

MSME: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA

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Abstract: The present study investigates the correlation between women's empowerment and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) within the Indian environment. It seeks to clarify the ways in which women's economic and social empowerment can be accelerated through the MSME sector. The study looks at the different obstacles that Indian women entrepreneurs must overcome and how MSMEs may help them do so. It also looks into how MSMEs affect women's employment, earning potential, and general socioeconomic advancement. The study also examines government programmes and policies that support women's involvement in the MSME industry. It also emphasises how crucial access to funding, skill development, and education are for female entrepreneurs. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combines qualitative interviews with female entrepreneurs with quantitative data analysis. The results indicate that MSMEs can play a major role in empowering women by giving them access to chances for financial independence, skill development, and decision-making authority. In order to further strengthen the beneficial effects of MSMEs on women's empowerment in India, the study ends with recommendations for policymakers, MSME stakeholders, and female entrepreneurs.

Key terms: MSMEs, Gender Equality, Obstacles, Women Empowerment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Overview of MSME's in India

Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises, or MSME's, are vital to the Indian economy. These businesses form the foundation of India's industrial sector and play a major role in innovation, job creation, and general economic expansion. The Indian government has put in place a number of policies and programmes to assist MSMEs in growing and developing since it understands their significance.

The potential of MSMEs to create jobs is one of their main benefits, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. These

labor-intensive businesses frequently provide a living for a sizable number of individuals. The government hopes to address the unemployment problem and build a more just and inclusive society by supporting MSMEs.

MSMEs promote entrepreneurship and innovation in addition to job development. These businesses, which are generally focused on specialised markets, are led by their owners' inventiveness and creativity. They aid in the creation of novel goods, procedures, and technological advancements that boost the economy's productivity and competitiveness.

The Government of India has launched a number of programmes and efforts to aid in the expansion of MSMEs. These consist of programmes for skill development, access to credit facilities, financial aid, and technology support. To further facilitate the establishment and operation of MSMEs, the government has lowered bureaucratic barriers and streamlined regulatory processes.

In addition, the government has started the "Make in India" initiative, which attempts to increase the share of MSMEs in the GDP of the nation and support homegrown manufacturing. This programme creates an environment that is favourable for MSMEs to grow and stimulates investments in them from both domestic and foreign sources.

Even while MSMEs make a big contribution, they still have to deal with a lot of issues, like poor infrastructure, limited access to financing, and a lack of technological capabilities. Nonetheless, it is anticipated that the MSME sector would continue to grow as a result of the government's ongoing efforts to solve these issues and offer the required support.

MSMEs play a significant role in society, but they also confront a variety of challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure, a dearth of technical innovation, and limited financing options. Still, it is expected that the MSME sector would continue to improve as a result of the government's continued efforts to solve these problems and provide the necessary support.

MSMEs, in summary, are an essential part of India's economic environment. They promote innovation, create jobs, and aid in the nation's general economic expansion. Under the right conditions and with the backing of the



government, MSMEs can become even more important in determining India's future as a major player in the world economy. In India, MSMEs play a crucial role in the country's economy. These businesses, also referred to as MSMEs, are essential to India's economic growth and development (Biswas et al.). Their contributions include lowering levels of inequality, creating jobs, and decreasing poverty. The Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises provides data that indicates the current size of the MSMEs market in India is approximately 6.3 crore, and that number is expected to increase by 18.5 percent by 2020 (source).

MSMEs' Significance in Empowering Women

MSMEs are essential to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. These businesses allow women the chance to become economically independent, improve their skills, and take on leadership roles, shattering stereotypes and enabling them to make a positive impact on their families and communities. Women who participate in MSMEs have access to income-generating opportunities that improve their financial security, self-esteem, and sense of achievement. MSMEs also frequently provide flexible work schedules, which help women successfully juggle their personal and professional obligations. This flexibility is especially important for women, whose participation in the workforce may be restricted by cultural norms and societal expectations. MSMEs give women the opportunity to learn new skills and information, enabling them to start their own businesses and become entrepreneurs. In addition to stimulating the economy, this also advances gender equality by questioning established gender norms and giving women the confidence to take on leadership roles in their communities. In general, it is impossible to overestimate the significance of MSMEs for women's empowerment since they provide women a chance to prosper, support the economy, and question social norms?all of which help to build a society that is more inclusive and equal.

