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Green Entrepreneurship: Skills that matches Women's Ability for an Instant Start-up as 'Ecopreneur'

Dr. Trisha Dhar

Adjunct Faculty, Amity School of Economics, Amity University

Dr. Sweta Mondal

Assistant Professor, Sarojini Naidu College for Women

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Women Entrepreneurship is an application of knowledge, skills and competencies by women or self-help group, bringing out new ideas by launching new products or re-modelling the existing ones thus creating wealth and employment, paving the path of economic growth. Women are identified as the critical actors of sustainable entrepreneurship. To look into the issue of environmental pollution, women entrepreneurs are encouraged to make or sell eco-friendly products like bio-degradable ones. On the out-break of Covid 19, a consciousness arose among businesswomen which influenced them to undertake green entrepreneurship, create ecological awareness to develop environment-friendly business practices through waste management plan. This can bring about sustainable business practices and show that sustainability is the driving force of innovation and socio-economic change. So, women have a perception of making a good contribution to the environment. The motive is to undertake sustainable business by social value creation, employment creation and environmental protection. It has a positive impact on eco-entrepreneurial intention.

The very concept of 'Green Entrepreneurship' emerges from the practice of starting-up and the managing of an eco-friendly business in a way which can have a positive impact upon society. It has the power to handle the environmental challenges in the most fruitful way. This can bring financial stability as well even at the minimum cost of production. It is women more than men who are found to engage themselves in green entrepreneurship and found to be very much suitable for developing eco-friendly products. This paper will involve a qualitative search in the post-pandemic era on how a larger percentage share of business women are engaged in green entrepreneurship in the most successful way. Few case studies along with literature study will be done so as to proof the hypothesis.

Keywords: *Green Entrepreneurship, Women Entrepreneurship, Ecopreneur Sustainable, Environment-friendly*

JEL Classification

1. Introduction

Economic globalization having an impact on the environment has led to green thinking for long-term sustainability. The need for sustainable business activities arose due to lack of awareness of environmental protection and social inequities. This resulted in increase in consumers' concern about

preserving ecological balance and creating demand for eco-friendly products (Cherian, Jacob; 2012). Green thinking initiates to create a path for sustainable development. This created a pressure on social structure impacting gender-disparity and women empowerment. There would be a higher propensity among women to adopt ecopreneurship due to their social and cultural condition with minimum incentives and the need to care for the environment (Potluri, Phani; 2020). The entrepreneurs who have their business based on environmentally friendly products is termed as green entrepreneur. Green entrepreneur bases their products which are readily available or re-cycle the used materials for production of produced goods. It generates employment as well as income. They place emphasis on protecting the environment and create opportunities by reducing waste, bring out new ideas, help in technology transfer, adopting modern strategies for green business activities. Women entrepreneurs making bio-degradable products have an impact on the society to achieve environmental sustainability. Women are identified as the critical factors for sustainable entrepreneurship and play a significant role in inclusive development.

The awareness about environmental protection brought changes in consumers demand and behaviour. On the consumer's side, awareness along with preference for green products reveals their willingness to purchase and pay more for environment-friendly products. Due to this change in behaviour to be more environment-friendly, businesses have made all effort to modify their business structure and remodelled their products to become more environmentally responsible and environment-friendly (Han, Hsu, Lee, Sheu; 2011).

Due to over-exploitation of natural resource environment is in the path of degradation. So, businesses are contributing to green management as there is a degradation of natural resources and environment. Green entrepreneurship is different from entrepreneurship in other areas. Sustainability is a component of green entrepreneur and takes into consideration the various components of sustainable business practices. It offers employment especially to women which leads to financial stability, make them socially responsible and have a beneficial effect on the environment. Awareness among individuals lead to a change in individuals' attitude towards green lifestyle. On the other hand, businesses are trying to exploit the potential of the green market industry by producing eco-friendly products. Green market indicates a shift in demand for green product which are eco-friendly. So, there is need to take into account the demand, behaviour and attitudes of the consumers by cutting down the extra cost and putting emphasis on green products. It has its unique properties in designing, promoting etc that will not harm the environment and help the green entrepreneur to be more competitive. This shows green entrepreneurs fosters economic development. The impact of green marketing on developing countries is limited.

Objectives

The paper aims to find out the position of women entrepreneurs as an ecopreneur in real-life scenario and bring out a comparison with that of male specially when concepts of 'Green Entrepreneurs' comes into existence. Thus, several objectives have been outlined so as to construct the hypothesis of the study which are as follows:

- 1) To find out the active participation of women in businesses related to eco-friendly products.
- 2) To comparatively study the position of male and female in 'Green Entrepreneurship'.
- 3) To find out the motivating factors influencing women for a quick start-up as an ecopreneur.

