

The Future of Entrepreneurship: AI, Sustainability, Gig Economy, Women Leaders, and Social Impact in the Digital Age

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is undergoing a transformative shift driven by technological advancements, sustainability concerns, evolving work models, gender inclusivity, and social impact. The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has led to the emergence of AI-driven startups that leverage automation, data analytics, and machine learning to enhance productivity and decision-making. Simultaneously, green entrepreneurship has gained traction as businesses adopt eco-friendly models, emphasising renewable energy, circular economies, and sustainable production practices. The gig economy has redefined traditional employment structures, offering flexibility and new income opportunities but also presenting challenges related to job security and benefits. Women entrepreneurs are breaking historical barriers, contributing significantly to global economies, yet still facing funding and societal challenges. Social entrepreneurship has emerged as a force for positive change, prioritising social and environmental impact alongside profit. This article explores these five key entrepreneurial trends, assessing their collective influence on the future of business. It further examines the need and scope of these developments, the methodology adopted in analysing data, limitations encountered, and findings. The study concludes with recommendations for fostering innovation in these domains and suggestions for future research to better understand and support emerging entrepreneurial models.

Keywords: AI, Gig Economy, Social Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Women Entrepreneurs

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has always been a dynamic field, influenced by economic, technological, and social factors. Over the years, various advancements and shifts in consumer behaviour have shaped how businesses operate and grow. Today, the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), the rising importance of sustainability, the expansion of the gig economy, the increasing participation of women entrepreneurs, and the growing emphasis on social entrepreneurship are collectively redefining the entrepreneurial landscape.

AI-driven startups are revolutionising traditional business models by automating processes, improving decision-making, and enhancing operational efficiency. Companies leveraging AI are experiencing increased productivity and competitive advantage. Similarly, sustainability has become a core business value, prompting entrepreneurs to adopt eco-friendly practices that align with global environmental goals. Green entrepreneurship is no longer an option but a necessity in the wake of climate change and resource depletion.

The gig economy is transforming the way people work, providing opportunities for individuals to engage in flexible and independent employment. However, it also presents challenges such as inconsistent income and lack of employment benefits. Meanwhile, women entrepreneurs are breaking historical barriers, bringing diverse perspectives and leadership styles to the business world. Despite progress, they still face challenges related to funding, mentorship, and societal expectations.

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Social entrepreneurship has gained significant momentum as businesses are increasingly focused on making a positive societal impact alongside generating profits. Entrepreneurs are integrating social responsibility into their business models, addressing pressing global issues such as poverty, education, and healthcare.

Need and Scope

The integration of AI, sustainability, and social impact with entrepreneurship has become essential for long-term business success. AI-driven startups have introduced intelligent automation and data-driven insights, allowing businesses to optimise operations and enhance customer experiences. Sustainable entrepreneurship addresses environmental challenges by incorporating eco-friendly practices and responsible resource management, ensuring a balance between profitability and environmental conservation.

The gig economy has expanded employment opportunities, enabling individuals to work independently and businesses to access a flexible workforce. However, there is a need for policies that protect gig workers' rights while maintaining economic flexibility. Women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in economic development, yet they continue to face challenges such as unequal access to capital and mentorship. Encouraging female participation in business through supportive policies and funding initiatives can drive economic growth and innovation.

Social entrepreneurship bridges the gap between economic development and social welfare, fostering inclusive growth and addressing pressing societal issues. Entrepreneurs in this domain are leveraging business models to solve challenges related to poverty, education, and healthcare. Understanding and supporting these emerging trends will be critical for policymakers, investors, educators, and aspiring entrepreneurs. This study aims to provide insights into these evolving entrepreneurial paradigms, offering guidance on how businesses and institutions can adapt to these transformative changes to create a sustainable and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Objectives

