

Package of marketing strategies for improving marketing problems of women entrepreneurs

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Entrepreneurship is a more suitable profession for women than regular employment in public and private sectors since they have to fulfil dual roles. Enterprises started by women are no longer confined to conventional fields. The present study was undertaken to package of marketing strategies for improving marketing problems and to develop a guidelines for improving marketing strategies. The total sample for the study comprised of 240 women entrepreneurs from three industrially advanced cities of Punjab namely; Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Amritsar. The selected enterprises were; beauty parlours, boutiques, food-processing units, training schools and direct marketing. Data were collected through personal interview method. The results showed that for improving product strategies majority of the respondents fully agreed that customers satisfaction should be checked. All the respondents fully agreed to adopt the “local communication facilities for attracting more customers” as a major promotional strategy, followed by “product should be attractively packed” and “sale in exhibitions and fairs on regular basis”. In pricing strategies, women entrepreneurs in all the enterprises adopted “discounts as a major pricing strategy”. For the market information, “new markets should be explored” as well as “entrepreneurship education and training should be made compulsory” and “awareness of government policies and regulations” were the major strategies given to the women entrepreneurs.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial activities, Involvement

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Women have been regarded as the nuclei of a nation and the builder and molder of its destiny. Women are trying their level best to attain quality of opportunity in various ways which are different over the time and among societies. In India, economic development has brought about changes in women's lives in many ways, and one major change is the introduction of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is a more suitable profession for women than regular employment in public and private sectors since they have to fulfil dual roles. In addition, entrepreneurship also changes the position of women from being job-seekers to job givers (Tapuriah, 1988). The role of women as entrepreneurs helps industrial development, promotes economic development and helps to solve the problem of unemployment and poverty. Today, women entrepreneurs represent a group of women who have broken away from the

beaten track and are exploring new avenues of economic participation. Among the reasons for women to run organised enterprises are their skill and knowledge, their talents and abilities in business and a compelling desire of wanting to do something positive. During the planning era, a number of institutions / agencies were set up to render assistance to women entrepreneurs by giving training, providing financial assistance and marketing assistance.

In spite of all these facilities and women being equally qualified as men to succeed as entrepreneurs, they still face a number of problems. The main problems faced by Indian women entrepreneurs are; marketing of products, financial constraints, high price of raw material, managerial constraints, technical difficulties, family affairs, child and husband care, lack of entrepreneurial initiative, low level of favourable family background, attitude of society towards women, procedures

of bank loans and last but not the least; lack of awareness of government policies and regulations. But, to overcome these problems, today women are also adopting different marketing strategies. Marketing strategies play a dominant role in any type of enterprise. Marketing strategies constitute the marketing divisions and programmes which have an effect on business operations of the enterprises. Thus, keeping the above facts in view, the present investigation was designed with the following specific objective to develop a package for improving marketing strategies of women entrepreneurs.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

Locale of the study :

The present study was conducted in three cities of Punjab namely; Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Amritsar. These three industrially advanced cities were selected purposively, as these cities have more than 35 per cent of the total registered entrepreneurial units in Punjab and maximum number of entrepreneurs are there in these cities due to heavy industrialization (Behl, 1996).

Selection of enterprises :

A pilot survey was done to identify the different enterprises being run by women. Amongst the different identified enterprises, those enterprises were selected in which women's participation was maximum. Thus, the selected enterprises were; beauty parlours (B.P.), boutiques(B.), food processing units (F.P.U.), training schools(T.S.) and direct marketing units (D.B.U.). In direct marketing units mainly three companies namely. Avon, Amway and Tupperware were selected.

Selection of sample :

Personal contact method was used. Out of the total list 80 respondents were randomly selected from each city which comprised of 16 entrepreneurs from each city from each of the selected enterprises, thus, making a total sample of 240 respondents.

Construction of research instruments :

An interview schedule was prepared for data collection. Suggestions of the respondents were sought for improvements in marketing strategies. The suggestions were studied under five subheads namely; product strategies, pricing strategies, promotional strategies, market information and general information. These were studied on a five point scale.

Collection of data :

The data were obtained through direct interview method.

