

Research Paper :

Problems of women entrepreneurs running boutiques in Punjab

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ABSTRACT

Women have adopted boutiques as an entrepreneurial activity to supplement their family income or as a means to channelize their creativity. However, all the entrepreneurs have their share of problems which hinder successful functioning of a business unit. The investigation was conducted to study the problems of women entrepreneurs running boutiques in Punjab. Information regarding this was collected from 200 boutiques operating from shops as well as from houses in various cities of Punjab. An interview schedule was prepared to collect the relevant information regarding various problems related to the availability of raw material, finance, marketing, production, managerial, personal and problems related to workers. The extent of problems such as expensive raw material, lack of money for further investment and price fluctuations was significantly greater in boutiques running from shops as compared to boutiques running from houses. On the other hand, the extent of problems such as adverse effects on health and no help in household work was significantly greater in boutiques running from houses as compared to their counterparts.

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In India, boutiques have mushroomed in the last few years not only in every nook and corner, but have established in big shopping complexes as well. A large number of women entrepreneurs feel that there is a good opportunity to make money and to provide employment in this sphere. Boutiques offer a wide range of fashion apparels exclusively designed for specific customer segment and have a job type production system (Pahwa, 1995). Boutiques may be located in residential or commercial areas and its success depends on how accurately target market is identified. Every business comes across various hardships related to employees, raw material, finance, personal, marketing and managerial problems. Hence, the study was planned to study the problems of women entrepreneurs running boutiques in Punjab.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted on 200 respondents running boutiques from houses as well as from shops in four cities of Punjab namely, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Amritsar and Patiala. The respondents were selected purposively by using snow ball sampling technique from selected cities of Punjab. The relevant information regarding the problems was collected from the boutique owners by an interview schedule. To study the extent of problems, the data were tabulated by three score method as, Frequently = 2, Sometimes = 1, Never = 0. The data obtained were tabulated and analyzed by using frequencies, percentages,

means and t-test.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The problems related to raw material, finance, workers, personal, production and managerial aspects faced by the women entrepreneurs running boutiques are presented in Table 1.

Problems related to raw material:

From the average mean scores worked out for various problems (Table 1), it was found that lack of new design was the most frequently faced problem (1.25) followed by expansive (0.99), variation in quality of raw material (0.41), inferior quality (0.32) and not easily available (0.14) in boutiques operating from shops. The boutiques operating from houses reported that the problems of lack of new designs (0.91), expansive (0.34), not easily available (0.17) and inferior quality (0.15).

Financial problems:

In case of boutique operating from shops, lack of money for further investment was found to be the biggest financial problem (1.42), followed by price fluctuations (0.90), less profit (0.73), small advertising budget (0.56), delayed payments (0.50) and irregular income (0.18). On the other hand, the problems faced by boutiques operating from houses were small advertising budget (0.65), delayed payments (0.61), less profit (0.54), irregular income (0.44), lack of money (0.36) for further investment and price

Table 1 : Distribution of respondents according to problems faced by them related to boutique enterprise