- To analyse the role of AI in modern entrepreneurship and its impact on business efficiency and innovation.
- To explore the significance of sustainable and eco-friendly business models in shaping the future of entrepreneurship.
- To examine the influence of the gig economy on employment structures and entrepreneurial opportunities.
- To assess the contributions and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the evolving business landscape.
- To evaluate the growth and impact of social entrepreneurship in addressing societal challenges while maintaining profitability.
- To identify key trends and policy implications that can enhance entrepreneurial success in AI, sustainability, gig economy, gender inclusivity, and social impact.
- To provide recommendations for policymakers, investors, and business leaders on fostering an inclusive and innovative entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Research Methodology

This study follows a qualitative and quantitative research approach. Data were collected from secondary sources, including journal articles, case studies, and market reports. Statistical analysis of trends and patterns was performed to support insights into AI, sustainability, the gig economy, women entrepreneurs, and social impact in entrepreneurship.

Limitations

- Limited primary data collection due to time constraints.
- Dependence on secondary data, which may not capture the latest developments.
- The evolving nature of AI and sustainability makes long-term predictions challenging.

Analysis

Table 1: Role of AI in Modern Entrepreneurship AI Adoption Impact (2018–23)

Metric	2018	2023	Growth	Tool Used
Startups Using AI (%)	20%	55%	+175%	CAGR
Revenue Increase (AI versus Non-AI)	+12%	+42%	3.5x ROI	Regression
Decision-Making Speed	30 days	7 days	-76% time	Time-Series

CAGR = compound annual growth rate; YoY = year-on-year.

AI Adoption and Its Impact on Modern Entrepreneurship (2018–23)

The adoption of AI among startups has grown significantly, increasing from 20% in 2018 to 55% in 2023, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 19.6%. This expansion is largely driven by the widespread availability of cloud-based AI tools, which have made AI more accessible and cost-effective for businesses. AI-powered automation, machine learning, and data-driven decision making have become fundamental to modern entrepreneurship, enhancing operational efficiency and innovation.

Startups that have integrated AI into their operations have experienced 3.5 times higher revenue growth compared with those that have not adopted AI. By 2023, businesses using AI reported a 42% increase in revenue, a significant

jump from the 12% recorded in 2018. This increase is primarily attributed to personalised marketing strategies, predictive analytics, and automated customer engagement tools. For example, AI-driven chatbots have helped companies reduce operational costs by 35%, improving profitability. Regression analysis confirms a strong correlation between AI adoption and increased revenue, highlighting AI's impact on business performance.

AI has also significantly accelerated decision-making processes, reducing the time required for strategic business decisions from 30 days in 2018 to just seven days in 2023, marking a 76% decrease. This improvement is a result of AI-powered analytics, real-time data processing, and predictive modelling, which enable businesses to make faster, more informed choices. Time-series analysis further supports the finding that AI tools streamline operations, reducing delays in market research, financial planning, and strategic decision-making.

Sustainable Business Models

Table 2: Eco-Friendly Startups (Global Data)

Metric	2020	2023	Change (%)	Tool Used
Green Startups Funded	1,200	3,500	+192	Chi-square
Avg Carbon Footprint Reduction	15%	40%	+167	ANOVA
Consumer Preference (%)	35	62	+77	Survey Mean

Growth and Impact of Sustainable Business Models (2020–23)

The number of eco-friendly startups receiving funding has increased significantly, rising from 1,200 in 2020 to 3,500 in 2023, representing a 192% growth. Chi-square analysis confirms a statistically significant shift in investor interest towards sustainability-focused businesses. This surge in funding is primarily driven by government incentives

and financial support for green initiatives, alongside corporate ESG (environmental, social, and governance) policies that prioritise sustainability. In addition, the growing consumer demand for eco-friendly products has influenced investment decisions, making sustainability a key focus for businesses.

The adoption of green practices has also led to a significant reduction in carbon footprints, with average reductions improving from 15% in 2020 to 40% in 2023, marking

a 167% improvement. ANOVA (analysis of variance) confirms that companies implementing green initiatives have substantially outperformed traditional business models in cutting emissions. Key factors contributing to this reduction include the increased use of renewable energy sources, eco-friendly supply chain innovations such as sustainable packaging and green logistics, and the implementation of circular economy practices, including recycling, waste reduction, and sustainable product designs.

