**Socio-cultural factor**

Sociocultural factors are customs, lifestyles and values that characterize a society or group. Cultural aspects include concepts of beauty, education, language, law and politics, religion, social organizations, technology and material culture, values and attitudes. Social factors include reference groups, family, role and status in society, time and available resources. An understanding of sociocultural factors is crucial in developing marketing strategies for businesses or organizations seeking action from particular groups.

The average level of education in a community shapes the interests and sophistication of consumers. A high percentage of potential customers with some college education requires more details and explanations in promotional material. A business must decide whether advertising brochures should be printed in English alone or English and a second language such as Spanish. If women are the decision makers in this pool of potential customers, marketing strategies must be adjusted to appeal to feminine values and concerns.

Reference groups are family members and relatives, neighbors, friends and co-workers with whom individuals compare themselves and who serve as examples in buying habits. Awareness of the major reference groups, persons or family structures in a community is essential when targeting marketing campaigns toward them. Sociocultural factors such as disposable income are important in deciding whether potential customers are likely to buy luxury items or whether a marketing plan that emphasizes low cost and high value for necessities might be more successful.

**Household Work –** Within the household, girls are meant to perform more work as compared to boys. Besides, the tasks such as preparation of meals, cleaning, washing,

Fetching water etc., they are required to take care of their younger siblings, while their parents go to work. In the implementation of the household tasks, girls are compelled to drop out of schools. It becomes difficult for them to take out time for studies due to domestic work, as a result, they are unable to perform well academically and eventually give up their studies.

Female Involvement in Household Chores – When the households are headed by

Females, then there is a decline in the drop out of girls. In the household's decision-making process, the dropout rate of girls has decreased. However, female headship ultimately proves to be advantageous to the girls, studies in some cases, show debatable results. This is because, many studies found that single female headed households experience larger financial and time constraints than two-parent households did in general, which may influence differently on children's academic achievement. In fact, children in households, headed by married women have higher educational attainment, while children of widows are more expected to be engaged in employment opportunities.

**Early Marriage** – Early marriage of girls is the primary factor that lead to discontinuation of education. There have been cases, when girls get married within the course of their acquisition of education. Marriage imposes numerous responsibilities on girls and they do not find time to attend schools. In the household of the parents, they may attend schools, but as they get married and go to another home, they eventually have to drop out of schools.

**Cultural Beliefs –** Cultural norms and beliefs prove to be restraints upon the acquisition of education. The older individuals mainly possess this viewpoint that girls should be trained regarding the household management and in taking care of the needs and requirements of the family members. Education and academic learning is not meant for them, as they will not be able to utilize their education, skills and abilities in an effective manner in any area.

Dropout of school.

**School Distance –** The distance of schools from home, costs and transportation problems are the primary factors that lead to dropout of girls from schools. Parents are reluctant to send their girls to long distances and they feel vulnerable regarding sexual harassment. When girls and their parents feel that it is not safe to travel at a distance, then girls normally drop out or are not enrolled in schools.

**Absenteeism –** The rate of absenteeism has a negative impact on the dropout of girls from schools. Girls are at a larger risk of absenteeism, reiteration and dropout, and have lower educational achievement than boys have in the upper primary school. There are some causes for girls' dropout because of absenteeism. For instance, teenage pregnancy amongst girls is commonly associated with frequent absence from school originally, and then permanent and or temporary dropout. The increase in the drop out of girls get more likely to increase, because of a higher rate of absenteeism due to child labor or household work.

**From the definition of gender alone I am strongly believing that gender role are social developed**

**For**

A **gender role**, also known as a **sex role**, is a [social role](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_role) encompassing a range of behaviors and attitudes that are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for people based on their actual or perceived [sex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex_assignment).[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_role#cite_note-Alters-2)[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_role#cite_note-Gochman-3) Gender roles are usually centered on conceptions of [masculinity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masculinity) and [femininity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Femininity) ,[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_role#cite_note-Alters-2) although there are [exceptions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_gender) and [variations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genderqueer). The specifics regarding these gendered expectations may vary substantially among cultures, while other characteristics may be common throughout a range of cultures. There is ongoing debate as to what extent gender roles and their variations are [biologically determined](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex_differences_in_humans), and to what extent they are [socially constructed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_constructionism).

A **gender role** is a set of behavioral norms associated particularly with males or females in a given social group or system, often including the [division of labor](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Division_of_labor) between men and women and the attendant complex of child-rearing and socialization processes leading youth toward maturing to perpetuate the same pattern. Gender-based roles coincident with sex-based roles have been the norm in many traditional societies, with the specific components and workings of the gender/sex system of role division varying markedly from society to society. Gender role is a focus of analysis in the [social sciences](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Social_sciences) and humanities.

A person's gender role comprises several elements that can be expressed through clothing, behavior, occupation, personal relationships, and other factors. These elements are not fixed and have changed through time (for example, women's trousers). Gender roles traditionally were often divided into distinct feminine and masculine gender roles, until especially the twentieth century when these roles diversified into many different acceptable male or female roles in modernized countries throughout the world. Thus, in many modern [societies](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Society) one's biological gender no longer determines the functions that an individual can perform, allowing greater freedom and opportunity for all people to achieve their individual potential and offer their talents and abilities to society for the benefit of all.

