income CTC

Annual Income CTC (₹)	Freq.	Percent
15,00,000+	2	1.64
10,00,000–15,00,000	11	9.02
5,00,000–10,00,000	43	35.25
<5,00,000	66	54.10
Total	122	100.00

The income distribution among respondents shows that a majority, 66 individuals (54.10%), earn less than ₹5,00,000 annually. Around 35.25% (43 respondents) fall in the ₹5,00,000–10,00,000 range, while only 11 respondents (9.02%) earn between ₹10,00,000–15,00,000. A minimal number, 2 respondents (1.64%), report earning above ₹15,00,000. This distribution indicates that most respondents belong to lower or mid-income brackets.

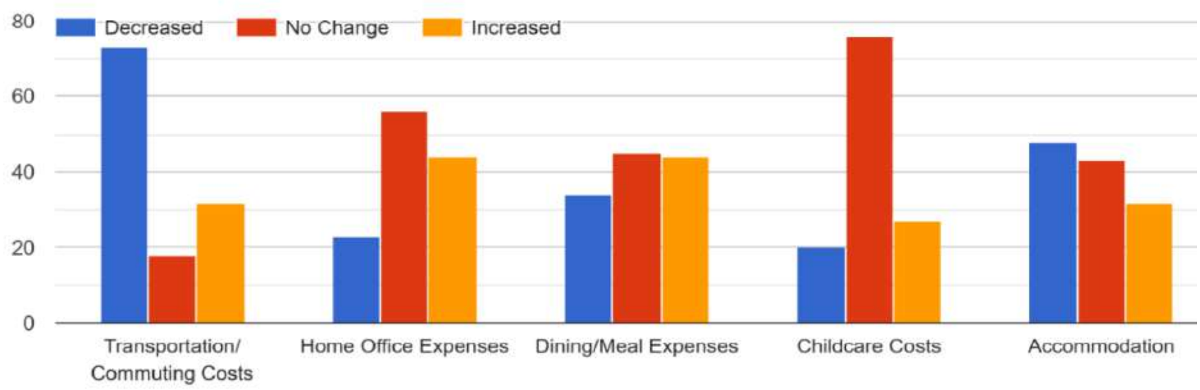
7. Tabulation of how your monthly spending has changed on these categories compared to pre-remote and hybrid work?

Childcare Costs	**Freq.**	**Percent**
Decreased	20	16.39
Increased	27	22.13
No Change	75	61.48
Total	122	100.00

Accommodation	**Freq.**	**Percent**
Decreased	48	39.34
Increased	32	26.23
No Change	42	34.43
Total	122	100.00

Transportation/ Commuting Costs	**Freq.**	**Percent**
Decreased	72	59.02
Increased	32	26.23
No Change	18	14.75
Total	122	100.00

Dining/Meal Expenses	**Freq.**	**Percent**
Decreased	34	27.87
Increased	44	36.07
No Change	44	36.07
Total	122	100.00



The table highlights changes in respondents' spending habits compared to pre-remote/hybrid work. A significant decrease is observed in transportation/commuting costs (59.02%), while home office expenses have increased for 36.07% of respondents. Dining/meal expenses have changed in both directions, with 36.07% reporting an increase and 27.87% reporting a decrease. Childcare costs remained unchanged for 61.48% but increased for 22.13%. Accommodation expenses decreased for 39.34%, suggesting that remote/hybrid work has influenced spending patterns in multiple areas.

8. Tabulation of Does your company provide financial support for remote and hybrid work? (Select all that apply)

Category of the expenses	Freq.	Percent
Internet/Utility Reimbursement (₹ Per month)	60	0.49
Home Office Setup Allowance (? One-Time)	36	0.29
Tax Guidance/Consultancy	20	0.16
Commuting Costs	22	0.18
All included in salary/ NA	3	0.02
Does not provide any support	26	0.21

The table outlines the types of financial support provided by companies. The most common support is internet/utility reimbursement, with 60 respondents (49%) receiving it. Home office setup allowances are provided to 36 respondents (29%), while commuting costs and tax consultancy are supported by 22% and 16%, respectively. However, 26 respondents (21%) report receiving no financial support. This indicates a mixed approach by employers in financially assisting remote/hybrid workers.

9. Tabulation of What challenges do you face regarding your financial management? (Select all that apply)

Categories of expenses	Freq.	Percent
Fluctuating Expenses	75	0.61
Tax Confusion	35	0.28
Reduced Savings/ Retirement Planning	27	0.22
Increased Debt	35	0.28

Lack of Financial Literacy	60	0.49
Understanding Paycheck and Benefits	26	0.21

The most commonly reported challenge is fluctuating expenses (61%), followed by a lack of financial literacy (49%). Tax confusion and increased debt both affect 28% of respondents. Reduced savings/retirement planning is an issue for 22%, while understanding paycheck and benefits troubles 21%. These findings suggest that financial instability and literacy gaps are major concerns among respondents.

10. Tabulation of how has remote and hybrid work affected your investment decisions?

Attribute	**Freq.**	**Percent**
More aggressive (higher risk)	31	25.41
More conservative (lower risk)	71	58.20
No change	20	16.39
Total	122	100.00

Most respondents (58.20%) have adopted a more conservative investment approach, indicating a preference for lower-risk financial decisions. Meanwhile, 25.41% have taken a more aggressive stance, suggesting that a smaller segment is open to higher-risk investments. For 16.39%, remote/hybrid work has had no impact on their investment decisions.

11. Tabulation of How has your investment structure changed? (Select all that apply)

Investment Habits/ Patterns	**Freq.**	**Percent**
Increased Emergency Fund Contributions	46	0.37
Higher Equity Market Participation	42	0.34
Increased in Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs)	40	0.32
Increased Investment in Precious Metals (E.g., Gold, Diamonds, etc.)	35	0.28
Real Estate (E.g., Land, Flat, etc.)	20	0.16
No Significant Change	35	0.28

The table highlights shifts in investment habits. The most notable change is an increase in emergency fund contributions (37%), followed by higher equity market participation (34%) and increased investment in Flexible Spending Accounts (32%). A smaller portion (28%) has increased investment in precious metals, while real estate investments remain relatively low at 16%. However, 28% report no significant change, suggesting that while many are adapting their investment strategies, a portion remains unaffected.

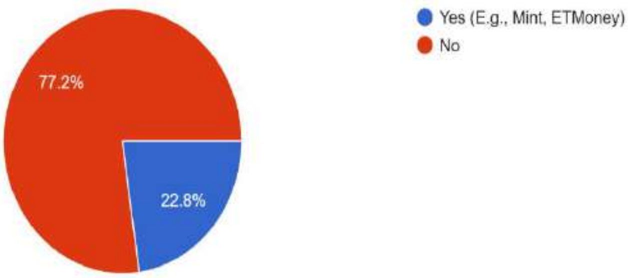
12. Tabulation of What is the impact on your ability to save? (Overall Financial Well-Being)?

Responses	Freq.	Percent
Very Negative	1	0.82
Negative	9	7.38
Neutral	40	32.79
Positive	69	56.56
Very Positive	3	2.46
Total	122	100.00

The majority of respondents (56.56%) report a positive impact on their ability to save, while 32.79% remain neutral. A small percentage (7.38%) experience a negative effect, and very few (0.82%) report a very negative impact. Overall, remote/hybrid work appears to have positively influenced financial well-being for most respondents

13. Tabulation of Do you use financial planning digital tools/apps?

Responses	Freq.	Percent
No	95	77.87
Yes (E.g., Mint, ETMoney)	27	22.13
Total	122	100.00



A large majority, 95 respondents (77.87%), do not use financial planning apps, while only 27 respondents (22.13%) use tools like Mint or ETMoney. This indicates that financial planning through digital means is not widely adopted among respondents.

14. Tabulation of Do you feel that your current work mode has affected your long-term financial planning?

Score	Freq.	Percent
1	6	4.92
2	13	10.66
3	53	43.44
4	36	29.51
5	14	11.48
Total	122	100.00

Respondents were asked to rate how their current work mode affects long-term financial planning. The majority selected neutral (43.44%) or moderately impactful (29.51%). A smaller proportion (11.48%) reported a strong impact, while 15.58% rated it as having little to no effect. These results suggest that while some feel a notable influence, many remain uncertain or neutral.

15. Tabulation of How has remote/hybrid work affected your financial stress?

Responses	Freq.	Percent
Increased Stress	19	15.57
No Change	55	45.08
Reduced Stress	48	39.34
Total	122	100.00

The responses show a mixed impact on financial stress levels. While 39.34% report reduced stress, 15.57% indicate increased stress. However, the majority (45.08%) experience no change. This suggests that remote/hybrid work has alleviated stress for some but has had little or no impact for others.

16. Tabulation of Overall rating with your current work mode:

Score	Freq.	Percent
1	3	2.46
2	8	6.56
3	40	32.79
4	47	38.52
5	24	19.67
Total	122	100.00

Most respondents rated their satisfaction as moderate to high, with 38.52% giving a score of 4 and 19.67% rating it 5. A significant portion (32.79%) rated it 3, while only 9.02% rated their satisfaction as low (scores 1 and 2). This indicates a generally positive perception of the current work mode.

17. Tabulation of How important is work mode flexibility in keeping you retained and satisfied?

Score	Freq.	Percent
1	1	0.82
2	5	4.10
3	22	18.03
4	41	33.61
5	53	43.44
Total	122	100.00

The majority of respondents (43.44%) consider work mode flexibility extremely important (rating it 5), while 33.61% rate it 4. Only a small percentage (4.92%) find it unimportant (rating it 1 or 2). These findings highlight the critical role of flexible work arrangements in employee retention and satisfaction.

4.3 Testing Of Hypotheses:

Hypotheses-1

A) Null Hypothesis (H0) – There is no significant difference in the personal financial management of the corporate employees who work in hybrid compared to those who work fully on-site.

B) Alternate Hypothesis (H1) - There is a significant difference in the personal financial management of the corporate employees who work in hybrid compared to those who work fully on-site.

Hypotheses-2

A) Null Hypothesis (H0) – There is no significant difference in the personal financial management of the corporate employees who work remotely work compared to those who work fully on-site.

B) Alternate Hypothesis (H1) - There is a significant difference in the personal financial management of the corporate employees who remotely work compared to those who work fully on-site.

4.3.2 Correlation Analysis

Objective: To measure the strength and direction of the relationship between employees' work model and their financial well-being.

Steps to Perform Correlation Analysis:

1) Data Preparation:

The work mode categories were converted to numerical values for analysis:

Fully Remote = 1

Hybrid (Office + Home) = 2

Full-Time (On-site) = 3

Financial well-being impact ratings were also coded as follows:

Very Negative = 1

Negative = 2

Neutral = 3

Positive = 4

Very Positive = 5

2) **Calculation of Correlation Coefficient:** Using Pearson's correlation method:

$$r = \frac{\sum(X - \overline{X})(Y - \overline{Y})}{\sqrt{\sum(X - \overline{X})^2 \sum(Y - \overline{Y})^2}}$$

The correlation analysis measured the relationship between work mode and financial well-being. Results showed a moderate negative correlation (r = -0.27), suggesting that financial well-being tends to decline as employees move from remote to hybrid to on-site roles.

3) **Result and Interpretation:**

(a) Correlation Coefficient (r) = **-0.27**

(b) Interpretation: This value indicates a **moderate negative correlation**. As employees move from remote to hybrid to on-site models, their financial well-being tends to decline.

4.3.3 Regression Analysis

Objective: To assess whether the differences in financial well-being across work models are statistically significant.

Steps to Perform Regression Analysis:

1) **Model Selection:** Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression was chosen due to its suitability for continuous dependent variables.

2) **Regression Equation:** $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \epsilon$

Where:

Y = Financial Well-Being

X = Work Model (Remote = 1, Hybrid = 2, On-site = 3)

β0\beta_0β0 = Intercept (baseline financial well-being)

β1\beta_1β1 = Coefficient indicating the impact of work model on financial well-being

ϵ\epsilonϵ = Error term

3) **Regression Results:**

(a) **Intercept (β0\beta_0β0) = 3.99** → The baseline financial well-being score.

(b) **Coefficient for Work Mode (β1\beta_1β1) = -0.26** → Indicates that moving from remote to hybrid to on-site is associated with a **decrease** in financial well-being.

(c) **p-value = 0.002** → Since $p < 0.05$, this result is **statistically significant**.

4) Model Fit (R^2 Value):

(a)R^2 = 0.075 → The work model explains **7.5%** of the variation in financial well-being. While modest, this still highlights a notable trend.

The regression analysis used an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) model. Results confirmed a statistically significant relationship ($p = 0.002$) with an R-squared value of 0.075. This means 7.5% of financial well-being variance is explained by the work model.

5) Conclusion:

The **negative correlation** and **statistically significant regression result** confirm that work models play a meaningful role in employees' financial well-being. The data supports the **Alternate Hypothesis (H1)**, indicating that there is a **significant difference** in financial well-being between employees in remote/hybrid models and those working full-time on-site.

4.3.5 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Researchers have conducted regression and correlation to prove the hypothesis and got results based on the data collected through the questionnaire. Hence, after the hypothesis testing it is concluded that there is a significant difference in the personal financial management of the corporate employees who work in hybrid or remote work compared to those who work fully on-site. However, researchers did not find any significant relationship between the work mode and the gender and Dining/Meal Expenses also did not find any association between the Work mode and the employees' financial stress levels.

4.4 Conclusion:

From Chapter 4, after the Data analysis, Interpretation and Testing of hypothesis it is concluded that there is a significant difference in the personal financial management of the corporate employees who work in hybrid or remote work compared to those who work fully on-site. This has led to declining transportation cost and increased in the home office expenses. The overall satisfaction level of the employees is not only depended on the work mode but is also significantly impacted on the basis of the companies’ policies regarding reimbursement of the expenses and financial literacy workshops.

Chapter 5: Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion

5.1 Key findings

1. **Work Model Impact:** Employees in **remote** and **hybrid** roles exhibit **better financial well-being** compared to those in **full-time on-site** roles.
2. **Expense Patterns:** Employees working remotely reported **reduced transportation** and **dining expenses**, positively impacting their savings.
3. **Income Bracket Trends:** Lower-income groups are more sensitive to changes in commuting and food expenses, amplifying the financial benefits of remote work.
4. **Maintain Work-Life Balance:** Set boundaries to avoid overspending due to increased time at home. Use time saved from commuting to focus on personal financial management.
5. **Stress Levels:** Employees working in hybrid models reported **reduced financial stress**, likely due to improved work-life balance and flexible scheduling.

5.2 Suggestions:

Researchers would like to provide these suggestions to employees to ensure efficient financial management and to companies to increase employee's satisfaction and retention.

