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Original Article

The Role of Micro Environmental Factors in Undermining the Growth of Market for Women Entrepreneurs

Agrima Agarwal[1], **Dr. Manoj Awasthi**[2]
[1]Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Vikramajit Singh Sanatan Dharma (V.S.S.D.) PG College, Kanpur
[2]HOD & Professor, Department of Commerce, Vikramajit Singh Sanatan Dharma (V.S.S.D.) PG College, Kanpur

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Abstract

Microenvironmental factors severely hinder the growth of market for women entrepreneurs, creating persistent barriers to market access, operational efficiency, and scalability. Due to restricted marketing networks, biased consumer perceptions based on gender stereotypes, it limits demand and restrict sales to local bases, stunting revenue crucial for growth. While unreliable vendors lead to cost inflation and disruptions due to weak bargaining power, intense rivalry among competitors reduces profits through price wars and resource disparities, shifting attention from strategic growth to crisis management. Broader market penetration is limited by weak intermediary relationships that result in distribution difficulties and profit leakage through unfavourable terms. Public stereotypes that portray women as risk-averse and family-oriented undermine investor confidence, community support, regulatory approvals. They also reinforce failure narratives that discourage formal network access, funding, and partnerships. These interconnected dynamics result in cash flow shortages, reputational damage, and operational inefficiencies, thereby constraining women entrepreneurs to a survival-oriented state, hindering their ability to achieve sustainable growth. This study emphasises the disproportionate effects of societal biases and network gaps, in developing economies like India. The suggestions recommend targeted actions, such as digital marketing campaigning, supplier diversification, and advocacy partnerships, to overcome these challenges and promote sustainable growth in the market for women entrepreneurs.

Keywords: *Women Entrepreneurs, Microenvironmental Factors, Growth of Market.*

Introduction

In India, women representing nearly half of the population, play an exceptionally vital role in fostering the nation's economic prosperity, promoting social harmony and collaboration among its diverse communities, driving significant advancements across various sectors for the overall progress of the country. Their contributions are undeniably resulting in substantial and transformative changes occurring across diverse sectors.

Women Entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs are defined as individuals or groups of women who initiate, organize, manage, and assume the financial risks associated with a business enterprise, frequently introducing innovations to generate economic benefits while overcoming inherent societal obstacles. They are risk-tolerant but creative and use networks, mentorship, and resilience to overcome obstacles like gender biases and restricted access to capital. They excel in industries like retail, services, technology, and sustainability and are usually self-sufficient, managing work and family responsibilities. By spotting market gaps, such as those for eco-friendly goods or services targeted at women, these entrepreneurs continue to innovate and use cutting-edge strategies like digital marketing to expand their business.

They play a revolutionary role in business, fostering inclusive growth, innovation, and the creation of jobs. By employing disadvantaged women, they increase GDP and regional development in India. They promote community reinvestment,

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Address for correspondence:
Agrima Agarwal, Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Vikramajit Singh Sanatan Dharma (V.S.S.D.) PG College, Kanpur
Email: agarwalagrima59@gmail.com

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challenge male-dominated norms, diversify industries. They increase real income and productivity by creating ecosystems and mentoring others. In the end, female entrepreneurs support strong economies and are essential to the long-term growth of businesses.

Components Of Micro Environment

The micro-environment comprised individuals directly involved in and connected to companies, impacting their ability to serve the market. They are the suppliers, marketing intermediaries, customers, competitors, and the public. These elements work in combination to impact marketing efforts, identify opportunities and threats, and shape the overall customer experience. It is vital for companies to understand and control the micro environment in order to build effective relationships, stay competitive, and satisfy market demands efficiently.

Customers: Customer are perhaps the most crucial factor in determining where a business should focus its marketing efforts. Businesses must have a thorough understanding of their customers, including consumers, companies, resellers, and governments, in order to develop strategies that cater to their particular requirements and habits.

Competitors: Companies that compete in the same market are the competitors. Companies can identify opportunities and threats by analysing the strengths, weaknesses, prices, and marketing methods of their competitors. This helps them refine their own strategy to protect or gain market share.

Suppliers: Companies that provide raw materials to manufacture goods and services are the suppliers. They influence costs, quality, and availability of products. Supply chain disruptions, including delays and quality inconsistencies, can halt production, delay order fulfilment, erode customer trust, and create opportunities for competitors.

Marketing Intermediaries: Business firms who act as a bridge between the manufacturer and buyer of the product are the marketing intermediaries. They are wholesalers, retailers, distributors etc. They help the business by marketing, selling, and distributing its goods to final consumers. Effective collaboration with intermediaries expands market reach and boosts customer satisfaction.

Public: Any group that has the ability to affect an organization's capacity to achieve its objectives is considered a public. Public include the media, governmental organizations, local communities, and special interest groups. A company's reputation and image can be strengthened by cultivating a positive image with key audiences.