Research Questions

Based upon the research objectives of the present study, the research questions can be assigned as follows:

- 1) How the women of today are actively participating in businesses related to eco-friendly products?
- 2) What are the positions of male and female when 'Green Entrepreneurship' is talked about?
- 3) What are the motivational factors that can influence a woman to have a quick start-up as an ecopreneur?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis lies here that whether women are in a beneficial position to be called as an ecopreneur.

Thus, the null and the alternative hypothesis states that:

Null Hypothesis: Women are not better suited for a start-up for environmentally friendly and bio-degradable products.

Alternative Hypothesis: Women are found to be better suited for a start-up for environmentally friendly and bio-degradable products.

Research Methodology and Data Collection

Since no such secondary data is broadly available for ecopreneurs or green entrepreneurship for women and men respectively, primary data being the only source of data for the study. Thus, due to lack of sufficient data and time, the study is restricted to only qualitative study based upon Literature survey and Case Study approach. The case studies have been done by

interviewing those women Entrepreneurs who are involved in the businesses related to eco-friendly products. These women are thus known as ecopreneurs or green entrepreneurs.

The collection of data followed is the interview method for the purpose of qualitative survey. For the purpose of literature study, several research articles, papers, reports, edited books, etc. have been referred.

Literature Study

The study by (Sanyang, Huang; 2008) brings out that promoting women entrepreneurship by empowering rural women in green cooperatives is the way to achieve sustainable rural development. Women entrepreneurs play a role for income generation, create employment opportunities, improvement in the quality of life for sustainable development.

Results show that sales volume in South Korea have increased manifold. They lack credit, inputs, business knowledge of cooperatives is limited. But women entrepreneurs through green cooperatives, information can help them to produce and market their products.

The study by (Cherian, Jacob; 2012) introduces the concept of green marketing and different consumer attributes are related to green marketing that is by a change in awareness of individuals and business are trying to exploit this potential of green market industry and need to shift towards eco-friendly life-styles.

By educating the masses, businesses put emphasis on promoting green products by taking into consideration the demand and attitude of the consumers.

(Sumathi, Anuradha, Akash; 2014) brought the need for production of green products and services for a sustainable future. So, there is a need to identify the opportunities in green business and the perception regarding the opportunities.

Study by (Brough, Wilkie, Ma, Isaac, Gal; 2016) brings out that there is an association between green behaviour and femininity and women are likely to accept environmentally friendly products. Men are more concerned than women in maintaining their gender-identity and this green-feminine stereotype may influence men to avoid green products and services.

Findings show that there is a link between gender-identity and environmental sustainability.

Study by (Sudiasjayanti, 2017) shows that women are more tied to the issue of green compared to men by using New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) as measurement. The study explored the green entrepreneurial intention of both male and female students.

Results concluded that the interest of men and women to be a green entrepreneur are not identical but there is an insignificant difference.

(Kimuli, Nagujja; 2022) explores a study in Uganda where sustainable entrepreneurship practices undertaken by women-owned businesses, what are the challenges faced and what strategies need to be overcome for sustainable business practices.

Results show women entrepreneur adopt social, environmental and economic practices in their business to overcome the risks and adopt sustainable business practices.

(Kant; 2022) aims to assess the effect of indigenous culture, local resources, environment-friendly, innovation on entrepreneurial development.

The study found that indigenous culture, skills, local resources, human capital, Innovation have an impact on entrepreneurial development.

(Bharathi, Kalaivani;2023) brings out the objective of the study that women in Vellore district, Tamil Nadu have to face certain problems and challenges, producing bio-degradable products in production, selling, marketing and socio-cultural aspects. Women entrepreneur are making a shift from household work to launching an enterprise or diversifying their products from the existing ones, thus creating wealth, employment and social good. The global pressure for environmental protection has encouraged to make or sell bio-degradable products.

The ecopreneurs can achieve the educational sustainable development goals such as reducing pollution, global warming, climate change etc.

Women have a critical role to maintain sustainable entrepreneurship. Study by (Rahayu, 2024) brings out the data, collected from 158 females engaged in small and medium enterprises.

(Windiyani, Hamid, Syamsuddin, Ikbal.; 2024) examines the synergy between women entrepreneurship and eco-friendly practices in influencing the orientation of the market and marketing performance of women entrepreneurs. Online data was collected from 131 female entrepreneurs.