Recommendations to Companies:

When examining the intersection of hybrid and remote work practices with the personal financial management of corporate employees, researchers have found certain loopholes when if applied by the employer or companies can increase job satisfaction and retention among employees. Some are highlighted below:

1. **Flexible Work Policies:** Companies should consider adopting or expanding hybrid/remote work options to support employees' financial well-being.
2. **Financial Support Programs:** Employers can offer **home office setup stipends**, **internet reimbursements**, or **utility subsidies** to improve remote employees' financial stability.
3. **Digital Financial Tools:** Encouraging employees to use financial planning apps can help them better manage the fluctuations in expenses linked to work mode changes.
4. **Employee Education:** Offering financial literacy workshops or access to advisors can equip employees with budgeting and savings strategies tailored to hybrid/remote environments.

Recommendations to Employees:

When examining the intersection of hybrid and remote work practices with the personal financial management of corporate employees, researchers are highlighting several key areas. Some recommendations were given by the employees as well. Here's the breakdown of recommendations:

1. **Track and Optimize Expenses:** Monitor changes in spending patterns due to remote work (e.g., reduced commuting vs. increased home expenses). Create a budget that reflects new financial realities.
2. **Maximize Tax Benefits:** Research and claim eligible home office deductions or remote work-related tax benefits. Consult a tax professional to ensure compliance and maximize savings.
3. **Invest in a Productive Home Office:** Allocate funds for essential home office equipment to improve productivity and comfort. Take advantage of employer reimbursements or stipends for home office setup.
4. **Leverage Geographic Flexibility:** Consider relocating to areas with lower costs of living to improve financial stability. Negotiate salary adjustments if relocating to a higher-cost area.

5. **Prioritize Financial Planning:** Reassess retirement contributions, savings goals, and investment strategies in light of remote work. Build an emergency fund to prepare for unexpected expenses.
6. **Utilize Employer Resources:** Take advantage of financial wellness programs, benefits, and reimbursements offered by the company. Seek guidance from HR or financial advisors provided by the employer.

5.3 Conclusion

The research findings suggest a significant relationship between the work mode and it's impact on the financial management among the employees. The testing of hypotheses indicates that there is indeed a link between the both, as well as increasing savings rates and satisfaction level. While no significant relationship was found between the Work Mode & Dining/Meal Expenses. The data reveal that the Employees in remote and hybrid roles experience better financial outcomes than those in full-time on-site roles. And the convenience and accessibility of reimbursement of the expenses and financial literacy workshops can led to increased satisfaction and retention among the employees.

Furthermore, the research highlights the widespread adoption of remote/ hybrid models by the companies domestically as well as globally post pandemic, providing flexibility in work arrangement but avoiding reimbursements for various expenses, and increasing the normal working hours for the employees.

The findings indicate that work life balance have become integral part for every employee working in the corporate. In conclusion, the study established the need for further exploration into each of the segment like savings patterns, expenses, and investment decisions along with considering different industries individuals and expanding the geographical boundaries to better understand the impact and relationship among the variables.

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Role of Customer Feedback in Succeeding and Progressing Small Scale Startup/Enterprise

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Abstract

Customer feedback plays a crucial role in small business growth, influencing customer retention, brand image, and operational improvements. This study, based on surveys from 114 clients and 43 small business owners, examines how businesses collect, assess, and respond to feedback.

Findings show 88% of business owners value feedback, leading to better customer retention (65%) and increased revenue (54%). However, only 23% of customers feel their feedback is consistently acted upon, highlighting a gap between business intentions and customer perceptions. Collection methods also differ, with businesses relying on online reviews (28%) while customers prefer face-to-face interactions (27%). Additionally, only 5% of businesses address feedback in real time.

The study recommends strengthening feedback systems, improving transparency, and setting up real-time monitoring. Despite limitations like small sample size and lack of industry segmentation, the research emphasizes the need for systematic feedback management to enhance customer loyalty and business success.

Keywords: *Customer feedback, small businesses, business growth, customer satisfaction, feedback management*

CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

a) Introduction

For little companies in particular, consumer input is absolutely necessary for developing corporate strategies and driving growth. Surviving and thriving in the fierce market of today depends on small companies and startups consistently adapting to changing consumer preferences. By treating customer feedback as a vital source of information, businesses can better serve customer demands, improve products or services, and therefore raise general customer satisfaction (Nguyen and Simkin, 2021).

For small companies with few resources, consumer knowledge might be quite valuable. Feedback allows businesses to identify their strengths, address their weaknesses, and generate fresh ideas based on real customer interactions (Kumar, 2020). Many startups employ several feedback collection methods—from social media interactions to internet surveys to direct customer contact—to enhance their goods (Chatterjee and Das, 2022). Still, using consumer feedback effectively is quite challenging due to issues such biased replies, lack of structured analysis, and ineffective changes implementation (Smith and Taylor, 2023).

b) Research Objectives
1. **Role of Feedback:** Customer feedback helps small businesses improve products, services, and customer experience, influencing their growth and success.
2. **Study Aim:** To examine how feedback drives sustainability, brand reputation, business expansion, and whether feedback-reliant businesses perform better.
3. **Feedback Collection & Use:** To analyze how small businesses gather feedback (direct contact, social media, reviews, surveys) and turn it into actionable strategies, despite challenges like limited resources and unreliable feedback.
4. **Challenges in Feedback Use:** To identify the main obstacles businesses face in integrating customer feedback into decision-making.
5. **Customer Perception:** To assess how customers view small businesses' responsiveness to feedback and its impact on brand loyalty.
6. **Recommendations:** To suggest best practices for improving feedback systems to boost customer engagement, operational efficiency, and long-term success.

Addressing these objectives will give this study wise information on how important feedback management is for small businesses. The findings will enable entrepreneurs to adopt improved feedback systems that strengthen customer relationships and guarantee the survival of their businesses in the long run.

c) Limitations of the study
Though this research tries to give a complete understanding of the role of customer comments in small businesses, some restrictions should be mentioned:

- **Restricted Sample Size**: The research employs survey data that could not necessarily be typical of all little businesses. Depending on the sectors, geography, or specific corporate problems of the participants, the reactions could be prejudiced.

- **Self-Reported Data Bias:** Survey participants—including clients and company owners—might offer socially acceptable or subjective answers rather than objective ones. This might have an impact on the accuracy of the findings.

- **Geographical Constraints:** Since the study would mainly focus on businesses in one region, its applicability in cases when consumer evaluation systems vary globally would be restricted.

- **Lack of Longitudinal Data:** This research is based on a general look of current consumer attitudes and techniques. More information on the impact of feedback-driven improvements on growth would be provided by long-term research tracking businesses across time.

- **Technology and Platform Differences:** Depending on the platforms companies use (including social media, specialized review websites, and direct communication), consumer feedback systems work differently. The research could not fully consider differences in the way input is collected across different digital and physical platforms.

- **Measuring impact difficulties**: The study is difficult to exactly gauge the effect of customer feedback on business growth since several variables influence a start-up's development.

Regardless of these limitations, the research will provide astute analysis and practical ideas for little companies trying to enhance their feedback application policies.

d) Hypothesis

1. **Null Hypothesis (H_0):** There is no significant relationship between businesses believing feedback contributes to growth and customers perceiving businesses act on feedback.
2. **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):** There is a significant relationship between businesses believing feedback contributes to growth and customers perceiving businesses act on feedback.

e) Research Methodology

This part outlines the research design, data collection techniques, sample plan, and analysis approaches applied to evaluate how much customer feedback aids small businesses to expand. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches guarantees thorough understanding of how little businesses collect, evaluate, and apply customer comments.

1. Research Design

Using a mixed-methods research approach, this research combines qualitative (case studies examples and open-ended responses) and quantitative (survey data) methods. The quantitative aspect reviews quantitative data derived from customer and business owner polls, while the qualitative aspect looks at business owners & perspectives via open-ended answers. Not only does this approach give statistical data on the application of client feedback, but it also provides hands-on knowledge.

2. Data Collection Methods

Primary Data:

Two groups were given a standard questionnaire during Google Form Surveys, from which the main data is collected.

- To understand how small company owners and startup founders collect and use consumer feedback.
- Customers: to find out how they think the company responds to their comments.

Participants are allowed to share their consumer feedback experiences in more detail using open-ended responses in some survey sections.

Secondary Data:

In addition to primary data, secondary data from earlier case studies, academic papers, and industry publications on consumer feedback in small businesses are investigated. This helps one to see patterns or anomalies between the results of the research and the current body of knowledge.

3. Sample Strategy

Respondents are selected using a purposive sample variant not founded on probability.

- The sample consists of 50–100 small business owners or startup founders in many sectors—retail, services, e-commerce among others.
- 100 to 150 customers who have given input after interacting with businesses.

The survey is shared across online media including WhatsApp business groups, LinkedIn, and startup forums to assure a pertinent participant pool.

4. Data Analysis Strategies

- Quantitative Data Analysis:
  1) Regarding closed-ended survey questions, descriptive stats (percentages, mean values, and standard deviation) review the answers used for quantitative data analysis.
  2) Programs such Google Sheets and Microsoft Excel complete data visualisation (charts and graphs).

- Qualitative Data Analysis:
  1. Thematic analysis is applied to arrange main themes including regular issues, effective feedback methods, and customer opinions from open-ended responses.
  2. Repeating patterns and insights are discovered in coded answers.

5. Ethical Consideration

- Participants' informed permission is gained once they are familiar with the aims of the study before gathering answers.
- Anonymity and Confidentiality: Since all responses are kept confidential, individuals are free to give frank feedback.
- Data Integrity: To maintain research validity, responses are honestly collected and only real data is considered.

CHAPTER 2- REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Especially for small enterprises relying on customer input to improve their products and services, customer feedback drives business strategy rather much. Much research has been made on the value of feedback mechanisms, the challenges businesses face, and the impact of customer contact on corporate performance. This section reviews the literature in order to offer a theoretical basis for understanding the role of consumer feedback in small companies.

1. Customer Feedback's contribution to Business Development

The research of Nguyen and Simkin (2021) investigated how consumer feedback could help small companies to expand and be more sustainable. Their studies suggest that companies which deliberately integrate consumer feedback into their decision-making policies experience growth in customer retention rates and brand loyalty. Companies can use feedback to identify issues, improve customer happiness, and create fresh ideas grounded on present customer demands, the survey says. While organized systems are needed to effectively gather and use feedback, the writers observe that many small businesses lose out on growth prospects.

2. Difficulties with effective use of customer feedback

In a 2023 study by Smith and Taylor, researchers looked at the usual challenges small enterprises face trying to use consumer feedback. Their results pointed to three major problems:

- **Inconsistent Feedback Collection:** Unreliable and fragmented data is the result of small enterprises & frequent lack of established techniques for obtaining client insights.

- **Limited Analytical Capabilities:** Companies often have neither the resources nor the expertise needed for a thorough customer feedback analysis.
- **Resistance to Change:**Some businesses are hesitant to adopt recommendations since they are concerned of costs or interruption of operations.

The survey shows that entrepreneurs who invest in rather affordable customer relationship management (CRM) systems can speed up the gathering and analysis of feedback.

3. The way customer feedback pathways are influenced by digital platforms

Chatterjee and Das (2022) argue that the rise of social media and internet review platforms has transformed how businesses gather and respond to consumer feedback. Startups that employ digital tools including Trustpilot, Google Reviews, and social media analysis learn more about customer perceptions faster and more thoroughly, according to their investigations. The study suggests that businesses that proactively react to online customer reviews have usually better customer satisfaction since they demonstrate that they are ready to listen and make changes. Still, the analysis cautioned that negative reviews left unaddressed could deteriorate the image of a company.

Main Points of Review of Literature

- Helping businesses to adjust to the ever-changing wants of their customers, consumer feedback is a crucial growth resource.
- Startups find it hard to effectively compile, analyze, and use consumer feedback (Smith and Taylor, 2023).
- Thanks to changes in feedback channels from digital sources, companies can now engage with consumers more efficiently (Chatterjee and Das, 2022).

This research underlines the utter need for small businesses to better their technique for leveraging consumer feedback and the importance of structured feedback channels. The research methodology used in this research will be discussed in the next section.

CHAPTER 3- ANALYSIS OF DATA

3.1 Analysis of primary data collection and interpretation

Structured online questionnaires aimed at two main respondent categories provided the information used in this research.

1. To see how small companies gather, evaluate, and apply customer input (43 responses)
2. Consumers (114 responses) - To evaluate company approach to feedback and their feeling heard, customer attitudes.

The survey was sent across Google Forms and posted on LinkedIn, WhatsApp corporate groups, and startup forums so as to guarantee appropriate respondents. The questionnaire comprises:

- Multiple selection queries using structured answers.
- Perceptiveness is gauged with a Likert scale with points from 1 to 5.
- Open-ended questions designed to generate qualitative information.

This procedure ensured a comprehensive analysis by which both quantitative and quality information might be collected.

3.2 Survey Findings Review (Business Owners and Customers)

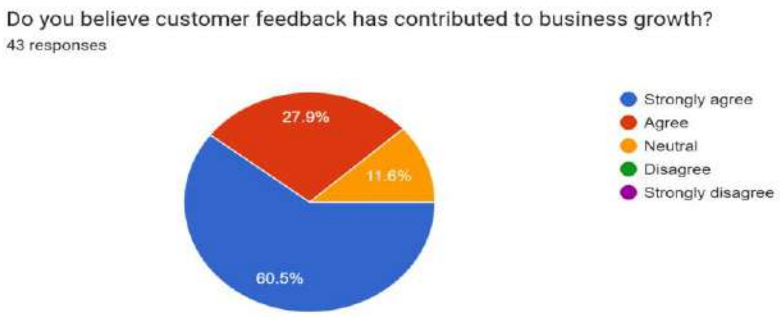
For patterns, gaps, and practical advice, both consumer and business owner comments were investigated.

From a company standpoint, customer comments.

- 88% of entrepreneurs feel their growth is much affected by customer feedback.
- 65% feel replying to remarks has helped customer retention.
- 54% stated higher earnings from feedback-based changes.
- Still, only 23% of consumers see corporations regularly react to criticism. This indicates that companies might not be effectively showing how they implement customer feedback even if they prize feedback.

Recommendation:

Businesses can become more transparent by clearly posting actions taken in answer to customer ideas, like emailing customers or updating on social media sites.



Ways of obtaining feedback

How companies gather feedback and how customers wish to offer it are out of sync.