Role Of Micro Environmental Factors In Market

Microenvironmental factors are instrumental in shaping a business's marketing strategies, exerting a direct influence on its daily operations and customer interactions. In contrast to the broader macroenvironment, these are the closely related forces—such as suppliers, customers, competitors, marketing intermediaries and public entities—which a firm can typically monitor and influence to varying degrees. They are important because they make it possible for companies to react quickly to current opportunities and threats, guaranteeing effective resource allocation and competitive positioning. Strong supplier relationships, for example, can stabilise costs and quality, enable consistent product delivery, and known customer preferences enable targeted promotions that increase sales and loyalty.

Decisions about the marketing mix—product, price, place, and promotion—are greatly influenced by these elements. Competitor activity, such as a price war or a product launch, makes a company differentiate itself through unique value propositions or advertising strategies, thus preventing the company from losing market share. Marketing intermediaries, such as retailers and distributors, help the company reach more customers but require proper management to avoid distribution problems. Public, such as the media and the community, impact the company's brand, and positive publicity can help in word-of-mouth marketing, while negative publicity might require crisis management strategies. Analysing these factors enables companies to achieve business agility, where potential disruptions can be converted into business opportunities.

Failure to understand the microenvironment would make a company lose touch with the market, leading to loss of growth and revenue. Managing the microenvironment is essential because it enables companies to achieve business resiliency, innovation, and consumer orientation, which is essential in a competitive environment. Companies that have excelled in microenvironment management, such as in supplier partnerships, have a competitive advantage in terms of business efficiency and agility.

Review Of Literature

Jayammal (2005) stated that marketing problem is the most neglected in the Coimbatore district. He clarified that women entrepreneurs struggle since they often lack enough knowledge about how to market effectively. They also rely heavily on local markets. There is heavy competition from large companies. Middlemen often exploit them, making it harder to collect

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payments. They face challenges with sales promotion and have lack support in accessing export markets.

Trusov et al. (2009) mentioned that women-run microbusinesses depend on word-of-mouth recommendations and local trade networks, making it particularly relevant in conventional business environments. One topic that comes up frequently is the significance of marketing activity expertise. Although possessing little formal marketing education, entrepreneurs with more than ten years of experience developed outstanding customer retention strategies.

Cohoon et al. (2010) stated that women entrepreneurs are an understudied category, according to one of their key findings. In the study, they recommended that efforts to promote women entrepreneurship should prioritize access to mentoring and support networks, as these are vital for success, with a focus on market connectivity.

Satpal et al. (2014) stated that women entrepreneurs struggle to manage their company's marketing activities because they lack of necessary training and strategic knowledge. Additionally, they noted that the field of marketing is dominated by men. The majority of female entrepreneurs are unable to handle marketing, distribution, and revenue collection because they do not comprehend the role of marketing. For these activities, they rely on intermediaries. They added that the middlemen frequently take advantage of them while pretending to be helpful. They work to increase their own profit margin, which hinders the growth of the business and reduces sales and profit for women entrepreneurs.

Bulsara (2014) mentioned that the business has serious marketing issues. The presence of fear and suspicion regarding women entrepreneurs in business and industry contributes to new client phobia, which, in turn, impedes business growth. This is evidenced by a decline in the business cycle, challenges in recovering funds, and difficulties in product promotion.

Felix (2015) discovers the factors—such as market turbulence, technological turbulence, the overall economy, competitiveness, management training, and intelligence response—that present marketing problems in meeting consumers' shifting expectations and desires in a competitive market.

Report published by Swaniti (swaniti.com, 2015) claimed that one of the biggest obstacles women entrepreneurs are facing is gaining access to markets and networks. It is necessary to have contacts, knowledge, and experience in order to access new markets. Due to a lack of training and experience, female entrepreneurs frequently struggle to successfully promote their products and services. Due to the fact that the majority of women entrepreneurs operate on a small scale, they also lack access to adequate market data regarding competitors, prices, inputs, and support services.

Patel and Desai (2016) talked about the marketing challenges faced by female entrepreneurs. They claimed that organised industries pose a serious threat to female entrepreneurs. They are facing marketing challenges because of the market's fierce competition and women's limited mobility. The challenges include competition from less expensive alternatives, innovation, late payments, and generous credit terms. According to their research, female entrepreneurs do not have access to or knowledge of appropriate markets. They said that selling goods through middlemen is a common practice. While there may be differences in urban areas, semi-urban areas heavily rely on middlemen. Additionally, they stated that female entrepreneurs struggle to gain market share and popularise their products. Women entrepreneurs lack ability with technology and the internet, and they are unaware of the shifting market trends.

Kumari, S., & Reddy, S. (2020) mentioned that due to the scarcity of female mentors and role models, Indian women entrepreneurs struggle with a lack of mentorship and support systems. The success of female entrepreneurs is hampered by the lack of guidance and assistance. Furthermore, women's work-life balance and family obligations are major obstacles that restrict their capacity to devote time and energy to their projects because they are expected to fulfil traditional roles as caretakers.

Objectives

- To study micro environmental factors that hamper the growth of market for women entrepreneurs.
- To offer suggestions for overcoming barriers that enhance their resilience and competitive positioning.

Research Methodology

This particular paper uses a collection of secondary sources, which encompasses publications, scholarly works accessible through diverse online platforms, and online references, in order to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the micro environmental factors that significantly influences women entrepreneurs and their business endeavours.