Theoretical Framework

Studies reveal that an association is observed between green behavior and femininity leading to a stereotype behavior that green consumers are more feminine. This green feminine stereotype behaviour may motivate men to avoid green behaviour. Indigenous skills, local resources, human capital and innovation have an effect on entrepreneurial development (Kant, 2022). Women entrepreneurs should be provided with credit access, market information, training in management skills etc. So, women empowerment through entrepreneurial skills helps them to produce and market their products. So, policy makers should take planning policy in such a way to strengthen women entrepreneurs' sustainable business activities and to grab the opportunities. Production of eco-friendly products and an eco-friendly environment create opportunities for women to undertake production activity along with carrying out their family chores and creating employment,

generating income etc. for the economy. It plays a key role for its contribution and a solution to the economy. They actively contributed to the development of the world economy. Women Entrepreneurship has got a transformation with the advent of eco-friendly women entrepreneurship which play a significant role in achieving self-sufficiency (Windiyani, Hamid, Syamsuddin, Ikbali; 2024).

Findings indicate green entrepreneurial motivation play a vital role for creating ecological awareness and the need to develop environmentally-friendly products. Results bring out that women contribute to inclusive and sustainable development.

Thus, the literature review brings out the fact that women enjoy being an ecopreneur. Green entrepreneurial awareness as well as motivation play a crucial role in producing eco-friendly products. Local culture for producing the indigenous goods play a vital role for women to take part in production and which becomes beneficial for the society as a whole by creating income and employment opportunities.

Results show that women entrepreneurship and eco-friendly products has a significant positive influence on market orientation, leading to a significant positive influence on market performance. The findings show the potential for sustainable businesses, gender-inclusive business strategies which will not only lead to business success but contribute to environmental advancement and progress of the society.

Case Studies

1. Moumita Debnath

She is the owner of Mou Terracotta Artificial Jewellery. The age of the company is over 17 years. Before her marriage, at the age of 21, she had started the business due to her artistic nature and fond of making hand-made items with the help of wastage materials such as old refills of pens, broken plastic or metal products to do various designs. These designs are done on clay to make porcelain artificial jewelleryes.

At the beginning she has started this business from home itself but later on as her business grew so due to lack of space, she has transferred it into a separate outlet in the market place. The place of her operation is Jadavpur market. Mainly through offline she uses to deal with the wholesaler along with her husband's support and using online platform through social media networking, use to do retail selling both within and outside the state.

Her motivation to start the business is her artistic nature and also her wish to become independent. As her educational qualification is restricted till class 10, so she hoped not to get any good job. Thus, she has tried to utilize her skills to do a self-owned business. This initiation before her marriage was due to financial crunch of her father's family, one of the reasons why she could not continue her studies and had to involve herself in earning their livelihood.

Photo 1: The Entrepreneur (Moumita Debnath) along with her product



Source: The Entrepreneur (Moumita Debnath)

But today she is highly satisfied thinking that everything happens for good. Unless she had been in such financial struggle and was forced to start her business at the early life of her careers, she would not been able to earn this amount of money that she earns today, which is more than she would have earned, if she does a job. She has started her business investing only ten thousand rupees and now her yearly turn over from the business is nearly 25 lakhs. Even she is as well mentally satisfied to give employment to few more women nearly thirteen in numbers so as to assist them to earn their livelihood and to support their family financially. She has a son of age 13, who is also very much interested in her business and want to join after completing his study.

Moreover, she claims that in this highly populated world and increasing environmental pollution, the terracotta items that her company produces is environmentally friendly and bio-degradable in nature.

2. Shibani Sutradhar

She was a married housewife, when the initiation for starting a business came into her mind. The motivation that she got for this was especially from her mother-in-law, who got inspired by looking at the various artistic hand-crafted things made by me with the help of wastage and natural ingredients.

Her law's home is at Bardhaman, West Bengal. The home is surrounded by huge plot of land where several types of trees are grown. There is also a pond just beside it. After, she got over with the daily household chores, her habit was to just sit beside the window and enjoy the nature, the trees, the shrubs, the bushes, the grasses and obviously the big pond where the swans and cranes used to remain busy with their usual struggles of finding foods. Looking at the nature she was always thinking how to utilize the ingredients of nature which is easily available to make beautiful creative items. From then the urge of making several decorative and useful items came into my minds. The first thought that came to her was with the leaf of the peepal tree. She uses to soak the leaves in water for few days. After a few days only the skeleton from the leaves remains. By dying these 'leaf skeleton' with variety of colours, beautiful decorative items for flower vases are made. She also uses to make pen stands, flower and fruit baskets using the pop sticks. Many more ingredients she uses in making the crafted products such as bamboo sticks, coconut shell, coconut husk, dried coconut leaf, straw, jute, wastage papers, stones, etc.