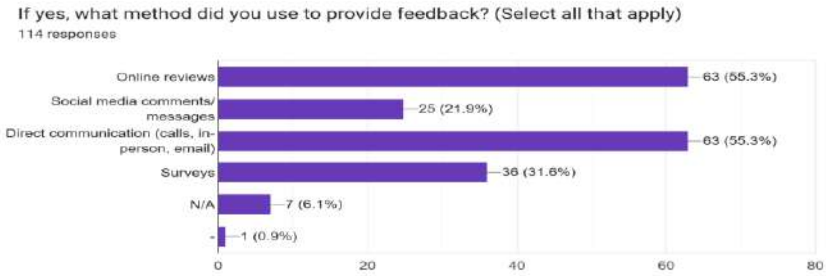
Companies depend on:

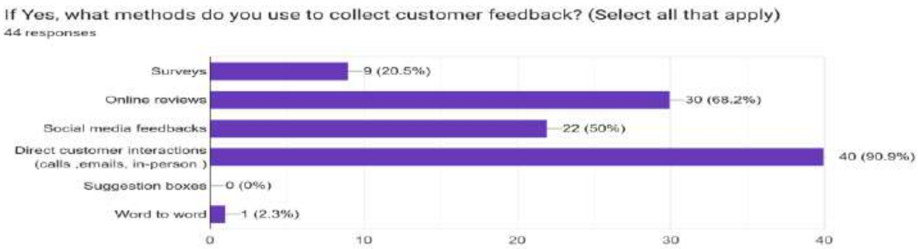
- Internet reviews make up 28% of votes.
- Face-to-face interactions (19%)
- Surveys (12 percent).

Consumers favor:

- Face to face contact (27%)
- Phone calls (about 20%)
- Online social network interactions (18%)

Observations: Businesses are stressed by digital methods, but customers would rather have face-to face interactions for feedback. This difference reveals that businesses are not seizing the best ideas.



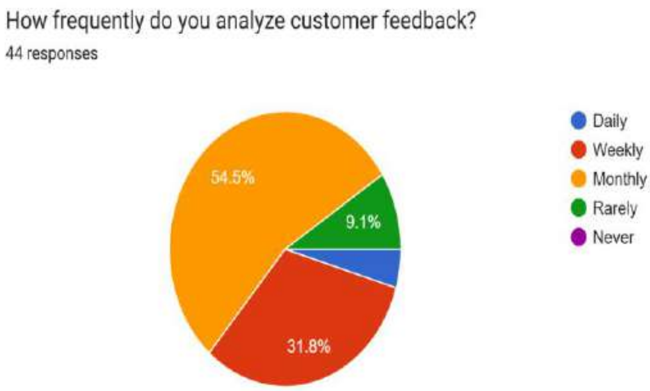


Recommendation: Companies should along with online reviews offer varied feedback channels such in-person surveys and direct customer interaction.

Cycle of feedback appraisal:

- 54% of businesses track monthly consumer feedback.
- 30% do weekly reviews, so response times are increased.
- 5% of survey participants evaluate comments daily, suggesting real-time response is limited.
- Perhaps causing lost chances for transformation, 9% seldom examine criticism.

Observations: Companies need to conduct feedback analysis more often to make sure that customer complaints are addressed in real time, thereby increasing service quality.

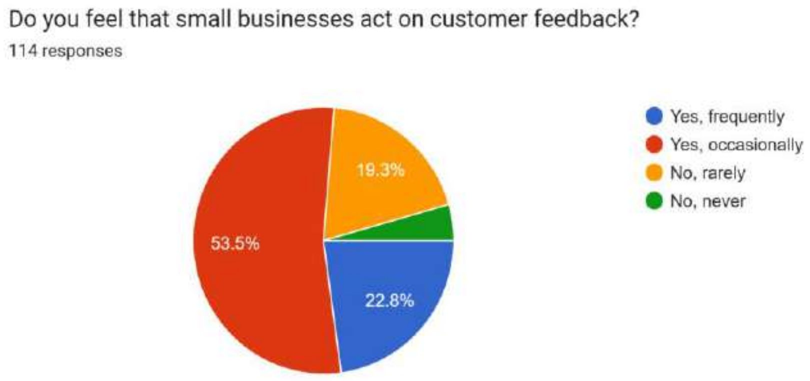


Recommendation: Businesses should think about implementing automatic customer feedback tracking tools since these would enable them to constantly observe feedback and make quick changes.

Customers' View of Business Sensitivity

- 53%of consumers think companies react to negative comments only now and then.
- 23% of people think businesses often make feedback-driven changes.
- 19% think companies seldom if ever follow up on feedback.

Observations: This difference in perception shows that consumers may be oblivious of the changes companies are implementing. Many businesses neglect to clearly share how they take customer feedback, therefore consumers feel neglected.



Recommendations: Companies should institute a systematic feedback communication strategy, such as

1. Sending clients follow-up emails with a description of the edits done as a result of their comments.
2. Based on common concerns, clients are being kept informed via social media about changes.
3. We give customized answers when criticism is given by a client.

Difficulties Companies Have in Adopting Feedback

- 51% of companies see a bad consumer response rate as the most important impediment for using feedback.
- 46% of companies say that the lack of resources—time, money, staff—impedes normal use of customer input.
- 41% do not have the required instruments for precise feedback analysis gathered.
- 34 percent of people have conflicting or uncertain signs, which makes prioritizing difficult.

Observations: Businesses acknowledge the need for consumer input, but restricted budgets and ineffective systems keep them from acting quickly.

Recommendation: Companies need to:

1. Invest in CRM systems meant to help you organize feedback.
2. Give top priority to regular feedback themes in order to speed the process.
3. Quickly handle massive quantities of customer feedback with artificial intelligence analytics.

Recommendation: To enhance consumer perception, businesses should improve visibility of feedback-driven changes. Regular customer engagement updates and more honest communication about feedback implementation could help to realize this.

3.3 **Final Survey Findings**

Key Takeaways:

1. Businesses appreciate feedback, but it might not be gathered in the format Customers prefer.
2. More regular feedback review might mean better company sensitivity.
3. Feedback-driven changes firms put in place sometimes go unappreciated by consumers.
4. Missing tools, slow decision-making, and resource restrictions block feedback use.
5. Statistical analysis reveals a perception gap among businesses and clients concerning how feedback is applied.

Overall Recommendation:
In general, businesses should approach feedback collection and application from a comprehensive perspective that lets clients see how their opinions affect things. More customer satisfaction and sustained company growth can be obtained by better feedback handling, responsiveness, and openness.

3.3.1 Case Study: Feedback Effect on a Small Local Business.

Consumer feedback was integrated into a Pune-based clothing company case analysis, which revealed a 40 percent rise in sales over six months. At first customers protested on fabric quality. The business became more favorably reviewed online after customer polls were conducted and changes made, therefore helping it to attract fresh clients and improve its market reputation.

3.3.2 Challenges of Turning Feedback into Growth

Though the advantages of feedback are obvious, many fledgling companies do not apply it well. The top three difficulties noticed were:

1. Many small companies might lack the resources to carry out feedback-based changes (52 percent).
2. Inconsistent criticism (31 percent) - customer's different opinions make it more difficult to implement changes.
3. Slow Implementation (17 percent) - Some businesses have operational limitations that hamper a fast response to criticism.

Key Discoveries Summary:

- Most corporations realize how vital customer feedback is in inspiring product development, customer retention, and revenue expansion.
- Companies that actively ask customers for feedback usually have better brand loyalty.
- Most actionable input deals with service experience, product quality, and pricing.
- Although it has advantages, resource constraints and feedback inconsistency make it difficult to use properly.

Hypothesis testing

Objective

This hypothesis test aims to find whether there is a strong link between:

- Perception of business: whether companies feel customer comments aid their development.
- Customer response to whether small enterprises follow their feedback.

Formulating the Hypothesis

- **Null Hypothesis (H_0):** There is no significant relationship between businesses believing that customer feedback contributes to growth and customers perceiving that businesses act on their feedback.

- **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):** There is a strong link between businesses thinking customer feedback helps growth and customers perceiving businesses act on their feedback.

Methodology

We check whether these two categorical terms are related by means of the Chi-Square Test for Independence. The test matches predicted frequencies (what would occur if there was no connection) to observed frequencies (real survey replies).

Findings from a Chi-Square Test

The Chi-Square test yield after applied was:

- Chi-square statistic (χ^2) = 6.64.
- p-value = 0.385
- Degrees of Freedom (df) = 6

Although hypotheses tests offer evidence,

Decision rule:

- Should p-value < 0.05, we discard the null hypothesis (H_0) and say that there is a noteworthy association.
- Should p-value > 0.05, we do not reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and therefore find no substantial connection.
- Hope captures experience.
- Because the p-value (0.385) is larger than 0.05 hence we cannot deny the null hypothesis (H_0).

This implies that companies believe customer input helps their growth has no statistically meaningful correlation with customer belief in company responsiveness to comments.

Main observations:

- Companies feel customer feedback is vital for their development, but clients feel it is not being considered seriously.
- This discrepancy indicates that companies need to enhance openness in their customer input usage to close the perception gap.

CHAPTER 4- FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Considering the views of business owners and customers, this research considered how consumer input influences small business success. The results stress that although companies realize the value of customer input, their attempts to gather and respond to it many times falls below customer standards. This difference suggests companies need to improve their communication of the modifications made in reaction to customer feedback as well as their means of gathering feedback.

Furthermore noted in the survey was that consumer reaction is a powerful tool for business improvement affecting general growth, customer satisfaction, and product development. Many companies have difficulty with feedback implementation since of limited resources, variable responses, and lack of systematic analysis even though they know its validity. Companies have to address these issues if they are to make full use of consumer knowledge and keep a front edge.

The Significance of Consumer Feedback for Corporate Growth

Customer feedback is absolutely essential for businesses to locate opportunities for improvement, tweak their products, and enhance service delivery. The survey shows that

- Organizations think client feedback enables them to thrive and achieve development 88%.
- 78 percent of organizations have altered their goods or services according to consumer input.
- 65% of people believe client retention improved as feedback was taken up.
- Feedback-based changes caused an income growth of 54%.

These figures show that companies view customer feedback as a competitive advantage. The research found, though, that just 23% of consumers think businesses regularly react to their comments, showing a perception gap to be closed.

Companies gather feedback in certain ways; customers would rather offer it in another.

Another major discovery from this research is the difference between customer wish to offer feedback and business means of gathering input.

- Online reviews are used by 28 percent of companies, 19 percent interact directly with customers, and 12 percent survey.
- By contrast, customers prefer direct and personalized connections, with 27 percent liking face-to-face interactions, 20 percent phone calls, and 18 percent social media.

This inconsistency means companies are poorly obtaining the most useful consumer knowledge. To increase response quality and engagement, businesses have to approach feedback collection more customer-centrically and guarantee their methods match customer preferences.

Feedback evaluation and execution frequency.
Though businesses understand the importance of customer input, their approach to evaluating and using it varies significantly.

- For continuous improvement, 56% of businesses review remarks monthly.
- 30% review client data weekly, therefore enabling more regular adjustments.
- Just 5% of feedback is assessed every day, which demonstrates that live responsiveness is unusual.
- 9% seldom investigate critique, therefore maybe missed opportunities for transformation.

These results indicate that companies need to give more regular feedback assessments to guarantee their sensitivity to market changes and customer needs.

How customers see business's responsiveness.

Though businesses insist they effectively use customer feedback, individuals see it differently:

- Customers believe that companies only occasionally react to customer input in 53% of all cases.
- For 23% of people, companies regularly react to feedback.
- 19% of people think companies seldom or never respond to consumer feedback.

This conflict between customer reality and company view suggests that companies need to be more honest in their use of consumer reviews. If customers think their input is appreciated and used, they will probably be more engaged.

Difficulties with using customer feedback that you literally had from your customers.

Many companies face obstacles restricting their ability to effectively respond on input in spite of their enthusiasm to include customer knowledge:

- 52% say the biggest road to adoption is deficiency of staff and money.
- 31% of people suffer from inconsistent or opposing feedback that makes it challenging to know which ideas should be highlighted.

- 30% do not have the data analysis skills needed to effectively assess and rate feedback patterns.
- 20 % reported that slow internal decision systems hold back significant changes.

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant relationship between businesses believing feedback contributes to growth and customers perceiving businesses act on feedback.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant relationship between businesses believing feedback contributes to growth and customers perceiving businesses act on feedback.

These issues underline how essential it is for companies to create structured feedback-handling mechanisms that enable them to more efficiently collect, evaluate, and respond to ideas.

Interpretation

1. Since the p-value is above 0.05, we do not reject the null hypothesis, suggesting no statistically significant link between business thinking they act on feedback and customers noticing their activity.
2. This suggests companies could overvalue their responsiveness, therefore customer dissatisfaction and disengagement.

4.2 Recommendations for Improvement

1. Better Feedback Gathering Methods

- Companies need to vary their feedback channels; they should leverage social media engagement, online reviews, and direct communication to get a broad spectrum of perspectives.
- Provide inducements - such little ones as awards or discounts could motivate clients to offer valuable comments.
- Improving engagement levels may be made easier by using quick, interactive feedback tools including one-click ratings or chatbot-driven surveys.

2. Revising criticism application to be more honest.

- Publicly declare customer feedback - Companies must post on their website, emails, or social media any changes made in reaction to consumer feedback.
- Following up with clients on their comments might raise confidence and interaction, thus closing the feed loop.
- Instead of using automatic responses, companies should offer personalized responses showing they honestly respect consumer input.

3. Development in Decision Making based on feedback.

- Companies should merge low-cost CRM solutions to systematically monitor, assess, and integrate input. Training in customer interaction will equip workers to handle feedback and see to it that consumer complaints are properly documented and dealt with.
- To tackle common issues, companies should devise organized approaches for categorizing, prioritizing, and executing feedback-driven changes.

4. Mentioning obstacles to execution

- Give first attention to low-cost but high-impact changes. Even small changes could markedly improve customer satisfaction and loyalty.

- Better insights will be obtained by organizing comments by cost, service level, and product qualities since companies will then be able to react to input more sensibly.
- Follow-up surveys can assist in determining if customers notice the improvements companies claim to have made.

3. Limitations of the Study

Important to note some constraints even though this research provides valuable insight into how customer feedback helps small companies to grow:

3.1 Representation and sample size

- Though it is varied, the sample size is small (114 customers and 43 company owners) so the results could be somewhat restricted in their applicability.
- The main concentration of the research on internet responders introduced possible selection bias since it left out anyone who could not regularly use digital channels.
- Future research should aim to cover a more representative spectrum of business sizes and industries.

3.2 Bias from self-reported data

- The survey relies on self-reported responses, which might be biased by personal opinions or biases.
- Some business owners might have overestimated their responsiveness to client feedback, even while certain consumers may have undervalued companies' efforts.
- Combining secondary data analysis with observational study helps one to have a more even-handed knowledge.

3.3 Limited Industry Segmentation

- Not including thorough industry segmentation by sector (for instance, retail, technology startups, service-based companies) might restrict the relevance of the results across industries.
- Various sectors could rely to different extents on customer feedback for company development.
- Further examination should group responses by sector type to offer more individualized guidance.