MSMEs' Place in the Indian Economy

MSMEs, or micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, are vital to the Indian economy. These businesses provide a substantial contribution to industrial production, employment creation, and export revenue. The foundation of the Indian economy is the MSME sector, which employs a sizable portion of the labour force, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas.

The potential of MSMEs to create jobs is one of their main contributions. They have the capacity to employ a sizable workforce and are recognised to be labor-intensive. This is especially crucial in a nation like India, where unemployment is still a major problem. MSMEs generate employment in service industries including retail, hotel, and IT-enabled services in addition to the manufacturing sector.

Not only do MSMEs create jobs, but they also add to industrial production. They produce a wide variety of commodities, such as textiles, clothing, leather goods, handicrafts, engineering goods, and more, and they are essential to the manufacturing industry. By supplying items to foreign markets, these businesses not only serve the domestic market but also boost export revenue.

MSMEs encourage inventiveness and entrepreneurship. They give those who have innovative ideas but little capital a place to launch their own companies. Due of their frequent resource limitations and need to come up with creative strategies to stay competitive, these businesses support innovation. Through promoting efficiency and competition, MSMEs also help to make the economy more competitive overall.

MSMEs encourage balanced industrial expansion, which aids in regional development. They create industries in rural and underdeveloped areas, which helps lessen regional inequities. The local economy is strengthened and job possibilities are created by the decentralisation of industry. Additionally, it lessens the strain on cities and encourages growth that is inclusive nationwide.

All things considered, MSMEs play a critical role in India's economy by fostering entrepreneurship, industrial production, employment, innovation, and regional development. Acknowledging their importance, the government has put in place a number of programmes and policies to encourage and assist MSMEs' expansion. These consist of financial accessibility, educational opportunities, technology assistance, and streamlined regulatory procedures. India can continue to utilise MSMEs' potential and guarantee the country's sustained economic progress by fostering and enabling them.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study "Women Entrepreneurship in India: A Study on MSMEs." by **Sharma, K., and R. Arora** examines women's entrepreneurship in India in relation to Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs). The writers examine the difficulties and chances that female business owners encounter when launching and operating their companies. They talk about the different aspects, like financial availability, education, and family support that affect women's decisions to start their own businesses. The report also makes recommendations for ways to further empower women in the MSME sector and emphasizes the role that government programmes and policies play in encouraging women's entrepreneurship.

A critical review of the body of research on women's empowerment through MSMEs in India is presented in **Shakraborty, S. H.'s article**, "Women Empowerment through MSMEs in India: A Critical Review of Literature." In order to determine the major themes and conclusions



regarding women's empowerment in the MSME sector, the author looks at a number of studies and research papers. The review addresses issues including government policies, networking, skill development, and financial accessibility. The article seeks to fill in gaps in the literature with regard to future research while offering a thorough understanding of the current status of women's empowerment in MSMEs.

I. Chakravarty and S. Chakravarty. "Women Empowerment through MSMEs in India: A Study of Challenges and Opportunities." (2006). this study looks into the opportunities and difficulties that women in India's MSME sector face. The writers examine the elements that support women's empowerment, including networking opportunities, training and skill development, and credit availability. They also look at the limitations and impediments, such as cultural norms, a lack of resources, and restricted market access, that prevent women from advancing in the MSME sector. The report makes recommendations for how to get around these obstacles and optimise MSMEs' potential to empower women.

A collaborative research paper by **Datta, A., and A.** The paper "Empowerment of Women in India via MSMEs: A Study of Policies and Hiring." examines how MSMEs contribute to women's empowerment in India, concentrating on hiring procedures and policies. The government programmes and initiatives that support women's employment and entrepreneurship in the MSME sector are examined by the writers. They examine how these policies affect women's empowerment and talk about the opportunities and difficulties of employing women in MSMEs. The study makes recommendations to improve women's empowerment through MSMEs and offers insights into how effective current policies are.