Statistical analysis :

Data thus, collected were tabulated for precise and

systematic analysis. Statistical tools *viz.*, simple percentages and weighted scores were worked out.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the present study as well as relevant discussions have been presented under following sub heads:

Various marketing strategies :

A number of women are going in for different type of enterprises and are investing lot of money, time and other resources but not earning very huge profits. Keeping that in mind with an objective to improve their marketing, a package of marketing strategies was developed and evaluated on the basis of responses from selected respondents. Today, women are adopting different marketing strategies to obtain their objectives. Many things are involved like pricing, products, promotion, services, events, information and ideas. It is necessary to develop and implement, appropriate marketing strategies for good business. It will help entrepreneurs and producers in keeping pace with the changing trends in the market and develop strategies to cater and distribute goods produced locally by entrepreneurs. Thus, an attempt has been made in this section to study some aspects of marketing strategies of the enterprises.

Product strategy :

It is clearly seen from Table 1 that the most important strategy adopted and suggested by the respondents for making improvement related to the products was "customer satisfaction should be checked" which may be because they give importance to customer satisfaction. Further, respondents from boutiques, food processing units and training schools fully agreed that "women entrepreneur should avail special government subsidies and concessions", whereas respondents from direct marketing and beauty parlours gave it a wt. score of 5.00 each. This may be because they think that they do not need any kind of concessions and subsidies as they have to go for a long procedures to avail this kind of subsidies specially which are given by government. The respondents from beauty parlours, boutiques and training schools fully agreed that "marketing should be done in near by areas". So that they can reduce their expenses on transportation etc. Whereas, women entrepreneurs from food processing units and direct marketing did not fully agree with the statement. The reason might be that they sell their products not only in nearby areas but also in near by cities and other parts of the state. Thus, they don't think that the marketing should be done only in nearby areas, but to create demand, marketing should also be done in far away areas.

Further, glance at Table 1 shows that entrepreneurs involved in beauty parlours, boutiques and training schools did not fully agree that "training related to export

Table 1 : Weighted scores for various marketing strategies related to the product

Product strategies	B.P. (n=48)	B. (n=48)	F.P.U. (n=48)	T.S. (n=48)	D.M. (n=48)	Total (n= 240)
Customer satisfaction should be checked.	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Women entrepreneur should avail special government subsidies and concessions.	5.00	4.66	4.66	5.00	5.00	4.89
Labelling should include all information related to the product.	5.00	5.00	4.76	5.00	4.60	4.87
Marketing should be done in nearby areas.	4.00	4.66	4.90	4.89	4.90	4.66
Branding and packaging should be given attention.	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.40	5.00	4.76
The products should have some brand / quality mark.	3.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	3.80
Marks of international level should be given to quality products.	2.50	2.00	5.00	3.00	3.00	3.10
Training related to export management of selected products.	2.00	2.00	3.50	3.00	4.50	3.00

management” is important which may be because they think that they don’t need such training as their products can not be exported. It may be further observed that respondents from boutiques stated that “marks of international level should be given to quality products” and “packing should be given attention” which may be because they think that on clothes there is no need of any international marks and secondly, in boutiques they do not need to pack the clothes attractively. Similarly, respondents from boutiques gave a lower score to the suggestion “labeling should have information” which may be because of the reason that their product does not need much information except washing instructions.

Thus, it can be concluded that most of the women entrepreneurs fully agreed with all the suggestions and were willing to adopt the various product strategies.

Pricing strategy :

Price affects the income of the entrepreneurs. To fix an optimum price is a difficult task. If the price is set too high, it may put a seller out of the market, on the other hand too low price, may not even cover costs and the earnings and many times the product will be considered of low quality. Therefore, a sound pricing strategy must be adopted by the entrepreneurs

to ensure satisfactory profits.