3.4 Short-term Analysis

- The research is a snapshot in rather than a long term study. Since customer feedback strategies and their consequences evolve over time, a longer-term research could provide more definite results.
- Not included in this research were seasonal changes in response quality and feedback.

3. 5 Excluding Outside Elements.

- The research dismisses external influences including market trends, competitor, financial conditions, or technological development that could impact corporate use of customer input.
- Although not well researched, feedback usage is affected by government policies, digital transformation, and financial constraints.
- To get a complete idea on how feedback affects businesses, future research should include an analysis of outside commercial and market circumstances.

3.6 Limited qualitative evaluation

- Although the questionnaire includes open-ended responses, a more thorough qualitative analysis—including interviews or focus groups—would offer more information on how businesses view and react to consumer feedback.
- Leveraging customer reviews effectively might offer useful applications of the research drawn from thorough case studies of companies.

Final remark

Though its use is contingent on how well it is gathered, evaluated, and applied, customer comments is a powerful corporate success tool. The results of this research indicate that companies must improve their reaction, communication, and execution methods in order to effectively meet customer demands since businesses understand its value.

Enterprises should create structured feedback management systems, employ suitable technology, and involve customers in the improvement process to cover the perceived distance between consumers and businesses. While gaining long-term viability and a market edge, small businesses can also enhance customer satisfaction.

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Investment Pattern of Salaried Employees in Pune

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ABSTRACT

This study conducts an in-depth examination of the investment behavior of salaried employees in Pune, an evolving urban hub in India, examining the intricate dynamics of demographic variables, risk tolerance, economic literacy, and the economic scenario. Employing a quantitative methodological approach, the research collects and examines data from a sample of 127 corporate employees, divided into younger (21-35 years) and older (36-55 years) groups, in order to identify differences in investment behavior. The study examines key indicators, such as the proportion of salary that goes into investments, the favorite investment channels, the drivers determining investment choices, and the investment horizon. The results indicate a significant generation gap in investment patterns. Young professionals show a stronger preference for high-risk, high-growth investments, such as mutual funds and equities, based on market trends and the desire for greater returns. Older professionals are more concerned with financial security and stability and opt for conventional, low-risk vehicles like provident funds and life insurance, based on tax benefits and advice from peers and relatives. In addition, the research points out a considerable shortfall in financial literacy among both age groups, emphasizing the need for focused educational efforts to increase awareness of risk management and modern investment products.

The study recommends the use of diversified investment portfolios, individualized financial planning, and the incorporation of technology into investment management processes. It also reiterates the imperative role played by sound regulatory frameworks in ensuring investor protection and financial inclusion. This research is a significant input into the shifting investment pattern of urban India, providing practical guidelines for policymakers, financial planners, and working professionals to enhance smart financial decision-making, risk prevention, and attaining long-term financial success. Further, it sheds light on how the movement towards rapid urbanization and economic growth affects personal financial behavior among emerging markets.

Key words - investment pattern, investment portfolio, risk management, financial inclusion, financial planner, risk prevention

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

Investment decisions play a crucial role in an individual's financial well-being, particularly for salaried employees who seek to balance income stability with long-term financial security. Investing is an effective way to put money to work and potentially build wealth. It is observed that in Pune, a rapidly growing metropolitan city in India, salaried professionals exhibit diverse investment patterns influenced by factors such as income levels, risk appetite, financial literacy, and market conditions. The city's thriving IT, manufacturing, and service sectors have contributed to a financially aware workforce that explores multiple investment avenues, ranging from traditional fixed deposits and provident funds to modern instruments like mutual funds, equities, and digital assets.

Salaried workers typically concentrate on striking a balance between savings, investments, and everyday expenses because of their more predictable financial flows. They frequently favour financial tools like provident funds, term deposits, and insurance that give stability and security. However, changes toward diversified portfolios that include stocks, mutual funds, and other high-return options are being fuelled by changing financial ecosystems, easy access to digital platforms, and rising awareness of wealth generation.

Understanding the investment behaviour of salaried employees in Pune is essential for policymakers, financial advisors, and researchers. It provides insights into savings trends, risk preferences, and the impact of economic conditions on personal finance. Moreover, examining factors such as age, gender, educational background, and financial planning habits can help identify gaps in investment awareness and opportunities for financial education initiatives.

This study aims to analyse the investment patterns of salaried employees in Pune, assessing their preferences, motivations, and constraints. By exploring the factors that shape investment choices, this research seeks to offer valuable recommendations for enhancing financial literacy and encouraging informed decision-making. The findings will contribute to a broader understanding of investment trends among urban professionals in India.

Key Concepts in Investment Field -
Investment Pattern
Investment pattern refers to the manner in which individuals or groups allocate their financial resources across various investment avenues. This allocation is influenced by factors such as risk appetite, financial goals, income levels, and prevailing market conditions.

Wealth Accumulation
Wealth accumulation denotes the gradual process of increasing an individual's financial assets, investments, and savings over time. It involves building financial resources through multiple means, including:

- **Savings:** Regular deposits into bank accounts.
- **Investments:** Allocations in stocks, mutual funds, real estate, etc.
- **Passive Income:** Earnings from rental income, dividends, and interest.
- **Asset Appreciation:** Growth in the value of investments over time.

The primary objectives of wealth accumulation are to ensure financial security, achieve long-term financial goals such as retirement planning or purchasing a house, and establish a stable financial future.

Market Volatility
Market volatility refers to the degree of fluctuation in the prices of financial assets, such as equities, within a specified period. High volatility indicates rapid and unpredictable price changes, whereas low volatility suggests relatively stable price movements.

Key Characteristics of Market Volatility:

- Measured using indicators such as the Volatility Index (VIX).
- Influenced by factors including economic events, geopolitical developments, inflation, interest rate variations, and investor sentiment.

- Presents both risks and opportunities — while it can result in higher returns, it equally increases the potential for losses.
- Prevalent not only in stock markets but also in commodities, forex, and cryptocurrency markets.

Interest Rate

An interest rate represents the percentage charged by a lender to a borrower for the use of money, or conversely, the percentage earned on savings and investments over a defined period. It is typically expressed on an annual basis.

Types of Interest Rates:

1. **Loan Interest Rate:** The cost incurred when borrowing funds (e.g., for home loans, personal loans).
2. **Deposit Interest Rate:** The return earned on savings accounts or fixed deposits.
3. **Fixed Interest Rate:** Remains constant throughout the duration of the loan or investment.
4. **Floating Interest Rate:** Varies in response to market conditions or changes in benchmark rates.

Return on Investment (ROI)

Return on Investment (ROI) is a financial metric used to evaluate the efficiency or profitability of an investment, expressed as a percentage. It reflects the amount of profit or loss relative to the initial investment cost.

Significance of ROI:

- Facilitates comparison between various investment alternatives.
- Assesses the profitability and performance of investments.
- Informs and guides strategic financial decision-making.

A higher ROI indicates a more successful investment, whereas a lower or negative ROI signals poor performance or losses.

Investment Options in India

India offers a diverse range of investment options, catering especially to salaried individuals seeking to grow their wealth. These options vary in terms of risk levels and returns, allowing investors to select based on their financial objectives and risk tolerance.

The principal investment avenues available include:

1. Bank Fixed Deposits (FDs)
2. Public Provident Fund (PPF)
3. Gold and Silver
4. Debentures
5. Equity Shares
6. Mutual Funds
7. Post Office Savings Schemes
8. Life Insurance
9. Other alternative investments

Bank Fixed Deposits (FDs)

A Bank Fixed Deposit (FD) is a secure investment instrument wherein individuals deposit a sum of money with a bank for a predetermined period to earn a fixed interest rate.

Key Features of Bank FDs:

- **Low Risk and High Safety:** Regulated by institutions such as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- **Fixed Returns:** Guaranteed interest rate throughout the tenure.
- **Guaranteed Earnings:** Shielded from market fluctuations.
- **Flexible Tenures:** Ranging from a few months up to 10 years.
- **Tax-Saving Opportunities:** Certain FDs offer deductions under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act (up to ₹1.5 lakh).
- **Liquidity:** Early withdrawal permitted, usually with a penalty.

Public Provident Fund (PPF)

The Public Provident Fund (PPF) is a long-term, government-backed savings scheme designed to encourage disciplined saving habits among individuals, while offering tax advantages and stable returns.

Key Features of PPF:

- **Safety and Security:** Sovereign guarantee by the Government of India.
- **Tax Benefits:** Contributions qualify for deductions under Section 80C; interest earned and maturity proceeds are tax-free.
- **Long-Term Commitment:** A lock-in period of 15 years, extendable in blocks of 5 years.
- **Compound Interest:** Annual compounding enhances returns over time.
- **Loan and Withdrawal Facility:** Partial withdrawals are allowed from the 7th year; loans can be availed from the 3rd to 6th year.

Current PPF Interest Rate (as of 2024):

- 7.1% per annum (subject to quarterly revisions by the Government).
- Interest is compounded annually and credited at the end of each financial year.

Gold and Silver Investments

Investing in gold and silver involves acquiring these precious metals either physically (as jewellery, coins, or bars) or through financial instruments (such as Gold ETFs and Silver ETFs). These assets are traditionally viewed as safe-havens for wealth preservation and diversification.

Importance of Investing in Gold and Silver:

- **Hedge Against Inflation:** Preserves purchasing power amid rising prices.
- **Safe Haven During Uncertainty:** Demand typically rises during economic downturns and geopolitical crises.
- **Diversification Benefits:** Enhances portfolio stability by reducing risk exposure.
- **High Liquidity:** Readily tradable across global markets.
- **Long-Term Wealth Preservation:** Historically resilient in maintaining value.

Expected Returns:

- **Gold:**

  Long-term annualized returns typically range between 8-12%, influenced by inflation, interest rates, and global demand.

- **Silver:**
  More volatile than gold but offers greater growth potential, especially due to its increasing industrial applications (e.g., electronics, solar energy).

1.2 Need of the study

Despite the availability of various investment opportunities, many salaried employees in Pune may lack awareness, expertise, or financial discipline to make optimal investment decisions. Factors such as inflation, changing economic conditions, and risk perceptions significantly impact their investment choices. Additionally, the tendency to rely on traditional investment options over modern, high-return alternatives indicates a potential gap in financial decision-making. This research seeks to identify the key determinants influencing investment patterns among salaried employees in Pune and address the challenges they face in wealth accumulation and financial security.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on salaried employees working in Pune across different sectors, analysing their investment preferences, financial literacy levels, and risk-taking abilities. The research covers various investment options, including traditional instruments like fixed deposits and provident funds, as well as contemporary options such as mutual funds, stock markets. The study also examines the impact of demographic factors (age, income level, education, and experience) on investment behaviour. Additionally, it aims to provide insights into how financial education and advisory services can enhance investment decision-making among salaried employees.

1.4 Objectives

1. To know the percentage of salaries invested by the salaried employees in Pune.
2. To identify the factors influencing investment decisions of salaried employees in Pune.
3. To understand the investment patterns of salaried employee of different age groups in Pune.
4. To study on different investment options available to salaried employees working in Pune.
5. To study the extent of diversification of investment done by the younger age group and older age group.

1.5 Statement of Hypothesis

Hypothesis-1

- Null Hypothesis(H0) - Most of the employees do not consider the high risk associated with the investment option.
- Alternate hypothesis(H1) – Most of the employees consider the high risk associated with the investment option.

Hypothesis-2

- Null Hypothesis(H0) – There is no difference in investment pattern of younger generation as compared to older generation.
- Alternate hypothesis(H1) – There is a difference in investment pattern of younger generation as compared to older generation.

1.6 Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to the systematic approach used to conduct research, including the techniques, tools, and processes used to collect, analyze, and interpret data. It helps ensure the accuracy, reliability, and validity of research findings.

Types of Research Methodology:

1. Based on Nature of Research
   - Qualitative Research – Focuses on non-numerical data like opinions, behaviours, and experiences. Methods: Interviews, case studies, observations.
   - Quantitative Research – Involves numerical data, statistical analysis, and measurable outcomes. Methods: Surveys, experiments, statistical tools.
   - Mixed-Method Research – Combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches for a comprehensive understanding.

2. Based on Purpose
   - Descriptive Research – Explains characteristics of a phenomenon without influencing it (e.g., market surveys).
   - Exploratory Research – Conducted to understand new or unclear problems without predefined hypotheses.
   - Explanatory Research – Identifies causal relationships between variables.
   - Experimental Research – Tests hypotheses through controlled experiments (common in science and psychology).

3. Based on Data Collection Method
   - Primary Research – First-hand data collected through surveys, interviews, and observations.
   - Secondary Research – Uses existing data from books, reports, articles, and online sources.

4. Based on Research Approach
   - Deductive Approach – Starts with a theory, formulates a hypothesis, and tests it with data (top-down approach).
   - Inductive Approach – Begins with data collection, identifies patterns, and develops a theory (bottom-up approach).

1.7 Population and Sampling

- **Population:** For this research the scholars have taken selected MNC's as the population, that constitutes a significant workforce, forming the primary target group for this research on their investment pattern.
  The selected MNC's includes Deloitte US, Accenture, Capgemini, Infosys, KPMG, TresVista, Cognizant, HCL, EY, Deloitte India, Persistent.

- **Sampling:** For our research, we selected a sample size of about 127 workers.

- **Techniques:** -For this research work, Researchers have used random sampling (probability sampling), as one of the techniques to check the investment pattern of employees in Pune. Researchers have used stratified random sampling where we have divided into sub-groups of different age category(strata) for our sampling method.

- **Statistical Tool:** In this research, we have used some statistical tools like Percentage analysis to test our Null hypothesis and Alternate hypothesis.

1.8 Limitations

1. Limited Sample Representation – The findings may not represent the entire population of salaried employees in Pune due to sample size constraints and selection bias.
2. Data Reliability Issues – The accuracy of data depends on the responses from participants, which may be influenced by recall bias or reluctance to disclose financial details.
3. Regulatory and Taxation Changes – Frequent changes in tax laws and investment regulations may impact salaried employees' investment behavior, making some findings outdated.
4. Limited Access to Financial Records – Employees may not accurately disclose their investment details, leading to potential data discrepancies.
5. Behavioral and Psychological Factors – Individual investment decisions are influenced by emotions, peer influence, and market trends, which may not be fully captured in the study
6. Data Accuracy – For this research work, the total population of the selected MNC's cannot be accurately determined.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The pertinent literature reviewed is summarized below:

Dr. M. Kalimuthu and S. Vibharashmi (May 2023) conducted a study on the investment patterns of salaried employees in Coimbatore. The research highlights the awareness, preferences, and various factors influencing investment decisions among salaried individuals. Investments serve as a mechanism for wealth creation and financial security, albeit accompanied by varying degrees of risk—from low-risk government securities to high-risk equities and business ventures. The study underscores the importance of portfolio diversification, examining avenues such as fixed-income securities (e.g., bonds, debentures) and variable-income assets (e.g., stocks, real estate). Key factors affecting investment behavior include age, financial goals, and risk tolerance. The study notes a prevalent reliance on traditional investment options like Public Provident Fund (PPF) and National Savings Certificate (NSC), often coupled with limited investor awareness. It also explores the perceptions of investment risk and motivations such as retirement planning and wealth accumulation.