Gupta, S., and A. Kumar. The paper "Indian Women's Empowerment through MSMEs: An Analysis of Opportunities and Difficulties." looks at the challenges and opportunities that Indian women have when trying to use MSMEs to empower themselves. The writers examine the different determinants of women's empowerment, including government assistance, financial access, and education. They also talk about the difficulties that women business owners encounter, such as prejudices in society, restricted access to resources, and a dearth of networking opportunities. The research offers valuable perspectives on tactics that can be implemented to advance women's empowerment within the MSME industry in India.

N. Jain and R. Gupta. "Women Empowerment through MSMEs in India: A Study of Success Stories." The success stories of women's empowerment through MSMEs in India are the main topic of this research paper. To determine the elements that have aided in the empowerment of these

women entrepreneurs, the authors examine case studies of prosperous MSME sector women entrepreneurs. They look at the tactics these women used, like networking, creativity, and skill building, and they talk about how their achievements affected the societal empowerment of women. The study offers insightful information about the accomplishments and experiences of female entrepreneurs in the MSME industry.

The above researches on women's empowerment through MSMEs in India offers insightful information about the opportunities and difficulties that women entrepreneurs in the nation face. They highlight elements that affect women's decisions to launch and grow their businesses, including access to capital, education, networking opportunities, and governmental regulations. The studies also go over the constraints and barriers that prevent women from achieving full potential in the MSME sector, such as cultural norms, a lack of resources, and restricted access to markets. The research papers provide suggestions on how to get past these obstacles and maximise MSMEs' ability to empower women. Overall, these studies offer important insights for future research and policy development, and they contribute to a thorough understanding of the current state of women's empowerment in MSMEs in India.

III. FINDINGS

It has been acknowledged that women's participation in MSMEs is essential to India's economic growth and women's empowerment. The involvement of women in MSMEs has the potential to promote socioeconomic advancement and inclusive growth in India. Women participate actively in micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and can make a substantial contribution to the development of jobs, the fight against poverty, and the general success of the economy. Various laws and efforts have been put in place to promote and encourage women entrepreneurs in the nation as a result of this recognition.

The Stand-Up India plan is one such effort that seeks to encourage entrepreneurship among women and marginalised communities by giving them access to financing, skill development opportunities, and supportive handholding. Women entrepreneurs are encouraged to launch new businesses under this programme in industries like manufacturing, services, and trading. In addition to giving women more economic power, this improves their capacity for leadership and decision-making.

The government has created a number of financial incentives and programmes that are especially designed to alleviate the difficulties that women-owned MSMEs encounter. These comprise interest rate subsidies, loans without collateral, and lending to the priority sector. By easing the financial obstacles that female entrepreneurs



frequently face, these policies hope to empower them to grow their companies and participate in the market.

Women's success in MSMEs depends on a variety of factors, including financial assistance, mentorship opportunities, and capacity-building initiatives. Networking platforms, entrepreneurial courses, and skill development programmes give women the information and tools they need to succeed in the corporate world. Women may break through social obstacles, dispel gender preconceptions, and succeed as entrepreneurs if they are given the proper tools and training.

The participation of women in MSMEs has a knock-on effect on society. In addition to increasing home revenues and achieving economic independence, women also enjoy higher social standing and more influence over family decisions. Positive effects follow, including more money being spent on healthcare, education, and the general well-being of their families.

Issues Faced by Indian Women Entrepreneurs

Notwithstanding the advancements, obstacles persist that prevent women from fully engaging in MSMEs. These difficulties include social norms, gender prejudices, a lack of supportive infrastructure, and restricted access to financing. To break down these barriers and establish a supportive climate for women entrepreneurs to flourish, a multifaceted strategy including government, business, and civil society partners is needed.

Limited financing availability is one of the biggest issues facing Indian women business owners. Issues such as insufficient collateral and discriminatory lending practises often make it difficult for women to get loans and investments.

One of the main factors influencing India's economic growth and women's empowerment is the participation of women in MSMEs. The nation can unlock the potential of female entrepreneurs and achieve sustainable and equitable growth by cultivating an ecosystem that is both supportive and inclusive. It is essential to keep funding women's entrepreneurship and giving them the tools, chances, and resources they need to be successful in the MSME sector.