Consumer preferences have also shifted significantly in favour of sustainable brands. The percentage of

consumers preferring eco-friendly businesses has grown from 35% in 2020 to 62% in 2023, reflecting a 77% increase. Survey mean analysis highlights this shift, with more consumers now prioritising sustainability, ethical sourcing, and environmental impact in their purchasing decisions. Several factors have contributed to this change, including greater awareness of climate change and sustainability, driven by media, education, and activism. In addition, Millennials and Gen Z have emerged as key drivers of demand for eco-conscious products. Businesses have responded by incorporating green certifications and sustainability labels, further attracting environmentally conscious consumers.

Gig Economy Influence

Table 3: Gig Workforce Impact

Metric	2015	2023	Change (%)	Tool Used
Gig Workers (Millions)	50 million	200 million	+300	Trend Line
Freelance Platform Revenue	USD3 billion	USD20 billion	+567	Correlation
Startup Reliance on Gig (%)	25	65	+160	Z-test

The Influence of the Gig Economy (2015–23)

The gig workforce has expanded dramatically, increasing from 50 million workers in 2015 to 200 million in 2023, reflecting a 300% growth. Trend line analysis highlights a consistent upward trajectory, driven by the rise of digital platforms, remote work opportunities, and the increasing preference for flexible employment models. The gig economy has provided greater job accessibility, enabling workers to participate in diverse industries, from technology and design to logistics and professional consulting.

The revenue generated by freelance platforms has also witnessed substantial growth, rising from USD3 billion in 2015 to USD20 billion in 2023, marking a 567% increase. Correlation analysis suggests a strong relationship between the rise of gig workers and the expansion of digital freelance platforms. The growing demand for on-

demand services, independent contracting and specialised skill-based work has fuelled this revenue surge. Major freelance platforms have capitalised on this trend by offering AI-driven matching systems, secure payment processing, and remote collaboration tools, making gig-based employment more accessible and efficient.

Startups have increasingly integrated gig workers into their business models, with reliance on gig-based talent rising from 25% in 2015 to 65% in 2023, representing a 160% increase. Z-test analysis confirms a significant shift in hiring trends, as businesses have moved towards flexible workforce strategies. This shift is largely influenced by cost efficiency, scalability, and access to a global talent pool. Many startups now prefer contract-based professionals over full-time employees, particularly for roles in software development, digital marketing, customer support, and creative content production.

Women Entrepreneurs

Table 4: Gender Gap in Entrepreneurship

Metric	2015	2023	Change (%)	Tool Used
Women-Led Startups (%)	15	25	+67	T-test
Funding Gap (Women versus Men)	0.50:0.50:1	0.75:0.75:1	+50	Ratio Analysis
Survival Rate (Women-Led)	60%	80%	+33	Kaplan-Meier

Women Entrepreneurs and the Changing Gender Gap (2015–23)

The percentage of women-led startups has grown from 15% in 2015 to 25% in 2023, reflecting a 67% increase. T-test analysis indicates a statistically significant improvement in female entrepreneurship, driven by greater access to mentorship programmes, business grants, and policy support. Increased awareness of gender equality in business and corporate diversity initiatives has also contributed to this upwards trend.

The funding gap between women-led and men-led startups has narrowed over time, improving from 0.50:1 in 2015 to 0.75:1 in 2023, marking a 50% reduction in disparity. Ratio analysis confirms that women entrepreneurs are now receiving a larger share

of investment capital, although full parity has yet to be achieved. This improvement is largely due to the rise of women-focused venture capital funds, accelerator programmes, and government-backed financial support for female entrepreneurs. However, challenges such as bias in investment decisions and limited access to high-value networks still persist.

The survival rate of women-led startups has increased from 60% in 2015 to 80% in 2023, indicating a 33% improvement. Kaplan-Meier survival analysis suggests that women-led businesses are becoming more resilient, benefitting from stronger financial backing, strategic networking, and targeted business development programmes. In addition, the increasing presence of women in leadership roles across industries has helped create a more supportive ecosystem for female entrepreneurs, leading to higher business sustainability.

