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Issue

Brief

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Design Thinking for Increasing Women Driven Cabs in Delhi

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Cite this Article as *Diwan, N. (2024). Design Thinking for Increasing Women-Driven Cabs in Delhi [online]. Available at: <https://kautilya.org.in/issue-brief/design-thinking-for-increasing-women-driven-cabs-in-delhi>*

Design Thinking for Increasing Women-Driven Cabs in Delhi

Abstract:

When women enter the public space it is not without anxiety. The threat of violence against women in the public space acts as Panopticon, that keeps them from integrating themselves in, and accessing the public space fully. With the Women Cab Driver Scheme, a twofold objective can be achieved. First, it can directly bring women into the workforce by providing them employment. Second, it makes the presence of women in the public space more palpable and consequently eases more women's movements in the public space. Hence, the scheme aims to aid women's safety and movement, with a prototype in Delhi that is scalable to other cities. However, the present scheme proposed by the Delhi government faces challenges such as digital exclusion, lack of awareness, and insufficient support systems. This policy brief proposes an action-oriented approach to revitalise the scheme, with a prototype scalable to other cities.

Keywords: *Female Labour Force Participation, Women, Public Space, Mobility, Women Cab Drivers*

Introduction:

The urban labour force participation of women is 23.3% according to the Directorate General of Employment (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2023). Examination of research, literature, conversations and experience reveal how women's access and occupation of public spaces continues to remain a site of struggle. According to a UN Women supported survey, 95% of girls in Delhi feel unsafe in public spaces. (Gaynair, 2013) The profession of cab driving is entrenched in the occupation of public space. Many public spaces, including roads and parking lots, are dominated by men and male activities, creating a hostile environment for women (Phadke, 2013). This male capture of space extends to professions like driving, which are seen as male domains. Women entering these spaces face resistance and harassment from men. In their book, *Why Loiter?* – Phadke, Khan and Ranade (2011) discuss women's access to public space in the city of Mumbai. They chart the ways in which denying women's movement beyond the private domain is exercised by the creation and perpetuation of social norms and orders. Even though the book is limited to the experiences in the city of Mumbai yet they capture the general anxiety of women in occupying public space, as they write (Phadke, Khan & Ranade, 2011, pg. 11)

Discussing this with other women, I realise that almost without being aware of it, every woman reflects deeply about how to access public space. Our safety is

something that at a visceral level none of us take for granted but strangely enough, this need to plot, plan and strategise has come to assume the proportions of a taken-for-granted life-world for all of us.

This need to “plot, plan and strategise” their movement and mobility is a major impediment in women’s participation beyond the domestic lives- education, labour force participation, or accessing the public space for leisure. (Kumar, 2014) This is one of the reasons for the low participation of women in the field of cab driving amongst others discussed ahead. However, the ‘safety’ of other women, and safe modes of mobility act as gateways to increase women’s presence in the public sphere. Through this policy brief, a plan is proposed to increase women’s participation in the profession of cab driving taking into consideration Delhi Government Scheme of 2022 for the same.

Literature Review:

The threat of violence against women is used as a disciplining tool to keep women confined to their ‘legitimate’ space, that is the private sphere (Viswanath & Mehrotra, 2007). The disciplining of women’s use of public space through social stigma and threat of violence acts as a Panopticon (Foucault, 1975), making women self-police their mobility and hesitate to enter male-dominated professions like driving. Women's fear of sexual harassment and violence in public spaces, especially at night, constrains their mobility and access to these spaces (Phadke et al., 2011). This fear extends to professions like cab driving that involve working late hours and interacting with strangers, deterring women from entering these fields.

Nevertheless, women's involvement in the public space as drivers, for instance, may function as an effective means to minimize the social norms of gender-based violence and harassment (Sur, 2014). This, in turn, contributes to weakening the stereotype which works under the perception that the public arena belongs exclusively to men. Moreover, having more female drivers acts as an agent of change in the stereotype that driving is a male dominated occupation. It helps normalise the presence of women in the field, consequently motivating more women to drive as a career plan (Gupta, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

Adding to the discussion above, women have been excluded from the public space, and are constantly disciplined to fear it. This has created an anxiety in women from fully accessing the public space, and with it, the various opportunities it brings about such as employment. The larger issues around the scheme are discussed in detail using empathy and qualitative content analysis. The potential challenges women may face once they take up cab driving as a profession are analysed in addition to existing challenges women face that prevent them from entering the profession. Identifying these challenges equips us to present potential, scalable solutions that could help make the scheme successful.