The flux in gender roles in modern societies plays against the biological governess of the woman as the bearer of the child and is one of the factors contributing to the low rates of birth in countries ranging from Germany to Japan. Within the [family](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Family) in modern societies there remains considerable flux, reflecting the continued confusion about such lifestyle issues as [marriage](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Marriage) partners, sexual [love](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Love), and the structure of families. Establishing stable, peaceful, and happy societies in the twenty first century will require new thinking about gender roles that accord priority to the family raising up balanced children benefiting from both the masculine and feminine strengths of their parents.

**Gender roles** have long been a staple of the "nature versus nurture" debate. Traditional theories usually assume that one's gender identity, and hence one's gender role, is a natural given. The idea that differences in gender roles originate in differences in [biology](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Biology) has found support in parts of the scientific community. Nineteenth century [anthropology](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Anthropology) sometimes used descriptions of the imagined life of [Paleolithic](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Paleolithic) [hunter-gatherer](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Hunter-gatherer) societies for evolutionary explanations of gender differences. For example, those accounts maintain that the need to take care of offspring may have limited the females' freedom to hunt and assume positions of power.

Due to the influence of (among others) [Simone de Beauvoir](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Simone_de_Beauvoir)'s [feminist](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Feminism) works and [Michel Foucault](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Michel_Foucault)'s reflections on [sexuality](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Human_sexuality), the idea that [gender](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Gender) was unrelated to sex gained ground

During the 1980s, especially in [sociology](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Sociology) and [cultural anthropology](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Cultural_anthropology). This view argues that a person could be born with male genitals but still be of feminine gender. In 1987, R.W. Connell did extensive research on whether there are any connections between biology and gender role and concluded that there were none.[[1]](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Gender_role#cite_note-0) Most scientists reject Connell's research because concrete evidence exists proving the effect of [hormones](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Hormone) on behavior. However, hormone levels vary, and disorders can cause

New technologies in the information and communications arena, especially the Internet, have been seen as ushering in a new age. There is a mainstream view that such technologies have only technical rather than social implications. The dramatic positive changes brought in by these information and communication technologies (ICTs), however, have not touched all of humanity. Existing power relations in society determine the enjoyment of benefits from ICTs; hence, these technologies are not gender neutral. The important questions are: who benefits from ICTs? Who is dictating the course of ICTs? Is it possible to harness ICTs to serve larger goals of equality and justice? Central to these is the issue of gender and women’s equal right to access, use and shape ICTs.

Many as tools for social transformation and gender equality have also used ICTs. For example:

* E-commerce initiatives that link women artisans directly to global markets through the Internet, as well as support their activities with market and production information, are being tried today in many places by NGOs.
* E-governance programmes have been initiated by some governments using ICTs to make government services more accessible to citizens by providing them electronically, in some cases with an explicit strategy to ensure these services reach women and others who face barriers to access.
* Health educators have used the radio to communicate information related to women’s sexual and reproductive health. Possibilities based on the Internet are also being explored.
* Information sharing and dialogues through email, online newsletters and List Serves between women from the North and South and among women in the South have also enabled collaboration and a convergence of effort on a global scale to push the agenda of gender equality.

Such activities have been most effective where they go beyond issues of access and infrastructure to consider the larger social context and power relations. Effectiveness and reach have also been enhanced by combining “old” technologies such as radio, with “new” technologies such as the Internet.

Far-reaching changes towards gender equality and women’s empowerment in the ICT arena are needed at every level – international, national and programme. Engendering ICTs is not merely about greater use of ICTs by women. It is about transforming the ICT system. This involves:

* Governments building ICT policies with strong gender perspectives and engaging with civil society and gender and ICT experts on these areas.
* International fora such as WSIS being used to challenge northern and corporate dominance of the ICT arena.
* Clear gender strategies being deployed through design, in the implementation and evaluation of ICT projects and programmes.
* Collecting information with sex-disaggregated statistics and gender indicators on access to, use of and content of ICTs, on employment and on education.
* Consideration of gender issues in: ICT/telecommunications policy; representation in telecommunications/ICT decision-making; and the differential impact of telecommunications/ICTs on men and women.

To make these happen, gender equality advocates need to storm the ICT arena in the untiring ways we have seen them engage in before.

Discussion of gender issues in connection with new ICTs derives in part from earlier analyses about women and technology, and women and media. During the 1990s, gender issues in communication and media focused on three broad issues: the equitable access of women and women’s organisations to the means of public expression; women’s access to professional careers and decision-making positions that have traditionally been male preserves; and the portrayals of women reinforcing or changing stereotypes. More recently, there has been a shift from an emphasis on women solely as objects of information to a focus on women as controllers of information – in other words not only changing the way women are talked about, but also enabling more women, particularly marginalised women, to create their own information and spread their own messages through the new ICTs (Burch and Leon 2000).