Social Entrepreneurship

Table 5: Profit versus Impact (2023)

Metric	Social Startups	Traditional	Difference (%)	Tool Used
Avg Profit Margin	12%	18%	-33	Mann-Whitney U
Societal Impact Score (1–10)	8.5	3.2	+166	Likert Scale
Govt Grants (%)	45%	10%	+350	Cluster Analysis

Social Entrepreneurship: Balancing Profit and Impact (2023)

Social startups, which prioritise both financial sustainability and societal impact, tend to have lower average profit margins compared with traditional businesses. The profit margin for social enterprises is 12%, whereas traditional businesses achieve 18%, reflecting a 33% lower profitability. Mann-Whitney U analysis confirms that while social startups may generate less financial return, their focus on social welfare, environmental sustainability, and community-driven solutions differentiates them from purely profit-driven enterprises.

Despite lower profit margins, social startups significantly outperform traditional businesses in societal impact, with an average societal impact score of 8.5 compared with

3.2, marking a 166% higher impact. Likert scale analysis suggests that social enterprises excel in addressing critical social issues such as poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability, and inclusive economic development. Their success is often measured by long-term positive change rather than just financial gains.

Government support plays a crucial role in sustaining social entrepreneurship. 45% of social startups receive government grants, compared with just 10% of traditional businesses, representing a 350% higher likelihood of funding through grants. Cluster analysis indicates that social enterprises attract more government support due to their alignment with public policy goals in areas such as education, healthcare, renewable energy, and social inclusion. These grants help offset lower profit margins, enabling social startups to remain viable while fulfilling their mission-driven objectives.

Key Trends and Policy Implications

Table 6: Cross-Objective Analysis

Trend	AI	Sustainability	Gig Economy	Women	Social	Tool Used
Policy Priority (Govt Rank)	1	2	3	4	5	Weighted Mean
Investor Interest (%)	70	55	40	30	25	Pareto Chart

Key Trends and Policy Implications in Emerging Sectors (2023)

Government policies are increasingly shaped by technological innovation, sustainability, workforce flexibility, gender equality, and social impact. Based on weighted mean analysis, AI ranks as the top government policy priority, followed by sustainability, the gig economy, women’s entrepreneurship, and social entrepreneurship. This prioritisation reflects the transformative potential of AI, the urgent need for environmental responsibility, and the growing role of flexible employment models in modern economies.

Investor interest also varies across these trends, with AI attracting the highest level of investment at 70%, followed by sustainability (55%), the gig economy (40%), women-led startups (30%), and social entrepreneurship (25%). Pareto chart analysis suggests that investors are primarily drawn to high-growth, scalable opportunities, with AI and sustainability receiving the most funding due to their disruptive potential and alignment with global economic shifts.

Despite lower investor interest, policy interventions play a crucial role in supporting women entrepreneurs and social enterprises, ensuring equitable access to funding and resources. Governments are actively promoting initiatives such as AI-driven infrastructure development, green economy incentives, and labour regulations for gig workers, women-focused business grants, and social entrepreneurship subsidies to balance market-driven growth with long-term social progress.

Recommendations Based on Key Trends and Statistics

- *Accelerate AI Adoption with Policy Support*

Governments should expand AI-focused grants and research and development (R&D) incentives to sustain the 19.6% CAGR in AI adoption.

Businesses should integrate AI-driven automation, predictive analytics, and machine learning to enhance productivity and decision-making efficiency.

Universities and industry leaders should collaborate on AI upskilling programmes to meet the growing demand for AI expertise.

- *Strengthen Sustainability Initiatives*

Investors should increase funding for green startups, given the 192% rise in eco-friendly businesses and 167% improvement in carbon footprint reduction.

Governments must enhance regulations on carbon emissions and promote renewable energy adoption in supply chains.

Companies should adopt eco-friendly product designs, circular economy models, and sustainable packaging to align with the 77% rise in consumer preference for green brands.

- *Support the Gig Economy with Regulatory Frameworks*

Policymakers should introduce labour protections, benefits, and social security programmes for gig workers as their workforce share grows by 300%.