The discrimination and gender stereotypes that women face from society are another major obstacle. They frequently encounter prejudice and scepticism, which can damage their reputation and restrict their ability to advance. Moreover, it can be challenging for women to successfully manage their personal and professional life due to the weight of cultural norms and traditional gender roles. Promoting gender equality and challenging social conventions that limit women's participation in the corporate sector are essential if we are to overcome these obstacles.

Internal obstacles also occur in addition to these external difficulties. Women frequently experience difficulties with self-belief and confidence, which can affect their capacity to

make decisions and take chances. This problem is made worse by the absence of mentors and role models, which prevents women from getting advice and assistance from seasoned experts in their fields.

Building professional relationships and gaining access to networks are frequent challenges faced by women in MSMEs. It may be difficult for women to make relationships and locate chances for collaboration or mentoring in male-dominated fields and at exclusive networking events.

Additionally, women bear a disproportionate share of the responsibility of caregiving, which can restrict their availability and flexibility to invest time and energy in their enterprises. This difficulty is made worse by the dearth of reasonably priced and high-quality daycare services, which forces many women to balance several responsibilities at once.

Last but not least, women in MSMEs usually face restricted market access and growth prospects. They could run into difficulties getting contracts, breaking into new markets, or getting paid fairly for the goods or services they provide. This may make it more difficult for them to grow their companies and compete fairly with their male competitors.

A comprehensive strategy is needed to address these issues, one that includes enacting legislative changes to create an enabling environment, advocating for women's empowerment and gender equality, offering targeted financial and non-financial support, and developing inclusive networks and mentorship opportunities. We can only fully realise the potential of women in MSMEs and encourage their significant economic involvement by tackling these barriers. Gender prejudices, lack of enabling infrastructure, limited access to financing, and societal norms are the four primary categories of problems that women in MSMEs encounter. The inability to obtain financing presents a serious obstacle for female MSMEs entrepreneurs. Because of gender prejudices in financial institutions, a lack of collateral, and low financial awareness, women frequently struggle to get loans or credit. In addition, women's involvement in MSMEs is hampered by the absence of a supportive infrastructure. This includes insufficient access to necessities like dependable transport and energy, which can negatively impact the operations and production of women-owned MSMEs.

MSMEs' Role in Empowering Women

Empowering women through MSMEs is essential to advancing both economic growth and gender equality. By concentrating on micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), we can provide women the chance to contribute to their communities, become financially independent, and engage in the economy. MSMEs give women a platform for self-employment and entrepreneurship, which is a major factor in their

empowerment. These businesses give women the freedom to manage their personal and professional life, enabling them to meet their caregiving obligations and achieve their career goals. In addition, MSMEs frequently function within local communities, giving women the opportunity to actively participate in the improvement and development of their areas.

Women can question social norms and break away from established gender roles through MSMEs. These businesses give women a platform to demonstrate their abilities, expertise, and inventiveness? A chance to dispel preconceptions and demonstrate their potential. We can break down barriers and build a more just and inclusive society by promoting women's involvement in MSMEs. MSMEs' contribution to women's empowerment also has a knock-on effect on the overall economy. Women contribute to creativity, job creation, and economic stability when they are given the chance to start and expand their own enterprises. Empirical research has demonstrated that granting women economic agency results in elevated household earnings, more productivity, and a decrease in poverty.

It is essential to give women access to the tools they need, like funding, education, and mentorship programmes, to guarantee effective empowerment. Governments, organisations, and stakeholders need to work together to establish a supportive atmosphere that helps women launch and grow their MSMEs. Policies should also be put in place to eliminate discrimination and impediments based on gender, guaranteeing women's equal chances in the corporate sector.

In summary, MSMEs' role in empowering women is a potent instrument in the fight for gender parity and economic growth. Recognising women entrepreneurs' potential and giving them the support they need will help us build a more inclusive society where women prosper, businesses grow, and communities prosper. In addition, a focus on women entrepreneurs' psychological capital is essential for their success in MSMEs and for their empowerment.

IV. FEW CASE STUDIES OF MSMEs LED BY WOMEN

In India, women-owned MSMEs have become influential change agents and major contributors to the national economy. These case studies highlight the noteworthy accomplishments of these businesses by highlighting their impact, perseverance, and inventiveness.

