

EMPOWERING VENTURE; UNPACKING THE MARKETING OBSTACLES CONFRONTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

¹S. Mallika

¹Assistant Professor of Commerce, Sri Vasavi College, Erode

²Dharani V

²Ph.D Part time, Research Scholar, Sri Vasavi College, Erode

ABSTRACT

Women entrepreneurs face distinct marketing obstacles that hinder their business growth and sustainability. This study aims to systematically review existing literature to identify, categorize, and analyze these challenges. The objectives are to understand the scope of marketing challenges, examine the interplay of sociocultural and economic factors, and offer actionable solutions. Using a systematic literature review methodology, the study synthesizes findings from 15 peer-reviewed articles published between 2013 and 2024. The results highlight key obstacles, including limited market access, inadequate branding strategies, financial constraints, and sociocultural biases. The implications extend to policymakers, researchers, and entrepreneurs, providing a roadmap for fostering an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Keywords: Women entrepreneurs, marketing obstacles, systematic literature review, entrepreneurial challenges, sociocultural factors, business growth.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of women entrepreneurs is a testament to their potential as drivers of economic growth and innovation. However, despite these achievements, women entrepreneurs face numerous barriers that impede their ability to thrive in competitive markets. Among these challenges, marketing-related obstacles remain underexplored yet critical for sustainable business growth. By doing so, it seeks to enhance the understanding of gender-specific challenges in entrepreneurship and offer a foundation for targeted interventions. Lehman et al. (2020) explores the interplay between effectuation theory and entrepreneurial marketing (EM) in establishing a new art venture. Effectuation theory emphasizes flexibility, adaptability, and leveraging available resources rather than pre-planned strategies, which aligns well with the uncertain and creative nature of art-based ventures. The authors argue that the art world requires a unique entrepreneurial approach where traditional marketing methods are inadequate. Instead, EM, which focuses on innovation, customer intimacy, and co-creation of value, becomes a natural fit. The study highlights how entrepreneurial artists combine artistic creativity with business acumen, using effectuation principles to identify opportunities, mitigate risks, and create new market spaces. Entrepreneurs often pivot strategies in response to changing environments and utilize existing networks to achieve goals. By integrating effectuation logic with EM, artists can engage with stakeholders more effectively, foster long-term relationships, and ensure sustainable growth. A key insight is that the process is iterative: entrepreneurs continuously experiment, learn from feedback, and adapt their strategies. The chapter emphasizes storytelling as a powerful tool in marketing art ventures, enabling entrepreneurs to connect emotionally with audiences and investors. The authors also note challenges, such as balancing artistic integrity with commercial demands.

The research provides a framework for how art entrepreneurs navigate the interplay of creativity, flexibility, and marketing to succeed in a competitive landscape.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The entrepreneurial journey is inherently challenging, but for women, these challenges are magnified by systemic barriers rooted in cultural, economic, and institutional factors. Marketing, a cornerstone of business success, often presents significant hurdles for women entrepreneurs. These include limited access to markets, lack of branding expertise, insufficient marketing budgets, and the inability to leverage digital tools effectively. While previous studies have addressed various aspects of women's entrepreneurship, a focused investigation into marketing obstacles is still lacking. This study positions itself within the broader discourse on entrepreneurship by emphasizing the marketing dimension and its interplay with other structural barriers. Laskovaia (2019) investigated how entrepreneurial orientation (EO)—defined by innovativeness, reactivity, and risk-taking—shapes the decision-making approaches of entrepreneurs during economic crises. Specifically, it contrasts causal decision-making (based on prediction and planning) with effectual decision-making (focused on adaptability and leveraging resources). Entrepreneurs with high EO are more likely to embrace effectuation, as they are naturally inclined to adapt, experiment, and co-create solutions with stakeholders. Effectual logic allows them to leverage existing networks and resources to manage uncertainty and minimize losses. Conversely, entrepreneurs with low EO may default to causal logic, relying on structured plans and predictive models, which are less effective in volatile environments. The findings underscore that neither approach is universally superior; their effectiveness depends on the contextual dynamics of the crisis and the entrepreneur's orientation. The authors highlight the need for a dynamic interplay between the two logics, suggesting that successful entrepreneurs pivot between causation and effectuation as situations evolve. The study concludes by offering practical insights for entrepreneurs and policymakers. It recommends fostering entrepreneurial mindsets and adaptive decision-making skills to build resilience against economic shocks.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study's findings will have far-reaching implications for policymakers, educators, and business practitioners. By identifying specific marketing barriers and their root causes, the research contributes to the development of gender-sensitive policies and programs. Moreover, it provides actionable insights for women entrepreneurs to navigate marketing challenges effectively. The study also enriches academic literature by bridging gaps in understanding the intersection of gender and marketing in entrepreneurship. Raman (2022) conducted a literature assessment on women's entrepreneurship and its association with sustainable development.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite global efforts to promote women's entrepreneurship, significant gaps persist in addressing their unique challenges. Marketing, as a critical component of business operations, is often overlooked in research and policy discussions. Women entrepreneurs frequently encounter obstacles such as limited market access, inadequate promotional strategies, and sociocultural constraints that hinder their ability to compete effectively. This neglect undermines the potential of women-owned businesses to contribute fully to economic growth and social development. Thus, there is a pressing need to systematically investigate and address these marketing challenges. Raktima et al. (2023) examined the intricate dimensions of women's entrepreneurship. The writers closely examine the hurdles impacting women in