Problems	Boutiques operating from shops (100) (Mean)	Boutiques operating from houses (100) (Mean)	t-value
Problems related to raw materials			
Expensive	0.99	0.34	2.43**
Inadequate supply	0.20	0.05	0.96 ^{NS}
Not easily available	0.14	0.17	0.32 ^{NS}
Inferior quality	0.32	0.15	0.84 ^{NS}
Variation in quantity of raw material	0.41	0.12	1.39 ^{NS}
Lack of new designs	1.25	0.91	1.61 ^{NS}
Financial problems			
Lack of money for further investment	1.42	0.36	5.11***
Less profit	0.73	0.54	1.06 ^{NS}
Irregular income	0.18	0.44	1.36 ^{NS}
Delayed payments	0.50	0.61	0.76 ^{NS}
Price fluctuations	0.90	0.10	6.07***
Small advertising budget	0.56	0.65	0.98 ^{NS}
Marketing problems			
Fast changing trends in materials	0.66	0.82	1.16 ^{NS}
Fast changing trends in fashion/design	0.96	0.88	0.73 ^{NS}
In decent behaviour of customers	0.38	0.57	1.24 ^{NS}
Competition with other enterprises	0.88	1.14	1.39 ^{NS}
Problems related to workers			
Non-availability of skilled workers	0.44	0.95	1.81 ^{NS}
Workers run away frequently	0.31	0.63	1.34 ^{NS}
Irregularity of time	0.97	0.79	0.99 ^{NS}
Higher wages demanded by the workers	0.72	1.18	1.44 ^{NS}
Misbehaviour of workers	0.24	0.42	1.06 ^{NS}
Mood fluctuations	0.87	1.08	0.84 ^{NS}
Personal Problems			
Hectic schedule	1.51	1.70	0.90 ^{NS}
Mentally challenging work	1.69	1.91	1.64 ^{NS}
Affecting the general health	0.94	1.47	2.06**
Dissatisfaction from work	0.37	0.34	0.29 ^{NS}
Getting no help in household work	0.31	0.60	1.98**
Disturbance due to phone calls out of business hours	0.57	0.39	1.84 ^{NS}
Production problems			
Power failure	2.00	2.00	-
Maintenance problems in running of machinery	0.18	0.19	0.86 ^{NS}
Lack of infrastructure	0.72	0.70	0.08 ^{NS}
Managerial problems			
Lack of business background	0.34	0.19	0.81 ^{NS}
Lack of professionalism	0.12	0.17	0.54 ^{NS}
Lack of skill	0.10	0.28	1.07 ^{NS}
Lack of assistance from other sources	0.17	0.28	1.19 ^{NS}
No instinct to do independent business	0.04	0.03	0.08 ^{NS}
Staff resists obeying orders	0.16	0.19	0.21 ^{NS}

*, ** and *** indicate significance of values at P=0.1, 0.05 and 0.01, respectively

NS – Non significant

fluctuations (0.10).

Marketing problems:

A majority of women operating boutiques from shops reported fast changing trends in fashion (0.96), competition with other enterprises (0.88), fast changing trends in materials (0.66) and indecent behaviour of the customers (0.38) were the marketing problems faced by them. In the other category of boutiques, the marketing problems came out to be competition with other enterprises (1.14), fast changing trend in materials (0.82) and indecent behavior of customers (0.57). Katoch (2009) also found the similar problems faced by the boutique owners as well as the florists in her study.

Problems related to workers:

It was observed that irregularity of time and mood fluctuations were the major problems related to workers faced by majority of the respondents operating boutiques from shops with an average mean scores of 0.97 and 0.87, respectively. The problems next in order were higher wages demanded (0.72), non-availability of skilled workers (0.44), workers run away frequently (0.31) and misbehaviour of workers (0.24). The other category of women who were operating boutiques from houses faced the problems from their workers in the order *viz.*, higher wages demand (1.18), mood fluctuations (1.08), non-availability of the skilled workers (0.95), irregularity of time (0.79), workers run away frequently (0.63) and misbehaviour of workers (0.42).

Personal problems:

Most of the respondents operating boutiques from shops felt that it was a mentally challenging work (1.69) followed by hectic schedule (1.51). Affecting the general health, disturbance due to phone calls out of business hours, dissatisfaction from work and getting no help in household work came out to be the next problems with mean scores of 0.94, 0.57, 0.37 and 0.31, respectively. The women running boutiques from homes reported that it was affecting their general health (1.47) and no help in household work (0.60) as the main problems. Most of the respondents operating boutiques felt that it was a mentally challenging work and they had to follow a hectic schedule. The findings of Kumari (2004) are also in line with the present findings.

Production problems:

All the women faced the problem of power failure as the main production problem as indicated by the mean score *i.e.* 2.0 and lack of infrastructure (0.72).

Managerial problems:

Lack of business background, lack of assistance from other sources, staff resists obeying orders, lack of professionalism and lack of skill were the managerial problems faced by the women operating boutiques from shops. The mean scores for these problems ranged from 0.34, 0.17, 0.16, 0.12 and 0.10, respectively. The order of these problems in case of women running boutiques from homes was lack of skill and lack of assistance from other sources (0.28), lack of business background, staff resists orders (0.19) and lack of professionalism (0.17).

Hence, it can be concluded that the extent of problems such as expensive raw material, lack of money for further investment and price fluctuations were significantly greater in boutiques running from shops as compared to boutiques running from houses. On the other hand, the extent of problems such as adverse effects on health and no help in household work was significantly greater in boutiques running from houses as compared to their counterparts.

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