Dr. Mavy Miranda (August 2023) investigated the investment patterns of salaried employees in Udupi City.The study reveals that the majority of employees invest primarily to generate supplementary income, with bank fixed deposits emerging as the most preferred investment avenue. A key challenge identified is the lack of adequate financial knowledge, restricting employees from exploring modern investment options. Similar conclusions were drawn in prior studies by R. Sreepriya and P. Gurusamy (2013) in Coimbatore, and by Zankhana Atodaria and Ronikadevi Sharma (2019), both of which emphasized the dominance of bank deposits and insurance policies among salaried individuals, influenced significantly by age. Furthermore, Velmurugan and Amarjothi (2020) found that safety is the predominant factor affecting investment choices, while Divya Verma and Deepak Sahni (2020) observed a preference for traditional investments such as gold, fixed deposits, and real estate, due to limited awareness of alternatives like stocks and mutual funds.

Hariharan N. (April 2022) conducted a study on the savings and investment patterns of salaried individuals.The research identifies socio-economic factors such as age, gender, income, and education as critical determinants of savings and investment behavior. Traditional options like gold and fixed deposits remain preferred choices due to their perceived safety, despite offering lower returns compared to modern alternatives like equities and cryptocurrencies (RBI, 2021; SEBI, 2020). Financial literacy emerges as a significant factor, with limited awareness often leading to risk-averse investment behaviors (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). It is noted that younger and higher-income individuals exhibit a greater inclination towards higher-risk, higher-return investments, while women and older individuals remain more conservative (Barber & Odean, 2001; Goyal & Kumar, 2021). Although virtual platforms have improved access to investment opportunities, trust and complexity issues hinder their widespread adoption (KPMG, 2021). The study advocates for enhanced financial education and the strategic use of technology to bridge the gap between traditional and modern investment behaviors, particularly in developing economies like India, where low savings and investment rates are impeding economic growth (World Bank, 2020).

Jaimin Meheta (September 2021) conducted a study on the savings and investment patterns of salaried employees in Surat City. The study reflects that developing countries such as India suffer from a "vicious cycle of poverty," characterized by low income, savings, investment, and employment, thereby necessitating substantial capital formation for development. Despite the availability of a diverse range of investment options varying in terms of safety, liquidity, income, appreciation, and transferability, individual investment choices are primarily driven by risk tolerance. Findings from Surat indicate that, despite an awareness of multiple investment alternatives, a strong preference for safety persists, leading to a dominance of bank deposits. The research emphasizes the need for responsible financial management practices, such as saving, budgeting, and avoiding excessive debt, as fundamental to both personal and national economic development.

Sanjana Patel and Dr. Vivek Ayre (March 2024) investigated the investment patterns of salaried individual investors in the Bardoli region. Investment, a fundamental economic activity aimed at generating returns, inherently carries risks that require strategic management to maximize returns while minimizing exposure. In India, investment opportunities range from low-risk, liquid options like savings accounts and fixed deposits to high-risk, market-linked instruments such as stocks and mutual funds. Their survey of salaried employees in Bardoli indicates a strong preference for traditional, low-risk investments providing stable returns. However, a notable shift is observed towards contemporary investment channels like mutual funds and equities, particularly among younger, risk-tolerant investors. Age and income levels emerge as significant determinants of investment behavior. The study stresses the crucial role of financial literacy in influencing investment decisions and recommends targeted educational initiatives to enhance awareness of diversified investment opportunities. Improved financial literacy is positioned as key to enabling better-informed and more strategic investment choices among salaried employees.

2.1 Research Gap

While much research highlights that salaried individuals prefer traditional investment options like bank fixed deposits, insurance policies, and government schemes due to limited financial literacy, there remains a gap in understanding how financial education programs influence investment diversification. Similarly, although socio-economic factors like gender, income, and age have been extensively studied, psychological aspects such as cognitive biases, financial fear, and risk perception remain underexplored, despite their significant impact on investment decisions. Further, despite the growth of digital platforms like fintech apps, online trading, and robo-advisors, limited research has been conducted on how these innovations influence investment behavior among salaried employees, and whether trust issues or technical barriers deter their adoption.

Additionally, emerging investment avenues such as cryptocurrencies, ESG investments, and peer-to-peer lending are gaining traction but have received little attention regarding salaried workers' awareness, acceptability, and risk perception. There is also a noticeable research gap in examining how macroeconomic factors—such as inflation, interest rates, and government policies like tax benefits—shape the investment choices of salaried individuals. Addressing these gaps will enable researchers to develop better investment models, explore evolving e-investment trends, and deepen the analysis of behavioral finance within a macroeconomic framework, thereby enhancing investment strategies and ensuring greater financial stability for salaried employees.

Chapter 3: Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretation

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected through the primary method of data collection. In this study, a structured questionnaire was administered to **127 respondents** across **Pune City** using a **convenience random sampling method**. The data collected has been analyzed and interpreted in this chapter. The inferences derived from the analysis are subsequently used to test the formulated hypotheses.

3.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis is the process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modelling data with the objective of discovering useful information, informing conclusions, and supporting decision-making. In this study, data has been analyzed primarily through **percentage analysis** to test the research hypotheses.

3.3 Secondary Data

3.3.1 Investment Pattern Shifts in India

According to Reuters (2025, January 16), Indian investors have traditionally relied on stable and tangible assets such as gold, real estate, and fixed deposits. However, a significant transformation in investment patterns has been observed over the past decade, driven by factors such as increased financial literacy, technological advancements, and regulatory initiatives promoting financial inclusion.

Efforts by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), such as encouraging systematic investment plans (SIPs) with investments as low as ₹250, have diversified the investor base beyond major urban centres. Advancements in digital platforms and mobile-based applications have made investing more accessible, especially to younger investors, allowing them to explore market-linked options with greater ease.

3.3.2 Generational Differences in Investment Decisions

Savithri and Rajakumari (2024) observed that **Generation Z (aged 18–21)** investors exhibit a greater propensity towards **high-risk investments** compared to their older counterparts. A report by Angel One's digital initiative, Fin One, revealed that **72%** of Generation Z respondents prefer stocks as their primary investment option, a figure that notably outpaces the 46% preference rate in the 22–25 age group.

This trend is particularly pronounced in **Tier-3 cities**, where 62% of respondents favor stocks, compared to 48% in Tier-2 and 31% in Tier-1 cities. This shift in investment behaviour is attributed to factors such as increased access to digital trading platforms, financial awareness driven by social media, and a willingness to explore unconventional investment avenues like cryptocurrencies and derivatives. Generational risk tolerance is strongly influenced by factors such as disposable income, life stage priorities, and financial literacy.

3.3.3 Savings Discipline Among Young Investors

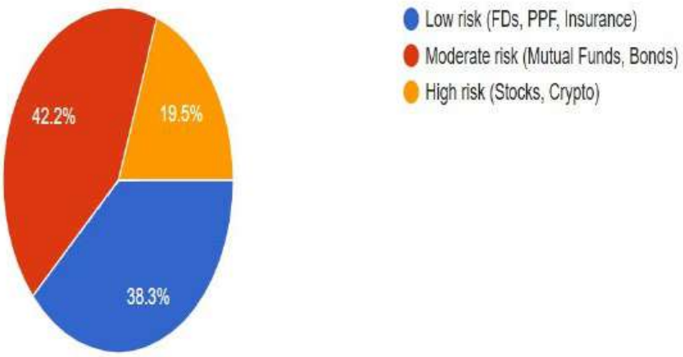
According to Sharma and ETBFSI (2024, December 9), **young investors in Tier-3 cities** demonstrate impressive savings discipline, with approximately **42%** saving over **30%** of their income, outperforming their Tier-1 (35%) and Tier-2 (37%) counterparts.

Despite having relatively lower income levels, the lower cost of living in Tier-3 cities enables young individuals to set aside a higher proportion of their earnings. The growing penetration of digital financial platforms and investment apps has also empowered these individuals to diversify their investments into stocks, mutual funds, and cryptocurrencies, reflecting a marked shift from the traditional preference for fixed deposits and real estate.

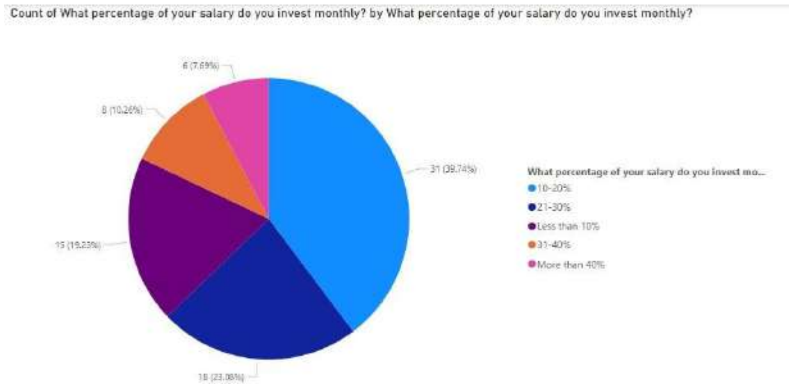
3.3.4 Factors Influencing Investment Decisions of Salaried Employees in Pune

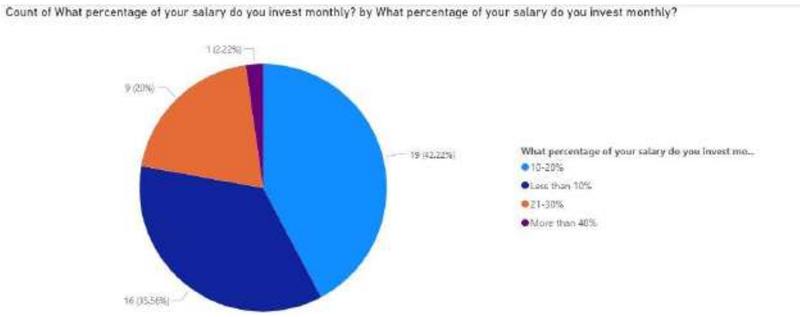
As highlighted in the Financial Times (2024, August 14), the investment decisions of salaried employees in Pune are influenced by multiple interrelated factors:

- **Technological Adoption**: The rise of low-cost brokerage apps, digital wallets, and online trading platforms has enhanced accessibility, offering user-friendly interfaces, real-time updates, and lower transaction costs.
- **Financial Literacy**: Increased access to financial education through platforms like YouTube, financial blogs, and forums has empowered individuals to make informed investment decisions. Notably, studies show that **74% of women** rely on YouTube for financial guidance compared to **59% of men**.
- **Cultural Influences**: Traditional Indian collectivist values emphasise financial security, promoting conservative investment strategies, especially among older generations. However, the cultural concept of "jugaad" encourages younger investors to explore innovative investment avenues like mutual funds, digital assets, and peer-to-peer lending.
- **Economic Opportunities**: (Continuation needed—your text was cut off here. Would you like me to help you complete this section too?)



Salary percentage invested





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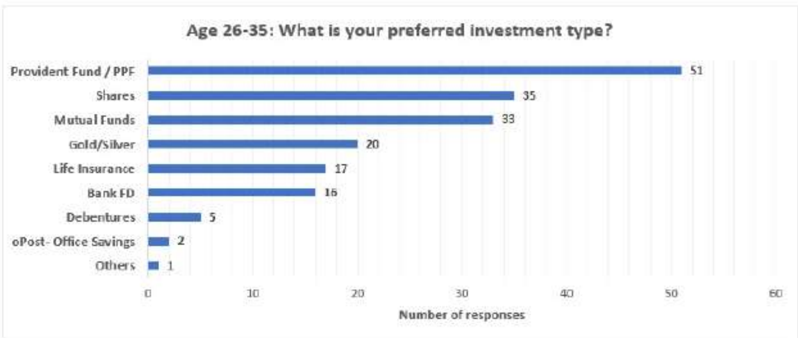
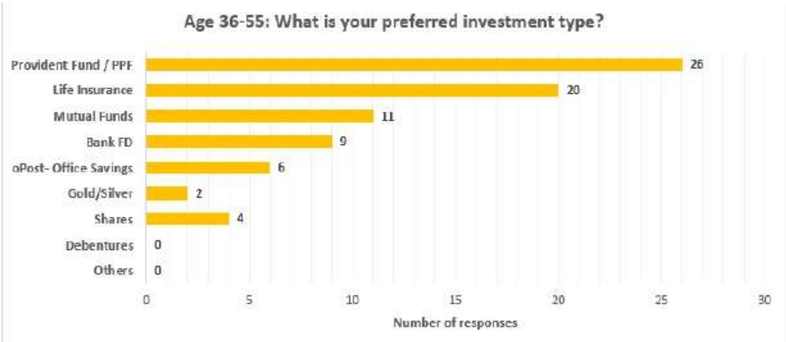
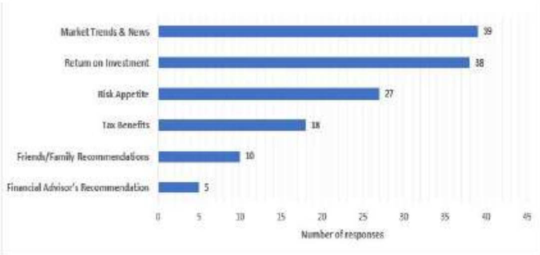
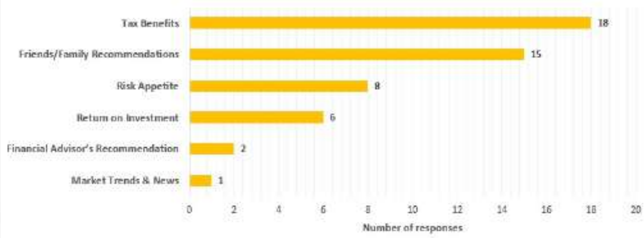


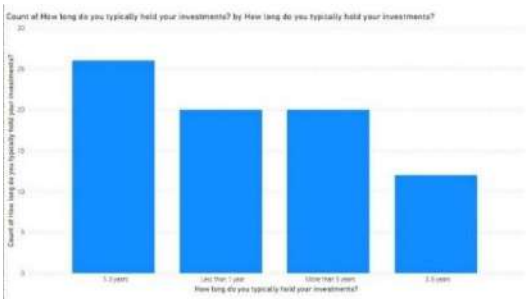


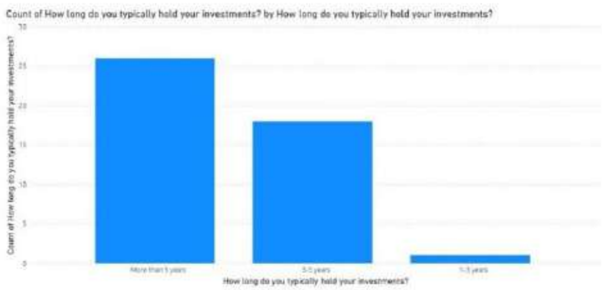
Factors influencing investment Decisions





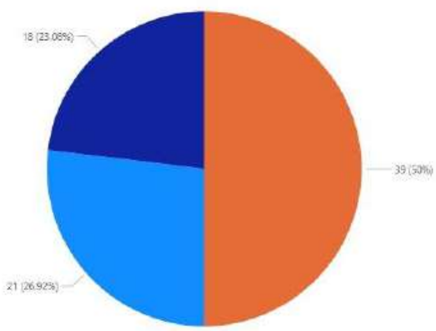
Investment period

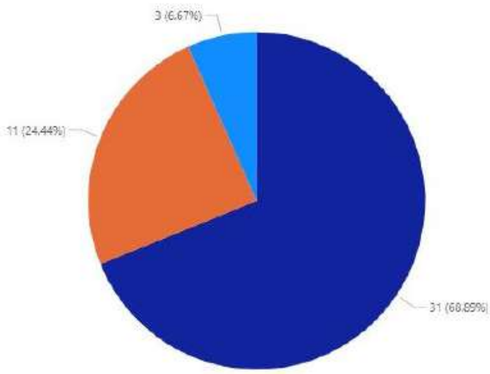




Risk Appetite (Age group wise)

The risk factor influences the mindset of Indians in investment decision as because Indian Choose to invest according to the risk factors associated with the investment options available in the market. The market trend has shown a significant shift of investment done by Indian due to the risk factors.