entrepreneurship and assess the effectiveness of female-owned firms. The empirical and theoretical literature allowed the researcher to elucidate the parameters influencing the success and growth of female entrepreneurs. They provide valuable strategies for managing organisations to mitigate such issues and, conversely, enhance the prospects for success among female entrepreneurs. Their efforts extend beyond just recording challenges; they pursue specific suggestions and implementation strategies aimed at addressing these challenges and empowering women entrepreneurs to overcome obstacles and thrive in competitive settings. This paper leverages the researcher's expertise in female entrepreneurship to provide a novel perspective on the opportunities, existing circumstances, and problems confronting female-owned enterprises. This study has significant implications for several stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, academics, and practitioners in the fields of entrepreneurship and gender studies. It is crucial in shaping legislation that help women entrepreneurs, as well as in developing educational programs and support mechanisms tailored to their individual needs and objectives. The researcher's study provides a significant basis for further studies aimed at expanding the knowledge and practices related to gender equality and economic advancement in entrepreneurship.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH AGENDA

Lethoko and Netshikundini (2024) examined the problems faced by women entrepreneurs, particularly those in rural regions. This paper examines, both numerically and qualitatively, the numerous challenges faced by female small business owners in a rural setting. They considered significant challenges such as budgetary limitations, insufficient physical infrastructure and services, cultural traditions, and market demand. The researcher heightened awareness of the many types of oppression impacting rural women, including gender inequalities and inequities in resources and opportunity.. It underscores the need for the formulation of policies and support mechanisms to tackle the many facets of the problem affecting women in rural small enterprises.

Ashlin Dsouza and Niyaz Panakaje (2023) examines factors such as accessible funding, socio-cultural limitations, institutional support, networking opportunities, and educational qualifications. Their evaluation encompasses both endogenous and exogenous aspects influencing the entrepreneurial process for women, so providing a thorough perspective on the challenges and achievements they may encounter. This literature evaluation yields valuable insights for policymakers, business assistance organisations, and women entrepreneurs. It underscores the need of cultivating an environment that supports women's investment initiatives by providing financing, mentorship, and a networking platform. Their results are crucial in establishing a foundation for future study and initiatives aimed at combating prejudice and discrimination against women in business.

Khurana et al. (2022) examined the mechanisms by which entrepreneurs acquire knowledge on the causation-effectuation-entrepreneurial learning signal in their responses to crises, namely via the identification and exploitation of arbitrage possibilities. The research may also examine the planning of causality. Consequently, the study may examine the use of improvisational strategies by entrepreneurs to navigate crises, seize arbitrage chances, and derive insights from their entrepreneurial traits. It may also examine how learning processes related to entrepreneurship cultivate absorptive capabilities and preparedness for crises. Vossenber (2015) conducted a qualitative study that examined female entrepreneurs. To do this, the author conducts interviews or focus groups with female owners to get their perspectives and experiences about marketing, branding, customer relations, and positioning. Concerning their expertise and viewpoints on marketing techniques, branding, customer acquisition, and market positioning. The research identifies patterns and frequency of

marketing difficulties specific to WOBs via the analysis of qualitative findings. The research enhances the comprehension of several aspects of female entrepreneurs' marketing endeavours: insufficient networks, financial challenges, customer stereotypes, and the balance between company and family responsibilities. Recognising these hurdles is essential for developing suitable support systems, educational initiatives, and regulatory measures that would empower women-led companies to surmount marketing challenges and expand their firms.