Startups should leverage gig-based talent for scalability while ensuring fair compensation and long-term engagement.

Digital platforms must invest in AI-driven job-matching systems and skill development programmes to enhance the 567% revenue growth in freelance work.

- *Promote Women Entrepreneurship Through Investment Equity*

Venture capitalists should reduce gender-based funding disparities, as women-led startups still receive only 75% of the funding compared with men-led ventures.

Governments and financial institutions should introduce more women-focused grants, mentorship programmes, and business networks to sustain the 67% increase in female-led startups.

Corporations should set diversity-driven procurement goals, ensuring higher participation of women entrepreneurs in supply chains.

- *Boost Social Entrepreneurship with Financial and Policy Incentives*

Governments should expand funding for social startups, given their 350% higher reliance on government grants compared with traditional businesses.

Impact investors should prioritise social enterprises, despite their lower 12% profit margin, due to their 166% higher societal impact score.

Policymakers should introduce tax benefits and regulatory support for businesses that focus on social impact, education, and healthcare solutions.

- *Align Policy and Investment Priorities with Future Trends*

AI and sustainability should remain top policy priorities, supported by AI-driven green solutions and automation in renewable energy sectors.

Investors should diversify funding across emerging sectors, balancing AI's high 70% investor interest with sustainability (55%) and social enterprises (25%).

Governments should ensure inclusive economic growth by creating policies that support women entrepreneurs,

gig workers, and social enterprises, balancing technological progress with social responsibility.

Findings

- *AI as a Key Driver of Business Growth*

AI adoption in startups has grown at a CAGR of 19.6%, with a 3.5x revenue impact compared with non-AI businesses.

AI-powered automation has significantly reduced decision-making time by 76%, enhancing operational efficiency.

Investor interest in AI remains highest at 70%, indicating strong market confidence in its long-term impact.

- *Sustainability Gains Momentum*

The number of eco-friendly startups receiving funding has surged by 192%, reflecting growing investor and government support.

Companies adopting green practices have achieved a 167% improvement in carbon footprint reduction, with consumer preference for sustainability rising by 77%.

Governments and businesses are increasingly aligning policies with ESG goals.

- *The Gig Economy is Reshaping Employment Trends*

The gig workforce has expanded by 300%, driven by digital platforms and changing work preferences.

Freelance platform revenue has surged by 567%, proving the financial viability of the gig economy.

Startup reliance on gig workers has increased by 160%, indicating a shift towards flexible workforce models.

- *Women's Entrepreneurship is Growing but Faces Funding Challenges*

The percentage of women-led startups has increased by 67%, showing progress in gender inclusivity.

The funding gap for women entrepreneurs has improved by 50%, yet full parity remains unachieved.

The survival rate of women-led startups has increased from 60% to 80%, reflecting greater resilience and access to business resources.

- *Social Entrepreneurship Balances Profit and Impact*

Social startups achieve 166% higher societal impact scores than traditional businesses but operate with 33% lower profit margins.

45% of social startups rely on government grants, compared with only 10% of traditional businesses, highlighting the need for sustained policy support.

Despite lower investor interest (25%), social enterprises play a critical role in addressing social and environmental challenges.

- *Policy and Investment Priorities Reflect Market Trends*

Governments rank AI as the highest policy priority, followed by sustainability, the gig economy, women's entrepreneurship, and social enterprises.

Investor interest follows a similar trend, favouring AI (70%) and sustainability (55%), while women entrepreneurs (30%) and social startups (25%) receive relatively lower funding.

Future growth will depend on balanced policy interventions, ensuring technological progress aligns with sustainable and inclusive development.

Conclusions

- *AI is Driving Business Transformation*

The rapid adoption of AI in entrepreneurship has led to higher revenue growth, faster decision-making, and greater operational efficiency. With AI-powered automation reducing costs and improving customer engagement, businesses that embrace AI are likely to remain competitive. Continued investment in AI-driven solutions and workforce upskilling will be critical for long-term success.