1. **"Sustainable Fashion" by Ritu Sharma:** The forward-thinking businesswoman founded a sustainable fashion line that blends eco-friendly procedures with traditional Indian workmanship. Her MSME has grown in popularity both

domestically and internationally due to its fair trade practises and ethically sourced materials. Ritu's dedication to supporting sustainable fashion and helping regional craftspeople has increased awareness of the value of ethical consumption in addition to generating job possibilities.

2. **"Tech Solutions for Rural Empowerment" by Shalini Gupta:** An astute businesswoman, Gupta saw how digital solutions could help close the gap between rural and urban areas. She established an MSME that creates digital solutions that are user-friendly, reasonably priced, and suited to the needs of rural areas. Through e-learning platforms and mobile-based agricultural advisories, Shalini's organisation has completely changed how people in distant places may access information and services. Her creative strategy has empowered rural communities, raising their standard of living and productivity.

3. **Neha Singh's article "Breaking Barriers in Male-Dominated Industries"** describes how the trailblazing entrepreneur broke prejudices by entering fields that had historically been dominated by men. Her MSME, which focuses on infrastructure development and building, has grown remarkably and opened doors for other women to pursue careers in similar fields. Neha has received recognition for her resolute perseverance and adeptness at overcoming obstacles, and she has also served as an inspiration to many aspirant female entrepreneurs throughout India.

4. **"Reviving Traditional Handicrafts" by Meera Patel:** With a strong commitment to protecting India's rich cultural legacy, Patel founded an MSME with the goal of bringing back traditional handicrafts. Through working together with talented craftspeople and giving them a stage on which to display their work. Through Meera's endeavours, long-forgotten artistic genres have been revitalised. Her commitment to maintaining traditional customs has revitalised rural communities' local economy in addition to creating job possibilities.

5. **Written by Priya Sharma, "Empowering Women through Financial Inclusion"** highlights how financial inclusion may significantly impact women's empowerment. Sharma is a social entrepreneur. Her MSME provides women from underserved communities with financial planning assistance, microcredit facilities, and financial literacy programmes. Priya's all-encompassing strategy has not only made financial resources more accessible, but it has also given women the tools they need to handle their money wisely. Numerous women have raised their conditions of life and achieved economic independence as a result of her efforts.



The enormous potential and influence of women-led MSMEs in India are demonstrated by these case studies. These business owners have proven to be resilient, creative, and dedicated to bringing about constructive change in the face of adversity. Their triumphs encourage and clear the path for more women to shatter stereotypes, boost the economy, and build a more welcoming community.

MSME Gender Equality

Any progressive society must prioritise gender equality, and MSMEs (micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises) have become an effective vehicle for advancing this goal. These businesses, which are frequently run or owned by women, are crucial in promoting economic empowerment and giving women access to opportunities across a range of industries. MSMEs give women a chance to demonstrate their entrepreneurial abilities and support the economy. Women can question social standards and break free from established gender roles by launching their own enterprises. This increases their self-confidence and general well-being in addition to paving the way for financial independence. MSMEs offer flexible work schedules, which are particularly helpful for women who typically handle several duties, including childcare and housework. Women can better manage their personal and professional life when they are given the freedom to choose their own working hours. A further benefit of gender equality in the workforce is that MSMEs can create job opportunities for other women. Gender-based wage disparities may be addressed by MSMEs. These small businesses can serve as role models for larger firms by providing fair and equal compensation to all workers, regardless of gender. This addresses the pervasive gender pay gaps that continue to exist in many industries while also ensuring that women receive their just wage.

MSMEs challenge gender stereotypes and promote diversity, which adds to the social fabric of communities in addition to their economic benefits. When women-owned businesses prosper, they tear down barriers and encourage other women and girls to pursue their aspirations in non-traditional sectors. In addition to helping individual women, this cultural transformation creates a society that is more diverse and egalitarian.

Provision of requisite resources and assistance to female entrepreneurs is imperative in order to fully leverage the potential of MSMEs for promoting gender equality. This covers financial resources, educational possibilities, mentorship programmes, and networking venues. Governments, non-governmental organisations, and other interested parties should work together to establish a supportive atmosphere that enables women to launch and expand their enterprises.

