

These girls tweet, and make money too!

More women entrepreneurs using social networking to further their businesses

Rupam Singh Gupta | TNN

One look at the woman sipping cappuccino and cracking jokes with friends at a coffee shop in Vadodara and you write her off as another youngster hanging out at a happening place.

She is all plugged-in, her fingers darting on her phone's keypad.

Before you dismiss her as another PYT, she looks up and tells her friend, "The deal is done." Zapped, are you? Yes, she was busy negotiating with a client online.

Meet Soumya Nagarajan, 25, one among a new breed of women entrepreneurs outpacing men in using social networking sites. A business graduate, Soumya's decision to start her own business rather than take up a job shows how women are lapping up opportunities provided in the digital era, says Khushbu Pandya, lecturer at School of Management, Suman-deep Vidyapeeth in Vadodara. Pandya's paper on 'Social media for women entrepreneur' which she presented at the recently held seminar at Ahmedabad's Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDI), focuses on how social media is helping women entrepreneurs build their brands.

"It's better than advertising as we get quick response. All we do is post our new promotions and schemes with pictures on the wall which speak for themselves," says Sarika, an executive at a spa in Ahmedabad. Owner Tanvi Godiawala Shah says being on Facebook has helped. The spa has 520 members who get weekly updates on the spa's



activities.

Globally, women use the net more than men. In India, the trend is catching

up, with net population being 60 million in December 2010. Citing Centre for Women's Business Research (US), Pandya says, "Women and men have different management styles. Women emphasise relationship-building as well as fact gathering and are more likely to consult experts, employees, and fellow business owners. And, social media is all about relationship-building, networking and nurturing relations."

Men like the internet for the experiences it offers. Women like it for the human connections it promotes. "It is something that comes naturally to us (youngsters) — Facebooking and blogging is second nature to us. Also, it makes for a very cost-efficient channel to inform and engage the consumer," says Soumya. Her company offers discounts at various eating and shopping outlets in Vadodara.

"Women know how to keep conversations active. Either online or offline, their PR skills come in handy to propagate their ventures," says Gurpreet Bal, sociology professor at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. From owning a boutique to a manufacturing unit, they have emerged from a stereotypical to an avant-garde entrepreneur, adds Bal, who chaired the seminar at EDI.

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