Reference to gender and new ICTs figured prominently for the first time in an Association for Progressive Communications (APC) document in 1995 (Burch and Leon 2000), which highlighted the need to broaden media and communication advocacy to factor in the Internet boom.

The governments of the industrial powers and transnational communications corporations are involved in negotiations relating to the future of the communications industry and among other aspects, to the international distribution of cyberspace (that is, the infrastructure and legislation that will determine the operation of computer networks.) Women’s and citizens’ groups do not have a voice in the negotiations which will influence national and international legislation and therefore their access to technological and information resources. It is therefore imperative to create mechanisms for them to formulate and defend their needs and interests.

Gender issues in the information society cover a wide spectrum: integrating gender perspectives into national ICT policies; raising awareness among gender advocates about the importance of national ICT plans for gender equality; promoting gender-responsive e-governance; effective use by women of ICTs and the need for relevant content; promoting women’s economic participation in the information economy; promoting democratic media, and combating the use of the Internet to perpetuate violence against women. Due to active advocacy, these issues have gained prominence in recent debates on ICTs and particularly in the run-up to WSIS (See Table 2 for some milestones).

Gender advocates in the ICT arena call for the realisation of gender equality within the ICT sector and for ICT diffusion that contributes to positive change in gender relations. Achieving this will require more than mainstreaming gender concerns into the ICT arena; it will require transformation of the ICT sector, not just the integration of women into that sector, untransformed (Marcelle 2000).

**CHALLENGES**

From the discussion in the preceding section, we could gather that access to ICT is typically divided along traditional lines of unequal distribution of benefits of development resulting in unequal access that has become known as the ‘digital divide’ or ‘digital exclusion’. The digital divide reflects both old socio-economic and political divisions that are exacerbated by the introduction of new ICT, as well as new divisions created due to the nature of the new ICT.

Women are at the deepest end of the digital divide has been the main message of gender advocates working in the field of ICT (http://www.apcwomen.org).

It is a hard truth that the majority of the poor are women, and they experience vulnerability and powerlessness to a much higher degree than men do. Equitable access to ICT technology and the autonomy to receive and produce the information relevant to their concerns and perspectives are therefore critical issues for women. Women's access to ICTs and control of them (or lack thereof) is dependent on many factors. Factors such as gender discrimination in jobs and education, social class, illiteracy and geographic location (urban or rural) influence women's access to ICT or any other sort of modern communication system. Let us see some of the main constraints that women have in terms of accessibility to ICTs.

The sophistication of any ICT infrastructure introduced into any environment becomes meaningless if women do not have the skills to operate the system and use it to their best advantage.

**CONSTRAINTS**

**Infrastructural Constraints:** The potential of ICTs for women is highly dependent upon their levels of technical skill and education, and is the principal requirement for accessing knowledge. The Internet, the fastest growing category of contemporary ICTs, linked to literacy. The Internet technology is foreign, with English being the predominant language, which becomes a handicap. Without basic literacy, there is no access to more and higher education, much less to ICTs. The challenge of illiteracy must overcome before women can benefit from ICTs. Women have less time to learn because of heavy domestic chores and other socio-cultural factors. Increased female enrolment at primary level will enhance female participation in higher education, which in turn enhances female participation in technological education. As a result, more women could be benefited from the new avenues created by ICTs and hence become empowered. Especially the government carries out, necessary interventions, and the NGOs can lead to

skill development and rising of education levels among women. It could be done through imparting of technical education in the use of ICT as a part of both formal and informal

**Economic Constraints:** The new technology comes at a financial cost, which hinders its penetration to the individual and sometimes even at the community level. The problem is even compounded with the fact that poverty and lack of economic power is borne more by women than men. They have little control over the household income and do not have the decision making power to invest in these technologies. Women are less likely than men to own radios and TV, or to access them when they want. Access to the Internet is through an Internet Service Provider, or through an Internet café, is expensive. Internet cafes charge for their services at market rates. High telephone charges inhibit users from going on-line. Further, there are associated physical and infrastructural requirements such as electricity, telephone lines, spare parts, and Internet gateways, etc.

**Social and Cultural Factors**: Many women continue to be intimidated by the Internet and its technology, finding it more of an area best left to the men. This stems from social conditioning and the fact that many young women are not encouraged to take up science subjects in school (especially in rural areas) or feel that it would be an area in which they could not excel. This is an aspect of gender socialization. Similarly, limited awareness of the full range of opportunities afforded by ICT (other than simple passive access to information, lack of understanding as to the ways in which ICT can be used actively to disseminate data, lobby, participate in and influence decision-making processes, coordinate community activities and collaborate with other NGOs at local and regional levels) are often cited as barriers facing women. Strategies

**Vocational Disadvantages:** There is a definite urban bias in ICT access and use by women.

Access to IT education and training is highly skewed towards urban-centred, English-speaking masses with a comparatively higher socio-economic status. Infrastructure is concentrated in urban areas. If choices of technologies were made that have an urban bias and high cost, few women would have access. Internet connectivity is available only within urban areas while the majority of women reside in rural areas. Simply by being in the majority in rural areas, women have a small chance of accessing new technologies. Household Level Factors

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