

Home > Opinion

Empowering small town entrepreneurs can smoothen India’s startup journey

Their entrepreneurial goals and local dynamics are seldom taken into account

By Viiveck Verma | 5 Apr 2023 10:37 PM IST



Small town entrepreneurs are dedicated business persons who come up with pragmatic, viable and cost-effective approaches for sustainable growth, in response to major problems and find themselves deprived of attention and investor support. This is a problem that needs to be countered and taken care of

The narrative of Indian entrepreneurship is no longer the story of select urban centres as since innovators have sprung up from several locations across the country. Rural and small town entrepreneurs have crafted remarkable success stories and there has been a demand for supporting the bright minds and bolstering their efforts. However, entrepreneurs from villages and small towns are often grouped together in all such assessments and it is time we pay heed to the specific needs and circumstances of each category. With substantial literature dedicated to the rural areas in public consciousness, it is crucial that we look at the particularities of entrepreneurship in small towns, areas which can neither be deemed rural nor can be considered metropolises.

Also Read - [Identifying growth levers, consolidating them crucial for the Indian economy](#)

What does it mean to be an entrepreneur in a small town? Seeking answers to this question can be the bedrock of empowerment efforts dedicated to invigorating the journey of this exceptional tribe.

Small towns usually face the difficulty of being placed intermediately in the urbanisation trajectory. While there are specific programmes that address rural constituencies, small towns end up dealing with the peril of an indeterminate classification and this arguably has led to some oversights.


Also Read - [India remains world economy’s beacon of hope](#)

At the TiE Global Summit, (as mentioned in these columns), entrepreneurs lamented that small town startups are ignored and face investor bias, with some claiming that VCs only look for IIT and IIM degrees and that there is a general disconnect between startups and investors and non-tech companies bear the brunt.

Alas, there is little understanding of the entrepreneurial goals and dynamics of people in small towns.


Also Read - [Jhum cultivation maintains ecological balance, endorses UN body FAO while silencing critics](#)

Interestingly, an article in Financial Express notes, “Startups in metros are mostly focussed on urban woes like last-mile connectivity, housing shortage, sewerage problems and vehicular pollution, whereas startups in small towns address real problems. Be it healthcare or education, they are looking to solve universal problems that concern larger segments of the population. [...] Since they have a first-hand understanding of the problem they aim to solve, entrepreneurs from non-metros tend to take a hands-on approach to come up with nifty, viable ideas that resonate specifically to the local market. This is something a startup founder from Bengaluru, Delhi, or Mumbai wouldn’t necessarily comprehend. [...] With limited access to resources, small-town entrepreneurs look for the most cost-effective way to build and market their products. Moreover, the setting up and operational costs of a business in tier-II and tier-III cities, and rural India are much lower than in metropolitans.”



Compare Prices & Subscriptions


Advantages of a TeamViewer License at a Glance. Choose the Best Plan and get Started.

 TeamViewer

Shop Now

Also Read - [Steel industry to be major gainer in election year](#)

When we juxtapose these realities, the situation which can be discerned is that small town entrepreneurs are dedicated business persons who come up with pragmatic, viable and cost-effective approaches for sustainable growth, in response to major problems and find themselves deprived of attention and investor support. This is a problem that needs to be countered and taken care of.



Compare Prices & Subscriptions

Advantages of a TeamViewer License at a Glance. Choose the Best Plan and get Started.

Shop Now

Several steps are required in this direction. First of all, there needs to be adequate research, production of relevant literature and enough attention directed to entrepreneurial specificities in small towns. It is not enough to merely celebrate success stories from small towns but it is in understanding the challenges and the particular situations such efforts encounter. From scaling and incubation to concerns of inclusivity, small town startups and endeavours deserve the spotlight, the assessments and the support that their urban counterparts garner. Startup incubation has to be intensified with a focus on the particular needs that every small town incubator is in. Investor mindsets have to be changed through greater persuasion by small town actors in the business world alongside a demand from the governments to provide greater perks for investing in such towns. All in all, a change in discourse, substantial emphasis and the winning of investor support can elevate the small town entrepreneurial narrative to one that signals the story of boundless success.

The next chapter in India’s startup journey has to be crafted with attention to detail and going beyond the urban-rural divide in order to look closely at the struggles of entrepreneurs.

Small town entrepreneurs, as the tremendous successes of numerous startups demonstrate, are some of the brightest people in the country. They can play a significant role in achieving spectacular transformations. They certainly deserve the emphasis they deserve and India’s entrepreneurial universe has to take them onboard in the most empowering of ways to accomplish more impactful outcomes.

(The author is Founder & CEO Upsurge Global and Adjunct Professor and Advisor EThames College)