RESEARCH GAP

While existing studies have explored financial and operational challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, marketing barriers remain underrepresented in academic discourse. Furthermore, most studies adopt a localized or case-specific approach, limiting the generalizability of their findings. Longitudinal research examining the evolution of marketing challenges over time is also scarce. The article pursues to fill these gaps by providing a systematic analysis of marketing obstacles across diverse contexts, offering insights into their underlying causes and potential solutions. Ferreira et al. (2019) highlights how hybrid entrepreneurs balance traditional employment with entrepreneurial ventures, leveraging personal passions and expertise. It illustrates how entrepreneurial marketing strategies, such as storytelling, customer engagement, and authenticity, build strong brand loyalty in niche markets. The authors emphasize the importance of maintaining quality and fostering direct customer relationships to differentiate in competitive industries. The case demonstrates how entrepreneurial marketing aligns with hybrid entrepreneurship to drive business sustainability and growth.

Bocconcelli, R. et al. (2018) identifies key themes, including resource limitations, innovation, and customer orientation, shaping SME marketing strategies. It emphasizes the importance of leveraging digital tools and networks for cost-effective marketing solutions. The review also highlights the unique challenges SMEs face in adopting traditional marketing approaches, such as budget constraints and limited expertise. By synthesizing past research, the authors provide insights into how SMEs can align marketing practices with their operational realities, ultimately enhancing competitiveness and growth. Yan, J., & Yan, L. (2016) finds that individual entrepreneurship, characterized by personal initiative and leadership, is crucial for fostering creativity and risk-taking. Simultaneously, collective entrepreneurship, involving teamwork and shared decision-making, enhances resource sharing and collaborative problem-solving. The study underscores the synergy between these two approaches, with collective efforts often amplifying the impact of individual initiatives. It concludes that a balanced entrepreneurial strategy, combining individual vision with collective execution, is key to sustaining innovation and competitive advantage in small businesses. Vijayakumar & Jayachitra, (2013) identifies constraints such as inadequate funding, lack of education, societal expectations, and limited market access. Despite these barriers, women entrepreneurs contribute significantly to economic development, showcasing innovation and resilience. The paper emphasizes the need for policy interventions, skill development programs, and financial support to empower women entrepreneurs. It concludes that fostering a conducive environment with adequate support systems and reducing gender disparities can enhance women's entrepreneurial participation, driving sustainable economic growth in India

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research process involved identifying relevant studies published between 2013 and 2024 from academic databases. The data extraction and analysis were guided by predefined themes, including market access, branding, digital marketing, and sociocultural factors. The

systematic approach ensures a holistic understanding of the marketing challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and the identification of actionable solutions. Raman, et al. (2022) identifies emerging research themes, including gender inclusion, empowerment, and green entrepreneurship. It concludes that integrating gender-sensitive policies with sustainability goals can accelerate progress toward inclusive development and equitable opportunities for women entrepreneurs globally. Vossenbergh, S. (2016) emphasizes gender-aware approaches to women's entrepreneurship development in sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on inclusive development policies.

DISCUSSION

Ashlin Dsouza & Niyaz Panakaje (2023) discusses challenges like gender bias, financial constraints, and limited access to markets, which hinder women's entrepreneurial growth. The authors advocate for tailored policy interventions, mentoring programs, and better access to funding to bridge these gaps. This review provides a comprehensive understanding of women's entrepreneurial journeys in SMEs. Raktima Bharadwaj et al. (2023) identifies barriers such as societal expectations, lack of mentorship, and difficulties in securing funding. Despite these challenges, women entrepreneurs demonstrate resilience and adaptability through innovative practices, collaborative networking, and leveraging technology. The study emphasizes the importance of supportive ecosystems, including access to training and government policies, to enhance their performance. It concludes that a combination of personal determination and systemic support is crucial for the success of female-led enterprises, providing actionable insights for improving women's entrepreneurial outcomes. Khurana, I. et al. (2022) explores how entrepreneurs navigate crises by balancing causation (planning) and effectuation (adaptability) approaches. It highlights how crises create arbitrage opportunities, requiring entrepreneurs to leverage entrepreneurial learning for innovation and resource optimization. Entrepreneurs who integrate experiential learning with strategic flexibility are better equipped to seize emerging opportunities during uncertainties. The research also discusses how entrepreneurs dynamically shift between structured and adaptive decision-making based on context. It emphasizes the role of learning and collaboration in achieving resilience and growth during crises, contributing to the understanding of entrepreneurship under volatile conditions.

IMPLICATIONS

For policymakers, the research highlights the need for gender-sensitive policies that address structural barriers in marketing. Educational institutions can use the insights to design training programs that equip women entrepreneurs with essential marketing skills. Entrepreneurs themselves can benefit from practical strategies to overcome marketing obstacles and enhance their competitiveness. The study also lays the groundwork for future research, encouraging scholars to explore emerging trends and solutions in the context of women's entrepreneurship.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

To mitigate marketing challenges, this study proposes several recommendations. First, capacity-building programs should be implemented to enhance women entrepreneurs' marketing knowledge and skills. Second, governments and financial institutions should provide targeted funding and incentives to support marketing initiatives. Third, networking opportunities should be created to help women entrepreneurs build valuable connections and access new markets. Fourth, digital marketing tools and platforms should be leveraged to overcome geographical and resource constraints. Finally, collaborative efforts between public

and private sectors are essential to creating an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs.