Photo 2: The Entrepreneur (Shibani Sutradhar) along with her product



Source: The Entrepreneur (Shibani Sutradhar)

Now, after 15 years of starting her business, she is the successful owner of her company, Sadhana Crafts. The name Sadhana is the name of her mother-in-law. She is not there anymore but her

inspiration brought Shibani here today where she is. Various types of decorative and gift items she uses to make at home and supply at the market place for sale. Today, she is very happy to teach her techniques of 'crafts making' to many of the women. After training, I am also able to provide employment to few of the women in her own company. Her initial investment was surprisingly 500 rupees. But now her profitable return from the business is nearly one lakh per month, and over 10 lakhs in a year.

This is not the end; she is also very happy to get recognition as the government registered master trainer of the self-help group. She uses to go far and near to give training to the members of the self-help groups not only for the crafted items but also for making several food processing items such Jams, Pickels and Sauces, etc.

3. Debapriya Dutta

She is the owner of Priya's Natural, producing organic cosmetics products for skin and hair care. Her home town is in Bolpur. Her age is at in the group of thirties. She has started the company just at the onset of the pandemic after taking the training from one of the renowned institutes. As she said that the idea of making organic cosmetic products were already there within her since her college days so she used to follow her regular skin care and hair care routine with the help of home-based products, made up of natural ingredients. The result that she used to get was not at all comparable with high priced chemical based marketed product. As such she had inculcated a wish within her so as to share her knowledge to the society obviously in return of money. That is how the business idea came into her mind. Thus, she has decided to train myself of storing the organic based products for longer days.

Accordingly, her plan has become successful and at present she is well satisfied to call herself 'a successful green entrepreneur' who is able to provide employment to a number of individuals both men and women, though the majority are women workers. She has started the business with rupees twenty-five thousand and now she is earning nearly 60 lakhs per annum. The raw materials that she uses to make her products are orange peel, neroli, gundhal, neem bark, neem leaf, mint leaf, basil leaf, henna leaf, turmeric, kesar, rose petal, amla, shikakai, milk, honey, bentonite clay, beet root, chandan, etc.

Photo 3: Priya's Natural Products and Product Making Processes



Source: The Entrepreneur (Debapriya Dutta)

She doesn't have to do any such financial struggle during the start-up as the investment cost, she had to bear is not much since most of the natural ingredients that are used in her production processes are easily available from nearby common trees and plants. Today, she has more than 50 employees working for her and she is very happy to serve the customer by providing my products from both offline and online stores. Moreover, the feedback that she uses to get from my customers is very much appreciable.

4. Moumita Mukherjee

She has started her business named as 'Kolakhshetra' at the post pandemic year, 2022. She is the seller of Santiniketan leather product and hemp bag. The hemp is a bast fibre obtained from the plant Cannabis Sativa. Cannabis is a scientific name in Bengal known as Ganja plant. Both the materials that are being used for the purpose of production are of the biodegradable in nature. As such, the business in which they are involved is sustainable and the most demandable in today's world. She

along with her husband started the business though the first motivation for the business came from her side only. Her husband was a private job employee and a B-tech engineer and She is an honors graduate. She is the direct seller of the product via online platform. When the business grew then she was facing a problem in running the business altogether by her own. Not only she was selling inside her home country but also many foreigners became her customers. It became much easier for her to capture the market at a large scale since she was fully concentrating on the online mode for selling. Her husband saw that she earned more than him through this on-line marketing platform. He understood that the business is the only solution through which their dream can become true. According to him, the opportunity cost of earning is much more if he will choose to work instead of doing the business. Thus, finally leaving his job, joined her business permanently. Now, it become their family business and the only source of income. Their initial investment at the start-up was Rupees ten thousand only.

Photo 4: The Entrepreneur's (Moumita Mukherjee's) husband (along with the product during the Live Session



Source: The Entrepreneur (Moumita Mukherjee)

Now at present just after two years of their business they are earning nearly one lakh per month. Occasionally, they also participate in the government registered fair and offline exhibitions conducted by professional business groups usually at the time of various festivals like Poila Baishak, Durga Puja, Jamai Sasthi, etc.

