

EXPLORING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN USING THE INDUSTRIAL METAVERSE TO EMPOWER RURAL ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA DIGITALLY

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ABSTRACT

The Industrial Metaverse presents a transformative opportunity for rural entrepreneurship in India, promising to bridge geographical divides and empower communities digitally. Despite its potential, the application of the metaverse in rural settings remains underexplored, with significant challenges hindering widespread adoption. This study investigates the potential of the industrial metaverse for rural entrepreneurship in India, exploring opportunities, challenges, and strategies for empowerment. Through a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and interviews with rural entrepreneurs, the research identifies key empowerment opportunities such as innovative market access, skill enhancement, and community building within the metaverse. However, challenges including infrastructural limitations, digital literacy gaps, and financial constraints present significant barriers to adoption. Proposed strategies for overcoming these challenges include government-private sector collaboration, education and training initiatives, and financial support mechanisms. The study underscores the importance of comprehensive understanding and digital literacy in leveraging the metaverse effectively, while highlighting the need for targeted interventions to enhance rural entrepreneurs' readiness and ability to engage with this emerging digital realm. The findings contribute theoretically by expanding the Capability Approach to encompass virtual environments and offer practical insights for policymakers, entrepreneurs, and technology developers. Recommendations include prioritizing investments in digital infrastructure, engaging in digital literacy programs, and developing user-friendly metaverse platforms tailored to rural contexts. Overall, this research emphasizes the transformative potential of the industrial metaverse for rural entrepreneurship in India and calls for collaborative efforts to realize its full benefits for inclusive and sustainable development.

KEYWORDS: *Industrial Metaverse, Rural Entrepreneurship, Digital Empowerment, Market Access, Skill Enhancement*

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