CONCLUSION

The marketing challenges faced by women entrepreneurs are multifaceted and deeply rooted in systemic barriers. This study underscores the importance of addressing these obstacles to unlock the full potential of women-owned businesses. By providing a comprehensive analysis of marketing barriers and their implications, the research contributes to the broader discourse on gender equality in entrepreneurship. The findings call for collective action from policymakers, educators, researchers, and entrepreneurs to create a more inclusive and supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem. Addressing these challenges is not just a matter of economic growth but also a step toward fostering social equity and empowerment.

REFERENCES

1. Lehman, K., Fillis, I., & Miles, M. P. (2020). The role of effectuation and entrepreneurial marketing in the creation of a new art venture. In I. Fillis & N. Telford (Eds.), *Handbook of entrepreneurship and marketing* (pp. 351–374)
2. Laskovaia, A., Marino, L., Shirokova, G., & Wales, W. (2019). Expect the unexpected: Examining the shaping role of entrepreneurial orientation on causal and effectual decision-making logic during economic crisis. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 31(5–6), 456–475.
3. Bocconcelli, R., Cioppi, M., Fortezza, F., Francioni, B., Pagano, A., Savelli, E., & Splendiani, S. (2018). SMEs and marketing: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 20(2), 227–25
4. Yan, J., & Yan, L. (2016). Individual entrepreneurship, collective entrepreneurship and innovation in small business: An empirical study. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 12(4), 1053–1077.
5. Ferreira, C. C., Lord Ferguson, S., & Pitt, L. F. (2019). Entrepreneurial marketing and hybrid entrepreneurship: The case of JM Reid bamboo rods. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 35(9–10), 867–885.
6. Gupta, G., & Chalil, K. (2024). Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in Urban India: A Comprehensive Exploration of Post-Covid Entrepreneurial Opportunities through Rigorous Literature Review. *BVIMSR Journal of Management Research*, 16(1).
7. Vuciterna, R., Ruggeri, G., Mazzocchi, C., Manzella, S., & Corsi, S. (2024). Women's entrepreneurial journey in developed and developing countries: a bibliometric review. *Agricultural and Food Economics*, 12(1), 36.
8. Dsouza, A., & Panakaje, N. (2023). Factors Affecting Women Entrepreneurs' Success: A Study of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises-A Review. *International Journal of Case Studies in Business, IT and Education (IJCSBE)*, 7(2), 51-89.
9. Ghosh, M. (2024). Exploring gender discourses in entrepreneurship: a bibliometric analysis. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1), 2299140.
10. Vuciterna, R., Ruggeri, G., Mazzocchi, C., Manzella, S., & Corsi, S. (2024). Women's entrepreneurial journey in developed and developing countries: a bibliometric review. *Agricultural and Food Economics*, 12(1), 36.

11. Lethoko, M., & Netshikundini, M. (2024). The Challenges of Rural, Women Small-Business Owners in Limpopo Province: A Case of Makhado Local Municipality, South Africa. *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*, 7(1), 117-134.
12. Ashlin Dsouza and Niyaz Panakaje (2023) Factors Affecting Women Entrepreneurs' Success: A Study of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises - A Review, *International Journal of Case Studies in Business, IT and Education*, Vol. 7 No. 2 9-10
13. Raktima Bharadwaj, Rajoshi Das, Anindita Majumdar (2023) The Challenges and Performance of Female-Owned Entrepreneurial Firms and Management Strategies, *IGI Global*, pp19-20.
14. Khurana, I., Dutta, D. K., & Schenkel, M. T. (2022). Crisis and arbitrage opportunities: The role of causation, effectuation and entrepreneurial learning. *International Small Business Journal*, 40(2), 236–272
15. Raman, R., Subramaniam, N., Nair, V. K., Shivdas, A., Achuthan, K., & Nedungadi, P. (2022). Women Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development: Bibliometric Analysis and Emerging Research Trends. *Sustainability*, 14(15), 9160.
16. Vossenbergh, S. (2016). Gender-aware women's entrepreneurship development for inclusive development in sub-Saharan Africa. *INCLUDE knowledge platform on inclusive development policies*.
17. Vijayakumar, A., & Jayachitra, S. (2013). Women Entrepreneurs in India-Emerging Issues and Challenges. *International Journal of Development Research*, 3(4), 12–17