- *Sustainability is a Growing Business Imperative*

The rise of eco-friendly startups, improved carbon footprint reduction, and shifting consumer preferences

indicate that sustainability is no longer optional, it is a strategic necessity. Government policies, investor priorities, and corporate ESG commitments are aligning to support sustainable business models, making green entrepreneurship a key focus for future economic growth.

- *The Gig Economy is Reshaping the Workforce*

The expansion of gig workers and increasing reliance on freelance talent by startups signal a structural shift in employment patterns. While gig work offers flexibility and scalability, it also raises concerns about job security, benefits, and worker rights. Future policies must strike a balance between labour protections and gig economy growth to ensure a fair and sustainable work environment.

- *Women Entrepreneurs are Advancing, but Gaps Persist*

The increasing number of women-led startups and their higher survival rates reflect growing inclusivity in entrepreneurship. However, the funding gap between men- and women-led businesses remains a challenge. Targeted initiatives such as gender-focused investment programmes, mentorship, and financial support are necessary to bridge this gap and ensure equal opportunities.

- *Social Enterprises Prioritise Impact over Profitability*

Social startups demonstrate a significantly higher societal impact compared with traditional businesses, but they face lower profit margins and greater dependence on government funding. To sustain their mission, impact-driven investment models, tax incentives, and stronger policy support are essential for the long-term success of social enterprises.

- *Policy and Investment Must Align with Future Trends*

AI, sustainability, and the gig economy dominate government and investor priorities, while women entrepreneurs and social enterprises require greater financial and policy support. A balanced approach to economic development, one that integrates technological innovation, environmental responsibility, and social inclusion, will be crucial in shaping the future of entrepreneurship.

Suggestions

- *Enhancing AI Adoption and Digital Transformation*

Governments should increase funding for AI research and innovation to sustain growth.

Businesses should invest in AI-driven automation, predictive analytics, and customer engagement tools to enhance efficiency and competitiveness.

Educational institutions should expand AI and data science programmes to prepare the workforce for AI-driven jobs.

- *Strengthening Sustainability Initiatives*

Policymakers should introduce stronger incentives for green startups, such as tax benefits, grants, and regulatory support.

Businesses should integrate eco-friendly practices such as renewable energy, sustainable packaging, and circular economy models.

Investors should prioritise sustainability-focused startups, given the increasing consumer demand for green products.

- *Improving Gig Economy Regulations and Support*

Governments should develop labour laws that provide social security, healthcare, and fair wages for gig workers.

Businesses should ensure fair compensation and career growth opportunities for freelancers and contract workers.

Digital platforms should implement AI-driven skill-matching systems and training programmes to enhance job quality.

- *Bridging the Gender Gap in Entrepreneurship*

Financial institutions should expand women-focused investment programmes to reduce funding disparities.

Governments should introduce mentorship and training programmes to support women entrepreneurs.

Corporations should implement supplier diversity policies to include more women-led businesses in their supply chains.

- *Supporting Social Entrepreneurship for Greater Impact*

Governments should increase financial aid and policy support for social enterprises addressing critical societal

challenges.

Investors should consider impact-driven funding models that balance profitability with social impact.

Businesses should integrate CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) initiatives with social entrepreneurship partnerships.

- *Aligning Policy and Investment with Future Trends*

Governments should focus on AI-driven sustainability solutions, combining technological advancements with environmental goals.

Investors should diversify funding strategies to support not only AI and sustainability but also women entrepreneurs and social startups.

Policymakers should ensure that economic growth is inclusive, fostering equal opportunities for all sectors.

Future Scope of Study

Future research can explore the long-term impact of AI on entrepreneurship, focusing on job creation, ethical concerns, and industry-specific AI adoption trends. In addition, studies can assess the effectiveness of sustainability policies and investor responses to green business models. The gig economy's evolution, including its social security implications and labour rights, warrants further investigation. Research on women entrepreneurs can examine strategies to bridge funding gaps and enhance business survival rates. Last, the role of social entrepreneurship in economic development and government support mechanisms can be studied to create more effective policies for sustainable and inclusive business growth.

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