The, details of Table 2 show that most of the women fully agreed to adopt “discounts as a strategy”, whereas, in beauty parlours and boutiques few of the respondents did not fully agree because they think that the product should be sold at fixed price, and moreover by giving discounts their profit margin may go down. Similarly, all the women entrepreneurs except direct marketing fully agreed with the statement that “there should be easy availability of finance at lower interest rates for women entrepreneurs”, so that they can make aware of special schemes for encouraging entrepreneurship. It is also seen from Table 2 that women involved in beauty parlours, boutiques, food processing units and training schools fully agree to the statement that “price should be always determined according to demand and supply”. This may be because some times demand is more but supply is less so they should fix the price accordingly so that they can gain profits and can avoid losses. Further, analysis shows that women involved in beauty parlours, food processing units and direct marketing stated that “a fixed price should be labeled on the product to discourage bargaining. In case of training schools, majority of the women somewhat agreed and few of them disagreed with the statement which

Table 2 : Weighted scores for the marketing strategies related to pricing of the product

Pricing strategies	B.P. (n=48)	B. (n=48)	F.P.U. (n=48)	T.S. (n=48)	D.M. (n=48)	Total (n= 240)
Discounts as a strategy.	4.83	4.83	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.93
Easy availability of finance at lower interest rates for women entrepreneurs.	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	3.49	4.69
Price should be always determined according to demand and supply.	4.90	4.98	5.00	5.00	3.49	4.67
A fixed price should be labeled on the product to discourage bargaining.	5.00	4.32	5.00	3.49	5.00	4.56
Competitive prices should be fixed after market analysis.	4.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	4.00
Price should be fixed according to the quality of the product.	3.00	3.00	3.32	3.32	3.00	3.12

may be because their product can not have fixed price because of variation in every individual's skills. The table further shows that women entrepreneurs in all the enterprises fully agree to the suggestion "competitive price should be fixed after market analysis" and the reason may be that the product can have good quality at competitive price as well as it can have more demand than other products.

Thus, it can be concluded after viewing the overall analysis of the table that majority of the women entrepreneurs from all the categories were willing to adopt the various pricing strategies so that they can have less competition on the basis of prices of the product.

Promotional strategy :

Promotional strategy is usually defined as a plan of action designed to communicate with the target market through personal and impersonal media. Keeping this in mind, some suggestions and strategies have been worked out for the improvement in marketing of the products which are presented in Table 3 .

As it is seen from Table 3 that all the women entrepreneurs fully agreed that "local communication facilities can attract more customers" (wt. score 5.0). The local communication facilities including cable T.V, *dhondhra*, mobile mike, local T.V. announcement and distribution of door to door pamphlets can help in attracting customers. These are easily available and moreover not very expensive. Adhikari and Acharya (2001) also found out that use of local communication facilities like T.V., distribution of pamphlets can increase the demand of the product. It is also found that women involved in food processing and training schools fully agreed (wt. score 5.0) that "sale in exhibitions and fairs on regular basis" can also increase their sale volumes and demand. Village fairs and festivals, exhibitions on regular basis can improve the marketing of their goods. Whereas, beauty parlours, boutiques and direct marketing entrepreneurs gave a score of 4.79, 4.79 and 4.66, respectively. The reason might be that they were not able to participate in

regular exhibition due to lack of various facilities.

"Personal selling by oral presentation" was fully agreed by the respondents of beauty parlours, food processing unit and direct marketing units. But, in case of boutiques the response was 'somewhat agree' with the same statement. This may be because it is not practical for them to demonstrate their products and services. Further, from the Table 3 it is clearly seen that majority of the women entrepreneurs from all the categories fully agreed that "advertising is a media for marketing of products" except the respondents from training schools. The reason could be lack of funds and proper knowledge about advertising. But, in contrast, may be the rest of the respondents thought that they can improve the problem of marketing by advertising their products in the market, as advertising is considered to be the most vital ingredient of promotional strategy.

Some of the respondents 'somewhat agree' that "incentive should be given as free gifts"(wt. score 4.49). The respondents from boutiques disagreed (2.66) with this, which may be because of the type of product manufactured by them. Few of the respondents were found to 'agree' with strategy because they were giving free coupons and price contest stamps to promote their sale. Women were willing to adopt this strategy because they think that this is a better policy to attract more customers. Overall the data presented in the table show that food-processing unit and direct marketing entrepreneurs fully agreed to adopt the promotional strategies to improve the marketing of their products.