Chapter 4: Findings, Conclusions & Recommendations

4.1 Findings

1. In Pune, employees consider high risk factor asscociated with investment options before investing.
2. In Pune, there is a difference found in the percentage of salary invested by the employees in various investment platforms.
3. The younger generation prefer to invest according to the market trend and news and also consider ROI as an important factor whereas the older generation go with the traditional approach which is taking suggestions from friends and family, majority of them do it for tax saving purpose.
4. More of the Younger generation invest in PF, Share Market and Mutual Fund whereas the older generation choose to invest more in PF, Life Insurance followed by Mutual Fund.
5. Generally, it is seen that younger generation holds the investment for shorter duration and the older generation holds the investment for longer period of time which is more than 5 years.
6. In Pune, according the above data we clearly see that younger generation prefer higher risk options or moderate risk options which gives more return whereas the older generation invest in safe market with less return.
7. By considering all the factors and understanding different mindsets of an individual, we can say that there is difference in investment pattern found.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is a statistical method used to make inferences about a population based on a sample. It helps determine whether there is enough evidence in a sample to support or reject a proposed assumption (hypothesis) about a population parameter.

In this Research, the researchers have taken 127 responses and used percentage analysis as a tool to check the statement hypothesis and find the proposal which are approved.

Statement of Hypothesis-1:

- Null Hypothesis(H0) - Most of the employees do not consider the high risk associated with the investment option.
- Alternate hypothesis(H1) - Most of the employees consider the high risk associated with the investment option.

As per the data, researchers analysed that only 19.5% of the sample size invest in different platform which are associated with high risk factors. This clearly states that the H0 is getting rejected and H1 getting accepted.

Statement of Hypothesis-2:

- Null Hypothesis(H0) – There is no difference in investment pattern of younger generation as compared to older generation.
- Alternate hypothesis(H1) – There is a difference in investment pattern of younger generation as compared to older generation.

The data shows that the younger generation and the older generation follow different investment pattern which is on the basis of percentage of salary, factors influencing investment decision, different investment options, risk appetite and investment time period. The researchers can state that H0 is getting rejected and H1 is getting accepted as because there is a major difference found in investment pattern of younger compared to the older generation.

4.3 Scope for further Research

Furthermore, research can focus on the impact of economic and policy changes, including taxation reforms, inflation, and government initiatives, on investment decisions. The role of employer-driven investment programs, such as financial advisory services and Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs), can also be studied. Lastly, the growing interest in sustainable and ethical investments presents an opportunity to analyze salaried employees' awareness and participation in ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) funds. Addressing these areas will contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolving investment landscape of salaried employees in Pune.

4.4 Conclusion

The Investment style of salaried professionals in Pune is heavily driven by age, risk tolerance, and availability of information. Young workers (21-35 years) show a greater tendency towards risk-taking, enthusiastically pursuing active investment channels such as the stock market and mutual funds based on market movement and probable returns. They invest a higher percentage of their pay and seek shorter time frames for investment, demonstrating an orientation towards wealth building and capitalizing on market prospects.

On the other hand, older workers (36-55 years) value stability and security, opting for traditional vehicles such as provident funds and life insurance. They make investment choices based on tax advantages and suggestions from family and friends, indicating a conservative strategy to protect their own future finances. They invest for longer periods and opt for stable; low-risk returns.

The research points out an obvious generation gap regarding investment approaches. Younger workers are willing to venture into new areas of investment and are motivated by market trends and hoped-for high returns. Older workers tend to be more conservative in their approach and are more focused on stability, based on tax incentives and social recommendations.

In addition, the information points towards an increased financial literacy among all ages. Although young employees actively pursue market news, they might fall short of a proper risk management understanding. Older employees, prioritizing safety over everything else, can forgo potential growth prospects for the lack of knowledge regarding new investment avenues. In conclusion, the investment habits in Pune are heterogeneous, mirroring different financial objectives, risk appetites, and access to information. For optimal financial well-being, salaried workers must seek a harmonious strategy, blending old security and new growth prospects, suited to their personal situations and age. Advisory services and education are necessary to enable people to make educated investment choices, closing the gap between old and new models of investment.

4.5 Recommendations

The following suggestions can assist in enhancing financial awareness and decision-making:

1. Strengthen Financial Literacy Programs

- Organize workshops and seminars to teach employees about different investment schemes, risk management, and wealth-building strategies.
- Employers and financial institutions must work together to provide training sessions on investment planning, tax benefits, and retirement savings.

2. Promote Diversified Investment Portfolios

- Salaried staff must be encouraged to diversify their investments across various financial instruments, managing risk and return.
- Awareness campaigns must emphasize the advantages of combining traditional investments (PF, FD, insurance) with contemporary ones (mutual funds, equities, digital assets).

3. Encourage Digital Investment Platforms

- With the increasing use of digital investment tools by younger staff, organizations must make it easy for them to access simple-to-use financial apps and investment advisory platforms.
- Issuing advice on secure and cost-effective online investment portals can assist in making wise decisions by the employees.

4. Age-Group Specific Investment Plans

- Employees at a younger age should be advised to follow planned investment plans for maximizing high returns with an appropriate exposure to risks.
- Employees who are older in age must be advised to seek moderately risky assets such as balanced mutual funds with stable investment to ensure security at retirement.

5. Promote Awareness of Tax-Saving Investments

- As older employees are more concerned about tax-saving investments, financial advisers must advise younger employees on tax-saving investment strategies to maximize returns.
- Such education of employees on tax-saving benefits under provisions such as 80C and 80D of the Income Tax Act can enhance tax efficiency in investment choices.

6. Employer-Sponsored Investment Advisory Services

- Such organizations should provide financial advisory services or outsource investment advisory services through investment consultants to assist employees in making sounder financial choices.
- Companies can provide periodic financial check-ups to assist employees in planning long-term financial goals.

7. Encourage Long-Term Investment Thinking

- Younger employees should be educated on the benefits of long-term investments, such as compound interest in mutual funds and equity investments.
- Financial advisors should emphasize the importance of retirement planning and pension schemes early in careers.

Through the adoption of these suggestions, salaried employees in Pune can make better and more strategic investment decisions, which will translate to improved financial security and wealth generation for all ages.

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Gen Z Workforce Management in MNCs

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates how multinational corporations (MNCs) are evolving their workforce management strategies to cater to the unique expectations, work ethics, and preferences of Generation Z (Gen Z). It delves into key areas such as career growth, learning opportunities, retention strategies, and the practical application of workforce management theories through case studies of companies successfully managing Gen Z employees. Using a mixed-method research design, the study incorporates both qualitative data (through an in-depth interview with an HR professional) and quantitative data (through a survey among Gen Z employees in MNCs). Findings indicate that Gen Z values flexibility, career advancement, continuous learning, mental well-being support, and purpose-driven work. Based on these insights, the study proposes strategic recommendations to enhance MNCs' engagement and retention strategies for Gen Z employees.

Keywords: Generation Z, Workforce Management, Multinational Corporations, Employee Retention, Career Growth, Learning & Development, Work-Life Balance

1. Introduction

1.1 Understanding Generation Z and Their Role in the Modern Workforce:-

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, represents the first truly digital-native generation, having grown up in an era of rapid technological advancement, global connectivity, and unprecedented access to information. This exposure has shaped their perspectives, behaviors, and expectations regarding work and career development. Unlike previous generations that valued long-term stability in a single organization, Gen Z seeks dynamic work environments that offer flexibility, continuous learning opportunities, and meaningful engagement. They prioritize career growth and skill acquisition over job security, making them more likely to explore multiple roles across industries. Their strong inclination toward technology means they expect workplaces to integrate advanced digital tools for communication, collaboration, and efficiency. Moreover, Gen Z places high importance on social responsibility, workplace inclusivity, and corporate values aligning with their personal beliefs. Organizations that fail to adapt to these evolving expectations risk losing top Gen Z talent to competitors who offer more engaging and purpose-driven work environments. As more Gen Z professionals enter the workforce, multinational corporations (MNCs) are re-evaluating their traditional workforce management strategies. Companies must develop new approaches to talent 1acquisition, employee engagement, and professional development to meet the unique needs of this generation. MNCs are increasingly adopting hybrid work models, personalized learning programs, and technology-driven HR strategies to attract and retain Gen Z employees. The rise of gig work, job opportunities, and artificial intelligence in HR management further underscores the need for organizations to remain agile and responsive to these workforce shifts. Effectively managing Gen Z in MNCs requires organizations to embrace digital transformation, cultivate inclusive workplace cultures, and offer structured career growth pathways. By aligning corporate strategies with Gen Z’s expectations, businesses can build a resilient, engaged, and future-ready workforce that drives innovation and long-term success.

a. Key Characteristics of Generation Z:-

i. Digital Natives: Having grown up with the internet, smartphones, and social media, Gen Z is highly adept at leveraging digital tools for communication, collaboration, and efficiency in the workplace. They expect employers to provide technology-driven work environments that support remote and hybrid working models.

ii. Preference for Workplace Flexibility: Unlike previous generations who adhered to traditional work schedules, Gen Z values work-life balance and seeks hybrid work models that offer autonomy and independence. Studies show that a significant percentage of Gen Z employees are more productive when given flexible work arrangements.

iii. Desire for Meaningful Work: Gen Z employees prioritize jobs that align with their values and contribute to social and environmental causes. They are more likely to be engaged in organizations that have strong corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and a clear sense of purpose beyond profitability.

iv. Emphasis on Career Growth and Learning: Continuous learning is a defining trait of Gen Z employees. They actively seek opportunities for professional development, mentorship programs, and access to skill-building resources. Organizations that provide structured career pathways and upskilling programs are more successful in retaining Gen Z talent.

v. Collaboration and Inclusivity: Gen Z thrives in diverse and inclusive work environments that encourage teamwork and open communication. They prefer organizations that promote equity, diversity, and a culture of belonging.

vi. Frequent Job Transitions: Compared to previous generations, Gen Z employees are more likely to change jobs frequently in pursuit of better career opportunities, higher pay, and a more fulfilling work experience. This makes employee retention a significant challenge for MNCs.

As this generation is poised to dominate the global workforce, MNCs must reevaluate traditional management strategies to accommodate their needs. Organizations that embrace digital transformation, flexible work models, and career development initiatives will be better positioned to attract and retain top Gen Z talent.

1.2 Importance of Studying This Topic:-

Understanding Gen Z's expectations is crucial for MNCs aiming to attract, engage, and retain top talent. A misalignment in workforce management practices can lead to higher attrition rates, decreased employee engagement, and a potential loss of organizational knowledge, resulting in financial and operational challenges for companies. As the workplace continues to evolve with the influx of Gen Z employees, organizations must adapt their management strategies to address their unique work preferences, expectations, and career aspirations.

Moreover, the impact of ineffective Gen Z workforce management extends beyond talent retention. Companies failing to accommodate Gen Z's demand for workplace flexibility, digital integration, and meaningful work risk lower productivity, reduced innovation, and an inability to compete with progressive organizations that have successfully embraced modern workforce dynamics. By aligning corporate strategies with Gen Z's work preferences, MNCs can not only enhance employee satisfaction but also foster a culture of continuous learning, engagement, and long-term business sustainability.

1.3 Objectives of the Study:-

a. <u>To analyse career growth and learning opportunities for Gen Z employees in MNCs :-</u>Career growth and skill development are key priorities for Gen Z employees. This objective aims to understand how MNCs are fostering professional development through structured career pathways, mentorship programs, training modules, and opportunities for upskilling. The study evaluates how these initiatives impact Gen Z's job satisfaction and long-term retention within organizations.

b. <u>To explore effective retention strategies tailored for Gen Z employees :</u>- High job mobility and frequent job-hopping are common among Gen Z employees. This objective focuses on identifying retention strategies such as personalized benefits, mental well-being initiatives, employee engagement programs, and recognition systems. Understanding these strategies will help MNCs create work environments that encourage Gen Z employees to stay committed to their organizations.

c. <u>To evaluate successful case studies of workforce management for Gen Z:</u>- By examining real-world examples of companies that have successfully integrated Gen Z employees into their workforce, this objective aims to highlight best practices in workforce management. Case studies of companies such as Google, Deloitte, and Microsoft will be analysed to understand how these organizations tailor their HR policies, work cultures, and career development opportunities to attract and retain Gen Z talent.

d. <u>To identify key challenges in integrating Gen Z into traditional corporate structures:-</u> Traditional corporate structures often emphasize hierarchical decision-making, rigid work schedules, and long-term career commitments, which may not align with Gen Z's expectations. This objective seeks to identify the difficulties MNCs face in adapting to Gen Z's work preferences, including resistance to change, lack of digital adaptability, and generational gaps in communication styles and leadership approaches.

e. <u>To provide strategic recommendations for improving engagement and workforce sustainability:-</u> Based on findings from literature, case studies, and survey responses, this objective aims to offer actionable recommendations for MNCs. These recommendations will include strategies for enhancing employee engagement, optimizing workforce planning, implementing hybrid work models, and fostering a purpose-driven work culture that aligns with Gen Z's values.