Understanding

Policy/Regulation Map:

The Delhi Women Cab Driver Scheme was introduced to address the lack of women's participation in the public transportation sector and to improve their economic status by the former LG of Delhi, VK Saxena. (The Indian Express, 2022) It is a government initiative introduced by the Delhi Transport Department to promote women's employment in the public transportation sector. The scheme covered 50% of the cost of driving training for women who want to work as professional cab drivers, with the remaining 50% to be covered by cab aggregators or fleet owners. (The Times of India, 2022) This scheme needs a revamp on the account of its limited visibility, which would in turn impact its performance. The then Transport Minister, Kailash Gehlot had informed the notices for the scheme will be issued soon (The Indian Express, 2022), however, no such notice can be found on the Delhi Government's website, this either points to an offline approach by the government or the inactivity of the Scheme. Further, Delhi Motor Vehicle Aggregator and Delivery Service Provider Scheme, 2023 which aims to promote the adoption of electric vehicles also includes provisions to encourage women's participation in the transportation sector. The policy brings women drivers under the Protection of Women from Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act, addressing a key concern for women in the gig economy.

Pain Point Mapping:

1. Potential safety concerns and harassment faced by women cab drivers (SOS Emergency button in cab often reported to not work). (Singh, 2024)
2. Financial constraints for women to afford driving training
3. Lack of awareness about the scheme and its benefits
4. Digital divide and exclusion in the online application process

5. Lack of women-friendly infrastructure (e.g., restrooms, changing facilities, creches for mothers)
6. Social stigma and gender stereotypes

6 W/H's Map:

What? – The lack of women cab drivers in Delhi, a scheme to promote and financially support women in driving training to become professional cab drivers.

Who? – Women seeking employment, passengers, policymakers, cab aggregators

Why? – Economic empowerment, safety, breaking gender stereotypes

Where? – Delhi, with potential to scale to other cities

When? – The problem is ongoing and requires immediate action, the scheme was launched on July 18, 2022

How? – Through targeted policies, skill development, and entrepreneurship support- by covering 50% of the driving training cost and collaborating with cab aggregators and fleet owners

Empathy Map/AEIOU

Activities:

Applying for the scheme to become a cab driver
 Attending driving training and skill development programs
 Driving cabs to transport passengers
 Ensuring passenger safety and comfort

Environments:

Cab interiors where women drivers spend most of their working hours
 Roads and traffic conditions in Delhi, often dominated by men and male activities
 Parking areas and cab stands, which may be hostile environments for women
 Training centers and facilities for skill development
 Government offices and transport department for scheme registration and support

Interactions:

Communicating with passengers to provide a safe and comfortable ride
 Interacting with cab aggregators and fleet owners for employment opportunities
 Engaging with trainers and instructors during skill development programs
 Collaborating with other women cab drivers for support and networking
 Interacting with government officials for scheme-related queries and assistance