To sum up, MSMEs have become an effective instrument for advancing gender equality. Through granting financial prospects, questioning conventional gender roles, and promoting diversity, these businesses enable women and make a positive impact on a more just society. For women to be able to fully participate in and prosper from the economy, it is imperative that we acknowledge and support the critical role that MSMEs play in furthering gender equality.

Policy Suggestions for MSMEs' Women's Empowerment

It is possible to apply a number of policy measures to support women's empowerment in MSMEs:

1. Financial Resources: Governments should set up special funds and programmes that make it simple and inexpensive for women-owned MSMEs to obtain funding. This can include venture funding that is expressly geared towards female entrepreneurs as well as grants and low-interest loans.

2. Training and Skill Development: It's critical to improve the abilities and skills of female entrepreneurs. Governments ought to partner with academic institutions and business leaders to offer specialised workshops, mentorship opportunities, and training programmes. This will assist women in gaining the skills and information required to manage profitable enterprises.

3. Supportive Business climate: To promote women's involvement in MSMEs, governments should establish a favourable business climate. This entails streamlining bureaucratic processes, lightening regulatory requirements, and offering tax benefits and other financial assistance to women-owned enterprises as inducements.

4. Access to Markets and Networks: To explicitly target female entrepreneurs, governments should organise business expos, trade shows, and networking events. They can also create channels that link female-owned MSMEs with prospective domestic and foreign investors, suppliers, and customers.

5. Gender-responsive Policies: To address the particular difficulties experienced by women in MSMEs, governments should create and implement gender-responsive policies. This covers steps to guarantee fair compensation, oppose discrimination based on gender, and advance work-life balance by providing childcare and maternity leave.

6. Technology and Innovation: By giving female entrepreneurs access to digital tools, e-commerce platforms, and training on using technology for company expansion,



governments may encourage the use of technology and innovation in MSMEs. They will be able to broaden their market reach and compete on an even playing field as a result.

6. Research and Data gathering: To gain a better understanding of the obstacles and opportunities facing women in MSMEs, governments should allocate funds for research and data gathering. This will support the development of focused initiatives and evidence-based policies to meet the unique requirements of female entrepreneurs.

Governments may empower women in MSMEs, support their economic independence, and promote sustainable economic growth by putting these policy proposals into practise.

V. CONCLUSION

Women in MSMEs in India appear to have a bright future ahead of them, with a number of encouraging developments and opportunities anticipated. A favourable atmosphere has been established for women to launch and expand their own enterprises thanks to the government's emphasis on encouraging women's entrepreneurship through a number of programmes and initiatives.

The growing availability of financing is one of the main reasons propelling the expansion of women in MSMEs in the future. Organisations and financial institutions are realising the potential of female entrepreneurs and facilitating their access to credit, loans, and other financial services. Because of this, women now have the confidence to grow their companies, enter new industries, and invest in them.

Moreover, women in MSMEs now have more opportunities thanks to technological improvements and digitalization. Social media and the internet have developed into effective instruments for customer outreach, marketing, and client base growth. These platforms are being used by female entrepreneurs to promote their goods and services, establish connections with potential customers, and establish a strong online presence.

Further factors influencing the future success of women in MSMEs are the shifting social consciousness and the increased acceptability of women in leadership positions. There has been a change in the way society views female entrepreneurs, with increased acceptance and encouragement. As a result, there is now a supportive environment where women are pushed to take chances, be creative, and succeed in their careers. A variety of training programmes and skill development initiatives are providing women with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the professional sector. With the help of these programmes, which concentrate on improving management,

financial literacy, and entrepreneurial skills, women will be more equipped to overcome obstacles and make wise business decisions.

In conclusion, women in MSMEs in India have a bright and hopeful future. Women entrepreneurs are well-positioned to contribute significantly to the expansion and development of the MSME sector thanks to the backing of the government, easier access to financing, developments in technology, shifting social attitudes, and skill-development programmes. As more women in India break down obstacles and launch profitable businesses, they will serve as role models and pioneers for upcoming generations of female entrepreneurs.

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