5. Mina Sharma:

Being a housewife, she has been motivated to start a business not for her but for the other women in her locality. She claims, there is no such financial urge from her part nor any urge to do something to earn fame in the society. Moreover, in her family no one had a minimum experience of business. She in her neighborhood is renowned as a kind hearted woman always there staying by side of every woman in need. More often she used to give several business ideas to those women facing financial crunch. But most of the women in their locality are not having that much ability to invest. Thus, failed to implement the business ideas given by her due to the very reason. One day during the Durga Puja celebration, when she was sitting with a group of women discussing with them with several business plans and ideas, suddenly one of the women raised her voice and asked her why not she is planning to open a business venture, in spite of having so many business plans? If it happens, the women who are in financial need then will get a job and thus can bring an end to their poverty. Those women who have no financial ability and investment capability was basically in need for a certain income and that will be obvious if they get a salaried job. But doing businesses for them is very much uncertain and risky.

Photo 5: The Process of Bamboo Jewellery Making



Source: The Entrepreneur (Mina Sharma)

Thus, the women in her society instilled a spirit within her to have an entrepreneurial startup. Thus, she had opened up a business in the year 2015 not for her but for the women in her society, so as to provide them a financial security and stability. The product that she produces is mainly jewelry that are made up of bamboo. This idea of making bamboo jewellery came into her mind as they have seen few of the women in their locality have the ability to make design through crafting of bamboo which has been easily available. Moreover, this is the business idea where a minimum investment is required. Her initial investment for purchasing the raw materials was fifteen thousand. But now she is earning in over 50 lakhs in a year. Bamboo toothbrush is another new product that our company has recently launched. The name of my company is Nature's Craft and Jewel. The reason why I choose to produce bamboo product is that it is nature's friendly which can be a sustainable business in today's over-polluted world. Today nearly 16 employees are working and all of them are women. A true confession is that without the women labor, my work would be impossible. The thing that I only own; is the financial and leadership ability. Their initiatives and motivations brought me today at the place where I am.

Facts and Conclusion

There are several types of bio-degradable products that are eco-friendly in nature, produced by the upcoming entrepreneurs of this century, where there is a huge population and increasing environmental pollution. Among these products few industries are dominated by men and few are dominated by women entrepreneurs. The bio-degradable products in which the women are much more concentrated are Reusable cloth bags, Clay Jewellery, Jute, leather and hemp bags, Jewellery and Saree Cosmetics based on organic products, Sugarcane and cornstarch Bagasse plates, bowls and Cutleries, Leaf Plates, Bamboo Jewellery, Bamboo Toothbrush, Decorating items such as artificial flower and vase sticks from waste plant parts, Recycled Paper Products, Water Saving Devices, Biodegradable Packaging. The products that the men are mainly focussed upon are Recycling polyester product such as sportswear, Solar Energy Devices, Vegan Pet Accessories, Compostable audio accessories such as mobile case made up of 'pela' or Chinese wax, Sustainable Office Accessories like Laptop Stand, Pen Stand, Pet Toys from recycled plastic bottles, Sustainable Yoga Mats made from renewable rubber.

It has been seen that most of the women are choosing to produce and sell eco-friendly products since the cost of production is minimum and as they are more concerned about the environment. There is a stereo-type notion that women produce green-products and so men are less likely to produce these kinds of products. By nature, they are found to have more patience than men, and also there is inculcated artistic nature within the women which helps them a lot to produce

handcrafts and decorative items. Moreover, the women are of the character not to waste the resources and so far, seems to be habituated with optimally utilizing the resources and reuses the resources in a modified version of it. Thus, the recycling and utilizing of the waste products are found to be originated from the very old era with the women.

Referring to the case studies, it can be seen that since business women have to play a dual role both in household and business units, thus they are very much comfortable to produce handmade items during their free time as these are less laborious in nature. The motivational factor that can be seen from the case studies are mainly belongs to the push motivational factors (Dhar, 2017). Women who have financial ability to invest, is in a position for a start-up business, comes as a help for other women as there is a financial problem faced by others in the society. Though many women might be having strong financial support, but when it comes to open up a business for their own then 'investment' becomes a challenging criterion. Thus, the items of production which requires the minimum investment becomes advantageous for them to proceed further in opening up for a business venture. Hence, the taken alternative hypothesis is found to be a valid one, whereas the null hypothesis has become void.

Future Prospects and Limitations of the Study

The study is mainly concentrated on the literature review and case studies so as to focus on the facts in the real-life scenario to understand the position of women in the society producing eco-friendly products. A comparative analysis has also been done between men and women based upon the literature survey.

Since the study is restricted to the qualitative analysis only, there is an opportunity to have quantitative study through the collection of primary data. Thus, the study is limited to theoretical and qualitative analysis as because we thought before going into the empirical one, we need to gain knowledge regarding the theoretical background and real-life scenario of the present situation.

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