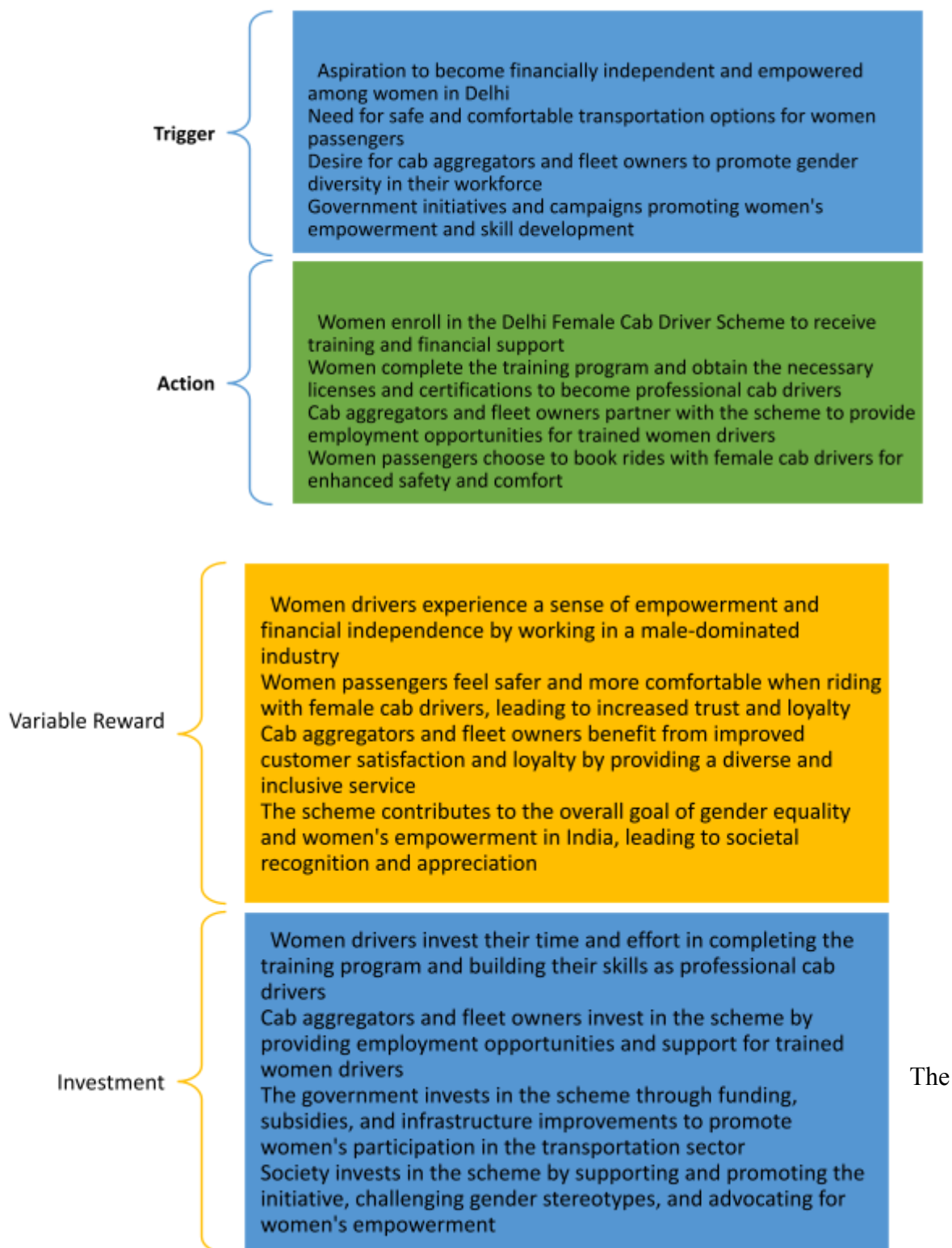
Objects:

Cabs equipped with safety features (e.g., panic buttons, GPS tracking)
 Mobile phones and apps for booking and navigating rides
 Licenses and documentation required for professional cab driving
 Training materials and resources for skill development
 Personal protective equipment (e.g., masks, gloves) for health and safety

Users:

Women in Delhi who aspire to become professional cab drivers
 Women passengers who prefer female cab drivers for safety and comfort
 Cab aggregators and fleet owners who employ women drivers
 Government officials and policymakers involved in the scheme's implementation
 Trainers and instructors providing skill development programs for women drivers
 Society at large, as the scheme challenges gender-based occupational segregation and promotes women's access to public spaces

Hook Canvas:



The

paper does not include primary research hence, persona mapping, group mapping and persona twins cannot be included in this study.

Findings:

Problem Statement:

The Women Cab Driver Scheme, launched in 2022 to empower women and ensure safety for female passengers, has not achieved its desired impact due to digital exclusion, which refers to the inequality in access to digital sphere in “work, study and leisure” (Tomczyńska, 2017), this leads to a lack of awareness among the target beneficiaries. In addition, the scene has seemed to fade away since its induction in 2022. To revitalize the scheme and make it more accessible, it is essential to address the information asymmetry and provide both online and offline application processes while exploring innovative solutions to attract and support women cab drivers.

Ideate:

Story Map/Flow Chart for Multiple Solutions:

Run intensive information campaigns to educate women, especially women living in low-income groups and under digital exclusion, about the scheme.

a. Team up with local NGOs, enrol women's groups and leverage community leaders to communicate through workshops, door-to-door campaigns, and community events.

b. Traditional media resources, like radio and newspapers, are another avenue to use in order to have a wider impact.

Simplify the application for the admissions process and provide both online and offline services that address the needs of women who have different levels of digital literacy.

a. Establish consultation desks at community centres, government offices and IDTR to meet women for help in filling the application forms and get guidance about the scheme.

b. Join hands with the common service centres (CSCs) to aid the last mile process or provide support online for applicants.

Provide intensive training programs with a wider range of knowledge of, for example soft skills and entrepreneurship, which will help the graduates to start their own business.

a. Partner with IDTR and others in training centers to develop complete-curriculum model with capability to empower women drivers and build essential skills that they need in this industry.

b. The mentorship and networking strategize is mandatory to assist the women moving through the labor market and to devise support system framework.