Micro Environmental Factors Undermining The Growth Of Market

Customers, suppliers, competitors, middlemen and public are elements of microenvironmental factors that have a substantial impact on the market growth of women entrepreneurs, thereby

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influencing competitive positioning, market access, and resource availability. Due to their restricted networks and financial limitations, these factors frequently create particular challenges for women-led firms, impeding performance and scalability.

Customers

Gender stereotypes frequently lead to biased customer perceptions, wherein women entrepreneur's goods and services are devalued in comparison to those of their male counterparts. This results in lower sales volumes and constrained revenue streams that are necessary for expansion and reinvestment. This also results in decelerated customer acquisition, restricted market penetration, and challenges in achieving expansion beyond localized or specialized sectors. All things considered, these dynamics produce an endless cycle of decreased cash flow, which impedes the expansion and long-term viability of businesses.

Competitors

In saturated markets, fierce competition overpowers women entrepreneurs who have fewer resources, including less funding or a weaker brand. As a result, established competitors are able to control pricing, shelf space, and customer loyalty. In the absence of effective differentiation methods, such as distinctive value propositions or aggressive promotions, new entrants face obstacles to market entry and suffer from profit erosion as they cut prices to compete or lose customers to competitors with superior resources. In addition to limiting revenue possibilities, this competitive pressure prevents innovation and scaling initiatives, putting companies in a survival state rather than growth paths.

Suppliers

Due to their smaller order volumes and weaker bargaining strength, women entrepreneurs are disproportionately affected by high costs from unreliable or exploitative suppliers, which inflate input costs and squeeze already tight profit margins that are essential for supporting expansion initiatives. Supply chain disruptions, such delays or inconsistent quality, halt manufacturing and delayed order fulfilment, weakening consumer confidence and creating opportunities for rivals. These problems increase operational inefficiencies by taking time and resources away from market diversification or expansion initiatives.

Marketing Intermediaries

Inadequate connections with intermediaries, such distributors or retailers, result in distribution bottlenecks when women entrepreneurs encounter gatekeeping, late payments, or unfavourable terms, significantly restricting the product's ability to reach broader markets. This reliance on intermediaries without any leverage results in missed sales, as they favour larger or male-dominated suppliers, leading to loss of income. As a result, it prevents them from expanding geographically, and achieving economies of scale for long-term success.

Public

Public stereotypes often portray women entrepreneurs as risk-averse or family-focused, instead of serious business leaders. This biasness restricts companies to unofficial networks and hinders formal market expansion. It also results in fewer partnerships, increased scrutiny during regulatory clearances, and underrepresentation in the media. Indirect hurdles may be imposed by local authorities or communities, such as mistrust on women in industries dominated by men, the postponement of permits, or public endorsements required for expansion projects like hiring or new location. This perception undermines their prospects, constrains their potential, and diminishes business value.

Suggestions

- Use digital marketing campaigns to showcase high-quality certifications and success stories on social media sites which increases visibility and foster trust.
- Collaborating with NGOs or community events for free promotions will expand reach beyond local bases, driving demand and revenue for reinvestment.
- Cultivate niche differentiation through unique value propositions, like eco-friendly products or personalized services, to thrive in competitive markets and secure market share.
- Engage with industry associations or entrepreneur networks to foster collaborative learning about competitive strategies, facilitating cost-effective innovation without significant resource investment.
- Establish bulk purchasing cooperatives with other enterprises to enhance negotiation capabilities, thereby securing affordable and dependable inputs that will stabilize operational costs.
- Diversify supply networks across various regions and look for Government programs for subsidized raw materials, thereby minimizing dependency risks and allocating resources for expansion.
- Establish direct relationships with distributors through trade shows and referral programs, bypassing unreliable intermediaries while securing advantageous terms through volume commitments or joint branding.
- Utilize e-commerce platforms like Amazon or Flipkart for self-managed distribution, reducing bottlenecks and improving market access for scalable growth.

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- Establish credibility through engagement in business forums and certification programs to showcase competence and cultivate partnerships within formal networks, which are crucial for growth of market.

Conclusion

The microenvironment serves as the foundation for daily marketing decisions. Businesses that actively track, assess, and adjust to changes in these immediate surroundings have a better chance to meet customer demands, surpass competitors, and keep operational excellence. Suppliers, consumers, competitors, intermediaries and the public, all of them has an impact on the brand's image. In the twenty-first century, effective marketing requires not just creativity and innovation but also the capacity to recognise and react to microenvironmental signs. Aligning strategically with these factors promotes adaptability, resilience, and long-term growth.

This study highlights the substantial impact of microenvironmental factors that hampers the growth of market for women entrepreneurs by imposing obstacles that limit profitability and scalability. Customers, suppliers, competitors, middlemen, and the public are significant players who influence a company's capacity to offer value to its target market. Women entrepreneurs economic potential can be achieved by minimising microenvironmental barriers and empowering them through collaborative ecosystems and skill development. This will promote sustainable growth and fair market participation.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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