2. Literature Review

The existing body of literature on workforce management highlights the evolving nature of employee expectations in the modern corporate landscape. Various studies emphasize the growing demand for flexibility, digital adaptation, and career progression among Gen Z employees. Reports from global consulting firms, such as Deloitte and McKinsey, discuss how organizations are restructuring their policies to align with these emerging needs. Additionally, academic research has explored the psychological and social factors driving Gen Z's career decisions, focusing on their desire for meaningful work, diversity, and mental well-being support. By integrating these insights, this study builds upon existing knowledge to provide practical recommendations for MNCs aiming to foster a Gen Z-friendly work culture.

2.1 Theoretical Background on Gen Z Workforce Trends:-

- **Flexibility & Work-Life Balance:** Gen Z values flexible, hybrid, and remote work setups, preferring work-life balance over rigid 9-to-5 jobs. They seek autonomy, boundary respect, and results-oriented workplaces to boost productivity and satisfaction.
- **Tech-Savviness:** As digital natives, Gen Z expects tech-driven workplaces using AI, automation, and cloud tools. They favor instant feedback, digital collaboration, and data-driven decision-making, making tech adoption critical for engagement.
- **Career Growth & Continuous Learning:** Gen Z prioritizes dynamic career paths, mentorship, and upskilling. They value structured learning, certifications, and tech-based training, preferring companies that invest in continuous, personalized development.

2.2 Case Studies of MNCs Managing Gen Z:-

- **Google:** Offers hybrid work, AI-driven learning platforms, and CSR initiatives like Google Sustainability, aligning with Gen Z's values of flexibility, growth, and purpose.
- **Deloitte:** Focuses on mentorship, reverse mentoring, financial wellness, and flexible schedules to support Gen Z's career and personal well-being.
- **Microsoft:** Promotes career development through Microsoft Learn, early-career programs, and DEI initiatives, creating an inclusive, growth-oriented environment for Gen Z.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design:-

This study employs a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques to ensure a comprehensive analysis. The qualitative component involves an in-depth interview with Senior HR Professional Mrs. Vanaja Vaidya, while the quantitative component consists of a structured Google Form survey distributed among Gen Z employees working in MNCs. The integration of both methods allows for a well-rounded understanding of workforce management strategies tailored to Gen Z employees.

3.2 Data Collection:-

Interview with Vanaja Ma'am: An interview was conducted with Mrs. Vanaja Vaidya, a highly experienced HR professional with over 25 years in workforce management, organizational development, and HR transformation. She has held leadership roles at Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Jade Global, overseeing strategic HR initiatives such as career architecture development, HR digitization, and global talent acquisition. Her expertise in managing large-scale employee transitions, particularly during mergers and acquisitions, provided valuable insights into Gen Z workforce management.

Mrs. Vaidya's leadership at Jade Global included spearheading the launch of a new career architecture framework, which enabled employees to define and navigate their career paths more effectively. She was also responsible for implementing a global Human Resource Management System (HRMS), ensuring a centralized data-driven approach to workforce management. Additionally, during her tenure as Global HR Head at Digitate (a Strategic Business Unit of TCS), she played a key role in hiring and retaining top talent by benchmarking compensation structures against industry standards and creating structured career roadmaps. These initiatives provided valuable context for understanding how MNCs can effectively attract, develop, and retain Gen Z employees.

The interview covered a range of critical topics, including career growth expectations among Gen Z employees, strategies for improving retention through career development programs, and the role of technology in enhancing workplace engagement. Mrs. Vaidya emphasized the importance of continuous learning and upskilling, highlighting that organizations that invest in professional development programs see higher employee satisfaction and lower attrition rates. Furthermore, she provided insights on fostering inclusive workplace cultures that align with Gen Z's preference for diversity, collaboration, and work-life balance.

Additionally, she discussed the challenges MNCs face in integrating Gen Z employees, including their demand for rapid career progression, preference for flexible work environments, and emphasis on workplace well-being. She noted that organizations must adapt their leadership styles and communication strategies to resonate with Gen Z's expectations. Mrs. Vaidya also shared best practices from her experience in leading large-scale HR transformations, such as incorporating AI-driven HR analytics to personalize career growth plans, implementing structured mentorship programs, and creating employee engagement initiatives that align with Gen Z's values.

Another key takeaway from the interview was the importance of organizational transparency and trust-building. Mrs. Vaidya highlighted that Gen Z employees seek clarity in career progression, open communication from leadership, and meaningful work aligned with their values. She stressed the need for companies to integrate feedback mechanisms, such as pulse surveys and real-time performance evaluations, to keep Gen Z employees engaged and motivated. By leveraging data-driven insights and fostering an inclusive work environment, she believes MNCs can successfully manage and retain Gen Z talent for long-term organizational growth.

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programs, and the role of technology in enhancing workplace engagement. Mrs. Vaidya emphasized the importance of continuous learning and upskilling, highlighting that organizations that invest in professional development programs see higher employee satisfaction and lower attrition rates. Furthermore, she provided insights on fostering inclusive workplace cultures that align with Gen Z's preference for diversity, collaboration, and work-life balance. Google Form Survey: Gathered responses from Gen Z employees to analyse workplace preferences, engagement factors, and expectations.

3.2.1 Google Form Survey:- A structured survey was distributed to Gen Z employees working in various MNCs. The questionnaire covered key areas such as workplace preferences, engagement factors, career aspirations, expectations from employers, and the importance of flexibility and learning opportunities. The survey responses were analysed to identify common trends and patterns among Gen Z professionals, providing quantitative validation to the qualitative insights gathered from the interview.

3.3 **Sampling Method:-**

3.3.1 Interview Sampling:- The interview was conducted with an industry expert who has extensive experience in managing diverse workforce segments, including Gen Z employees. Mrs. Vanaja Vaidya's background in global HR strategy, learning and development, and workforce retention provided critical perspectives on how MNCs can better integrate Gen Z into their organizational structures.

3.3.2 Survey Sampling:- The survey was distributed to a targeted group of Gen Z employees working in multinational corporations across various industries. The respondents were selected through convenience sampling, ensuring representation from different job roles, career stages, and geographic locations within MNCs. This approach helped capture a diverse range of opinions and expectations regarding workplace engagement and management practices.

3.4 **Limitations:-**

3.4.1 Limited Sample Size in Survey Responses:- Due to time and resource constraints, the survey was conducted with a limited sample size, which may not fully represent the broader Gen Z workforce in MNCs. While efforts were made to ensure diversity in responses, a larger sample size would provide a more statistically significant understanding of workforce trends.

3.4.2 Subjective Insights from One-on-One Interview:- The qualitative data derived from the interview with Mrs. Vanaja Vaidya reflects expert opinions based on professional experience. While these insights offer valuable strategic perspectives, they are inherently subjective and may not account for all variations in Gen Z workforce preferences. Future studies can incorporate multiple expert interviews to enhance the robustness of qualitative findings.

By integrating qualitative insights from an industry expert with quantitative data from a broad set of employees, this research methodology ensures a balanced and in-depth exploration of Gen Z workforce management trends in MNCs

4. Results and Key Findings

1. Findings from Vanaja Ma'am's Interview:-

The study gathered valuable insights into how Gen Z is reshaping workforce management in MNCs. Key trends, challenges, and strategic measures were identified to understand how organizations are adapting to attract, retain, and engage Gen Z employees. With extensive experience in global HR strategy, talent management, and organizational transformation, the expert interview provided a comprehensive perspective on the evolving corporate landscape. One of the primary findings from the interview was that Gen Z employees demand a work culture that aligns with their personal values, focusing on flexibility, career growth, and well-being. Organizations that have successfully adapted to Gen Z's preferences have reported increased engagement, lower turnover rates, and a stronger employer brand. In contrast, companies that have been slow to implement these changes are facing difficulties in recruitment and retention, resulting in inefficiencies in workforce management.

The interview also highlighted that MNCs are increasingly leveraging digital tools to meet Gen Z's expectations. AI-driven analytics, automated career progression tracking, and digital mentorship programs have become essential components of HR strategies. Additionally, transparency and open communication between leadership and employees play a vital role in maintaining trust and satisfaction among Gen Z professionals. Another significant insight from the study was the growing importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability initiatives in workforce engagement. Gen Z employees are more likely to be drawn to organizations that demonstrate ethical business practices, environmental consciousness, and diversity-driven hiring policies. Companies integrating these principles into their core values tend to attract top Gen Z talent and maintain long-term employee loyalty.

2. Workforce Planning and Recruitment Adjustments:-

2.1 <u>Dynamic Workforce Planning</u>: Due to economic fluctuations and unpredictable business demands, companies now review workforce plans more frequently (quarterly/monthly) instead of yearly. Organizations are shifting from rigid, long-term workforce planning models to more agile strategies that allow them to respond quickly to changing economic conditions and evolving workforce preferences.

2.2 <u>Impact of Gen Z Hiring</u>: The increase in Gen Z hires has led to higher attrition rates, requiring companies to maintain a balance between hiring fresh talent and retaining experienced employees. To counteract attrition, MNCs are implementing structured onboarding programs, competitive compensation models, and continuous learning opportunities to increase employee loyalty.

3. Retention and Engagement Strategies:-

3.1 <u>Flexibility as a Key Attraction Factor</u>: Companies are offering hybrid work models, flexible leave policies, and reduced work encroachment on personal time to attract Gen Z. Organizations that fail to adopt flexible work arrangements are seeing higher turnover rates among young professionals who prioritize autonomy and work-life integration.

3.2 Work-Life Balance and Mental Well-being: Unlike previous generations, Gen Z sets clear boundaries between personal and professional life and expects organizations to respect their personal time. MNCs are investing in employee assistance programs, wellness initiatives, and mental health support services to cater to these expectations. Companies that prioritize employee well-being are experiencing improved productivity and reduced burnout among Gen Z employees.

3.3 Attractive Compensation Structures: Instead of traditional retirement benefits, Gen Z prefers higher take-home salaries, perks like gym memberships, tuition reimbursement, and engaging workplace environments. Companies that personalize compensation and benefits to align with Gen Z's financial goals and lifestyle preferences are more successful in talent retention.

4. Challenges in Managing Gen Z Employees:-

4.1 Frequent Job-Hopping: Gen Z employees often switch jobs quickly, seeking better opportunities and career growth. To address this, organizations are implementing personalized career paths, structured mentorship programs, and skill development initiatives that provide clear progression opportunities.

4.2 Lower Pressure Resilience: Gen Z employees perform exceptionally well when engaged in exciting and meaningful projects but may struggle with high-pressure environments. Companies are redesigning performance management approaches to include regular feedback, mental wellness support, and task variety to maintain engagement without excessive pressure.

4.3 Expectation of Purpose-Driven Work: Gen Z prefers jobs that provide a sense of impact and creativity. Organizations that align their business objectives with sustainability, social responsibility, and innovation are more likely to retain Gen Z employees. Companies are integrating purpose-driven initiatives into their corporate culture by supporting volunteer programs, diversity and inclusion efforts, and environmentally conscious business strategies.

5. Strategies for Effective Gen Z Workforce Management:-

5.1 Technology-Driven Learning and Redesigning Management Practices: MNCs are leveraging AI-powered learning platforms, gamified training programs, and microlearning modules to cater to Gen Z's preference for continuous learning. Additionally, traditional management structures are being redefined to incorporate flatter hierarchies, open communication channels, and participative decision-making processes that foster collaboration and innovation.

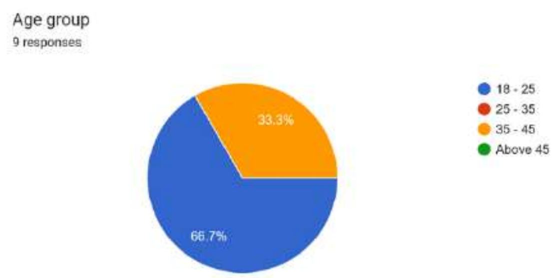
6. Survey Analysis:-

6.1 Preference for Hybrid Work Models:- Survey results indicate that 80% of Gen Z employees prefer hybrid work models over traditional office settings, reflecting a major transformation in workplace expectations. This trend aligns with findings from the literature review, where Gen Z was shown to prioritize flexibility and autonomy in their professional lives. The shift towards hybrid work enables employees to maintain better work-life balance, reduce commute-related stress, and work in an environment that best suits their productivity needs. Companies that embrace hybrid models are experiencing increased employee satisfaction, enhanced engagement, and improved retention rates. Moreover, organizations that fail to accommodate such preferences are witnessing higher attrition, as Gen Z professionals actively seek roles that provide them with greater flexibility.75% value career advancement programs and mentorship opportunities.

6.2 Demand for Career Growth and Mentorship Programs:- Approximately 75% of Gen Z employees emphasize the importance of structured career growth opportunities and mentorship programs. This preference is rooted in their desire for continuous learning and rapid professional advancement. Unlike previous generations that prioritized job stability, Gen Z is more inclined towards organizations that offer personalized career development plans, upskilling opportunities, and access to industry mentors. Studies indicate that companies with strong mentorship programs experience higher retention rates, as employees feel valued and see clear progression paths within the organization. Additionally, mentorship fosters intergenerational learning, bridging the gap between experienced professionals and younger employees, ultimately enhancing knowledge transfer and innovation within MNCs.

6.3 Increased Focus on Employee Wellness and Mental Health Support:- The survey further reveals that 70% of Gen Z employees seek workplace wellness programs and mental health support. This finding aligns with existing research that highlights Gen Z's emphasis on holistic well-being, including physical, emotional, and mental health. Companies that offer wellness initiatives—such as stress management programs, mental health days, on-site counselling, and flexible work arrangements—are seeing higher employee engagement and productivity. Organizations investing in comprehensive wellness programs not only attract but also retain top Gen Z talent. On the other hand, companies that neglect mental health support risk increased absenteeism, burnout, and declining employee morale. This shift in workplace expectations emphasizes the need for employers to integrate well-being initiatives into their corporate strategies to foster a healthier and more motivated workforce.