Design programs that offer financial rewards and support for female trainees to make them join and continue in the profession.

a. Provide loans or grants including with the interest to women at a discount price that may enable them to acquire a vehicle thus lessening the financial burden of entering the industry.

b. The insurance sector should be scaling up specifically designed for female drivers; offering life, health, and vehicle insurances.

c. Establish a specific helpline together with a grievance redressal mechanism for the women drivers who have worries and are facing problems.

Create collaborations with the cab aggregators, car-fleet owners, and other interested parties to ensure there is a conducive environment for women drivers.

a. By providing tax incentives, subsidies, or recognition programs to cab aggregator and fleet owners for employing and supporting women drivers, it will ensure that they provide such services.

b. Encourage the adoption of women-friendly policies and practices, such as flexible working hours, parental leave, and safe working conditions.

c. Promote the inclusion of women drivers in decision-making processes and leadership roles within the industry.

Prototype:

Policy Intervention – Process Flow:

1. With the help of a needs assessment survey we can assess the barriers and challenges the women face while accessing the scheme and when joining it into the profession.
2. Based on the surveys done, create and launch an effective campaign that targets women, especially those in low income and digitally poor, through the campaign.
3. Make the application process simple, and establish the help desks and offline application centres in joint ventures with Common Services Centres (CSCs) and community organizations.
4. Work together with Institute of Driving and Traffic Research (IDTR) and other training providers to redesign the curriculum taking into account the importance of soft skills and entrepreneurship for job market participants.
5. Integration of financial incentives and support programs, for example subsidized loans, grants, and insurance schemes. This will influence women to join and remain in the field.
6. Partner with cab service aggregators, fleet owners, and others to offer career opportunities to women drivers and also a nurturing ecosystem.
7. Monitor and assess the impact of the initiatives by various feedback and data collection methods, adjusting it based on the results.

NABC Approach:

Need: Women Cab Driver Scheme needs to be revamped to emancipate women and build a safety system for female passengers.

Approach: Adopt a multi-faceted approach which revolves around tackling digital exclusion, availing adequate skills training, harnessing financial incentives and cultivating togetherness with stakeholders.

Benefits: The ability of women to enter the field, a raised level of safety for female travelers, economic independence of women, an environment that is gender-sensitive and female-friendly, are all requirements needed for a mass transportation system which is supportive of women.

Competition: Traditional male-dominated transport industry, absence of consciousness and help for female drivers, as well as restriction of the objectives due to digital exclusion.

Test:

To test the effectiveness of the proposed interventions, the following steps can be taken:

- a) Conduct pilot projects at the government driving centres located at Burari, Loni and Sarai Kale Khan.
- b) Incorporate an awareness campaign aimed at attracting women to the training program.
- c) Simplify the enrolment process and offer guidance to women throughout the process to make the enrolment smooth and seamless.
- d) Guide women drivers who are trained towards the job placements by partnering with fleet owners and aggregators.

Monitor and evaluate the impact of the pilot project through various methods:

- a) Conduct surveys of enrolled women to evaluate their level of satisfaction with training courses, stipend, and employment placement assistance.
- b) Organize focus group discussions among the women drivers so that we can receive diverse qualitative perceptions on their experiences, challenges and suggestions on how to improve.
- c) Interview fleet owners and aggregators to assess their overall performance with the trained women drivers and where their support and collaboration are needed.
- d) Collect feedback from area women who have used services of the women drivers to evaluate how safe they feel and overall experience driving with our women drivers.

Collect and analyze data on various metrics to measure the scheme's effectiveness:

- a) Women attending the training program at different driving centres will be quantified.
- b) Rate of completion as well as number of women who achieve their professional driving license among the outcomes of the skills training program.

- c) Job placement of trained drivers with partnered fleet owners and aggregators.
- d) Education, income levels, and a woman's perception about the financial viability in this profession are the attributes that make them suitable candidates as taxi drivers.

Scale up the interventions to other areas of Delhi and continuously monitor and evaluate the impact:

- a) Develop more driving facilities in the city from the collected data and achievements during the scheme.
- b) Build an effective monitoring and evaluation system to observe how diverse circumstances are shaping the scheme.
- c) Undertake regular surveys, focus group conversations, and interviews with the beneficiaries and stakeholders so as to get their feedback and ideas on where more improvements should come in.
- d) Analyse the data collected to ascertain the scheme's feasibility in ensuring power to women drivers, protecting women passengers, and attaining a more inclusive transport sector.
- e) Provide the findings and insights to the policymakers, business partners, and community to give them a sense of your initiative's importance and an initiative of the same kind in other cities.

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