Market information :

There should be a mechanism by which the performance of the product in the market can be evaluated so that one can see in quantitative terms the effect of the marketing strategies. The entrepreneur/manufacturer is required to first analyse the nature and characteristics of the marketing, try to identify the prospective customers and then effectively plan for

Table 3 : Weighted scores for various marketing strategies related to promotion of the product

Promotional strategies	B.P. (n=48)	B. (n=48)	F.P.U. (n=48)	T.S. (n=48)	D.M. (n=48)	Total (n= 240)
Local communication facilities for attracting more customers.	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Product should be attractively packed for better sale.	5.00	4.79	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.89
Sale in exhibitions and fairs on regular basis.	4.79	4.79	5.00	5.00	4.66	4.84
Personal selling by oral presentation.	5.00	3.91	4.89	4.69	5.00	4.69
Incentives should be given as free gifts attached to products.	4.79	2.66	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.44
Advertising as a media for marketing of products.	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.53	5.00	4.43
Sale promotion is important to create awareness.	4.79	5.00	5.00	4.32	5.00	4.32

implementation of the marketing programme.

It is clearly seen from Table 4 that in all the enterprises most of the women entrepreneurs were willing to adopt the various strategies for improving their marketing of the products. Majority of the women (wt. score 5.0) fully agreed that “new markets should be explored” which may be because they want to expand marketing of their products for better sale volumes and for creating more demand they have to be aware of new markets. Further, majority of the women wanted to “use cheaper and good quality raw material” (wt. score 4.76). But, sometimes they felt shortage of supply due to which they have to purchase their raw materials on high prices. Thus, they want to have knowledge / training how they can tap the market facilities so that they can have their supply on regular basis as well as on low prices.

Similarly, all the respondents fully agreed to have “training to tap the market facilities” so that they can know about the integrated marketing concept which includes product planning and development, promotion of products, distribution, availability of raw material at lower prices for solving market problems. Similarly, all the women entrepreneurs some what agreed to the formation of co-operative society, which may be because they want to discuss their entrepreneurial problems at one place and find solutions jointly especially those related to marketing of their products. Further, it is also seen that all the women entrepreneurs fully agreed that women should be “aware of government policies

and regulations”. So, there is need to make women aware of different government schemes and policies and implemented especially for women entrepreneurs.

Thus, it is concluded that women should adopt such strategies, so that they can improve marketing of their products as well as can become successful entrepreneurs.

General market information :

All the respondents fully agreed with all the strategies. The women entrepreneurs were fully agreed that “women should have knowledge about accounts” the reason might be that because of less knowledge of accounts they face many problems and they depend upon accountants. “Successful women entrepreneurs should help budding entrepreneurs” also received an overall score of 5.0. The respondents further, fully agreed that “ government policies be re-evaluated” which may be because they felt that government policies are only built not implemented. Thus, these should be re-evaluated. “Entrepreneurship education and training should be made compulsory” so that women can be made aware of different opportunities for self-employment.

Conclusion :

For improving product strategies, majority of the respondents fully agreed that customers satisfaction should be checked. All the respondents fully agreed to adopt the

Table 4 : Weighted scores for marketing strategies related to market information

Market Information	B.P. (n=48)	B. (n=48)	F.P.U. (n=48)	T.S. (n=48)	D.M. (n=48)	Total (n= 240)
New markets should be explored.	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Use of cheaper and good quality raw material.	4.83	4.66	5.00	4.66	4.00	4.76
Training to tap the market facilities.	4.66	4.50	5.00	4.00	5.00	4.30
Developing distribution channels.	2.89	3.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.93
Formation of co-operative societies for further improvement.	3.00	4.00	4.66	3.00	5.00	3.93
Awareness of government policies and regulations is a must.	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Table 5 : Weighted scores for general marketing strategies

General	B.P. (n=48)	B. (n=48)	F.P.U. (n=48)	T.S. (n=48)	D.M. (n=48)	Total (n= 240)
Knowledge about accounts.	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Successful women entrepreneurs should help budding women entrepreneurs.	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.0
Building confidence and self-reliant to empower women entrepreneurs.	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.0
Government policies be re-evaluated and implemented especially for women entrepreneurs.	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Entrepreneurship education and training should be made compulsory.	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

“local communication facilities for attracting more customers” as a major promotional strategy, followed by “product should be attractively packed” and “sale in exhibitions and fairs on regular basis”. In pricing strategies, women entrepreneurs in all the enterprises fully agreed to adopt “discounts as a major pricing strategy”. For the market information, “new markets should be explored” as well as “entrepreneurship education and training should be made compulsory” and “awareness of government policies and regulations” were the major strategies given to the women entrepreneurs.

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