Some graphs from the survey are as follows:-



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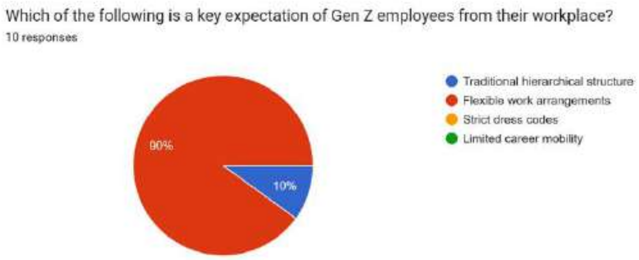

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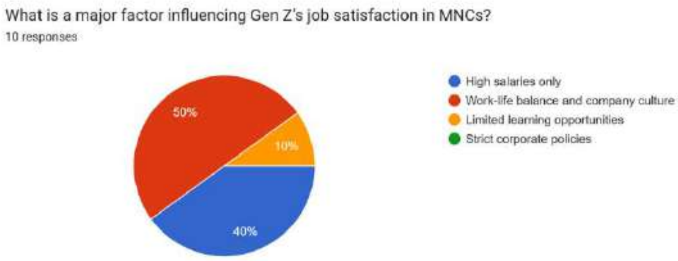

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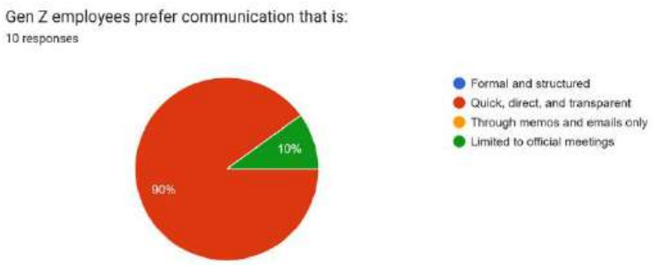

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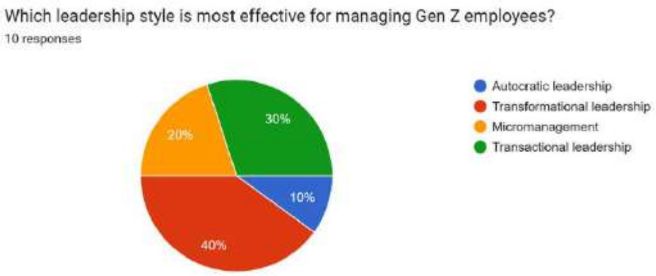

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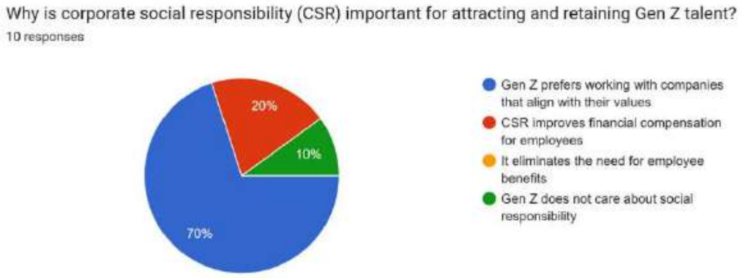

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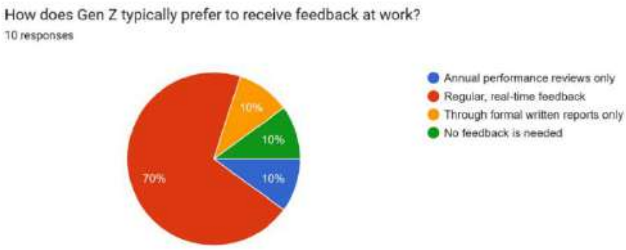

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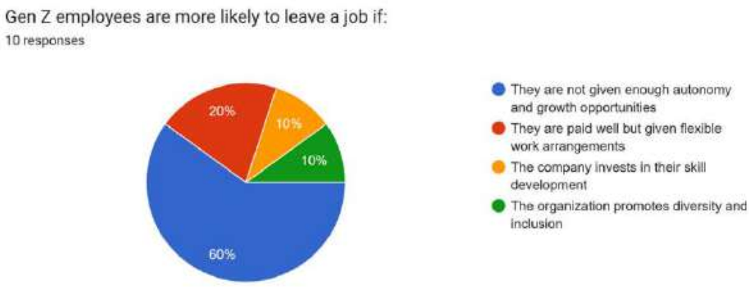

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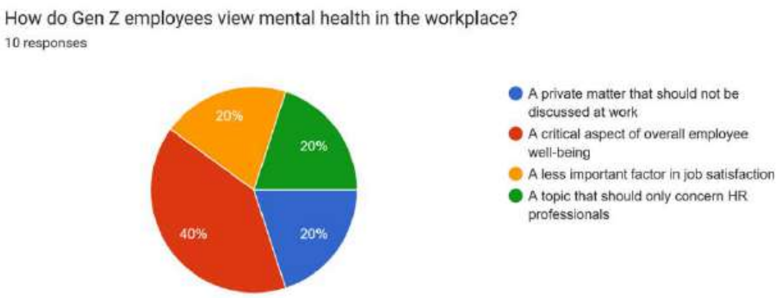

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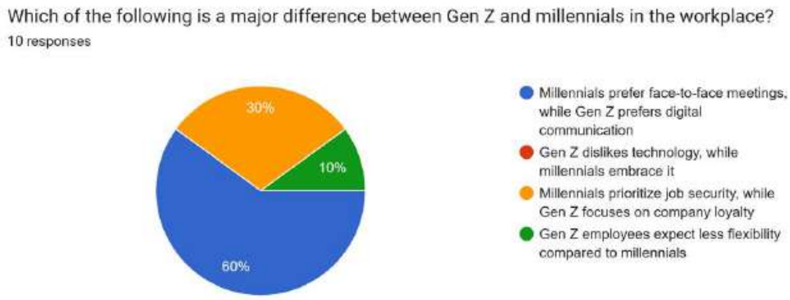

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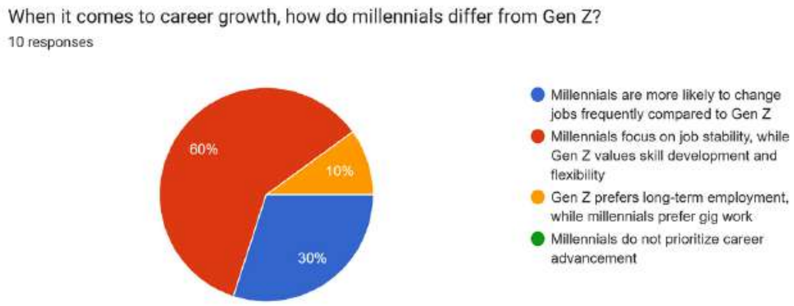

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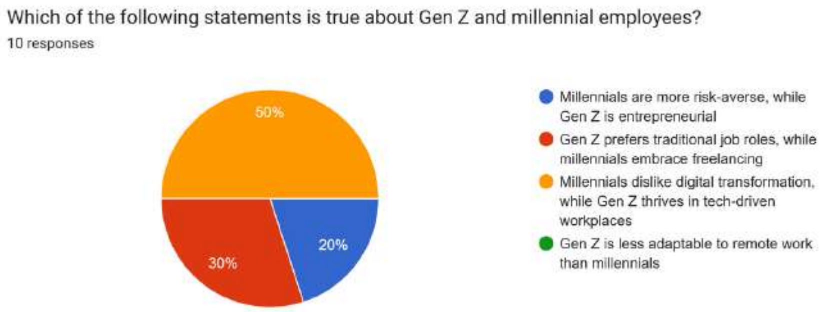

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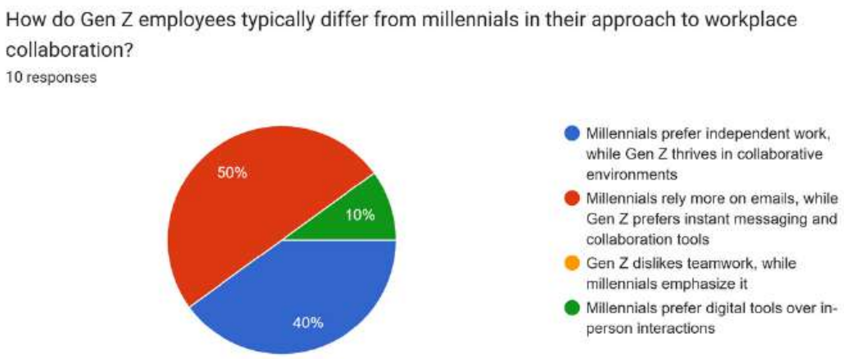

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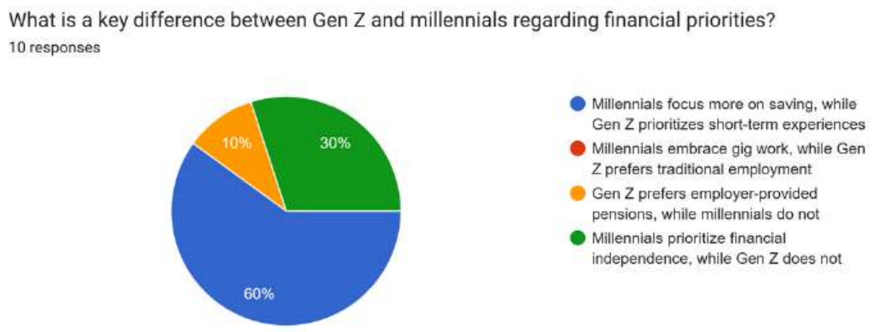

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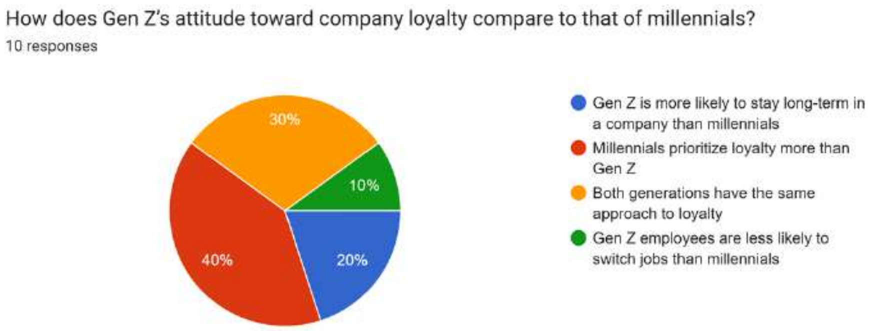

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4. **Limitations of the Study**

Understanding the challenges and constraints of this study is essential to evaluating its findings. Several limitations were identified that could impact the generalizability and applicability of the research results.

4.1 Limited Sample Size in Survey Responses

The survey was conducted with a limited number of Gen Z employees, which may not fully represent the diverse perspectives within this generation across various industries and geographic locations. A larger sample size could provide more statistically significant results and a broader understanding of workforce trends.

4.2 Subjective Insights from the One-on-One Interview

The qualitative data obtained from the interview with an HR professional is based on individual experiences and professional perspectives. While the insights are valuable, they may not universally apply to all MNCs or workforce environments. Incorporating multiple expert interviews could enhance the reliability of findings.

4.3 Potential Bias in Self-Reported Data

The survey responses rely on self-reported data, which may be influenced by personal perceptions, expectations, and biases. Participants may respond based on their ideal work environment rather than their actual experiences, affecting the accuracy of findings.

4.4 Limited Industry Representation

The study focuses on MNCs but does not differentiate between industries, which may have unique workforce management practices. Future research could explore industry-specific challenges and strategies for managing Gen Z employees.

4.5 Evolving Workforce Trends

Gen Z's workplace expectations and preferences are continuously evolving due to technological advancements and changing economic conditions. The findings may need to be revisited in the future to align with new workforce dynamics.

5. Recommendations

1. Develop Structured Career Pathways: MNCs should establish well-defined career progression plans that outline growth trajectories for Gen Z employees. These pathways should include clear milestones, promotion criteria, and skill development opportunities. Structured mentorship programs, pairing junior employees with experienced professionals, can help Gen Z navigate their careers effectively. Internal mobility options should be encouraged to allow employees to explore various roles within the organization, fostering long-term engagement and reducing turnover.

2. Enhance Retention Strategies: To retain Gen Z talent, organizations must implement personalized benefits tailored to individual needs, including mental health support, financial wellness programs, and flexible work policies. Employee recognition programs should be strengthened through frequent feedback, performance-based rewards, and opportunities for leadership development. Additionally, creating a positive workplace culture with open communication and employee involvement initiatives will enhance job satisfaction and loyalty.

3. Leverage Technology for Learning & Engagement: Integrating AI-driven learning platforms allows employees to personalize their learning experiences, access skill-enhancement resources, and track career progression. Gamification in training programs can make learning more engaging, increasing motivation and retention of knowledge. Virtual mentorship programs, utilizing AI-driven recommendations, can match employees with mentors based on career interests and skills, ensuring continuous professional growth and a dynamic learning environment.

4. Prioritize Work-Life Balance & Flexibility Companies should implement hybrid work models that allow employees to choose between remote and in-office work based on their productivity preferences. Flexible scheduling should be introduced to accommodate personal and professional commitments, reducing stress and increasing job satisfaction. Wellness initiatives such as mental health counselling, mindfulness programs, and fitness incentives should be integrated into the corporate culture to promote a holistic approach to employee well-being.

5. Foster a Purpose-Driven Work Culture: Aligning business objectives with social impact initiatives is essential to engaging Gen Z employees, who value purpose-driven work. Companies should incorporate sustainability efforts, diversity and inclusion programs, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives into their core mission. Providing employees with opportunities to participate in community service, environmental sustainability projects, and ethical business practices will create a deeper sense of connection and motivation within the organization.

Conclusion

As Gen Z becomes a dominant part of the workforce, multinational corporations must evolve their workforce management strategies to attract, engage, and retain this generation effectively. The research findings emphasize that Gen Z employees place significant importance on workplace flexibility, career growth opportunities, continuous learning, and purpose-driven work environments. Organizations that fail to recognize and address these needs risk high turnover rates, decreased employee engagement, and difficulties in maintaining a competitive edge.

Companies that invest in personalized development programs, hybrid work environments, and technology-driven engagement models will position themselves as preferred employers for Gen Z professionals. Providing structured career growth pathways, integrating AI-driven learning platforms, and fostering a culture of mentorship and leadership development are crucial strategies for ensuring long-term retention and satisfaction. Furthermore, emphasizing workplace well-being through mental health support, work-life balance policies, and inclusive work cultures will contribute to a more engaged and productive workforce.

Looking ahead, businesses must continue focusing on digital transformation, upskilling initiatives, and comprehensive employee wellness programs to meet the evolving needs of the workforce. The integration of AI, automation, and data-driven HR strategies will further streamline workforce management while ensuring personalized employee experiences. Moreover, embracing corporate social responsibility and sustainability initiatives will strengthen employer branding and appeal to the value-driven mindset of Gen Z employees.

By implementing these strategies, MNCs can ensure sustainable talent management and long-term success in an ever-changing global work environment. Organizations that proactively adapt to the preferences of Gen Z will not only attract top talent but also cultivate a workforce that is innovative, resilient, and committed to achieving shared business goals

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- *Padma Shri and the Padma Bhushan*
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