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Women Entrepreneurs in Dairy Product Marketing: a Study in Kanyakumari District

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role and contribution of women entrepreneurs in the marketing of dairy products in Kanyakumari district. With a sample size of 75 women entrepreneurs actively involved in dairy-related businesses, the research aims to understand their marketing strategies, challenges, and the socio-economic impact of their entrepreneurial activities. Data was collected through structured questionnaires and personal interviews, focusing on factors such as market accessibility, customer reach, pricing, product diversification, and government support. The findings reveal that while women entrepreneurs play a significant role in the local dairy economy, they face multiple hurdles, including lack of formal training, limited access to credit, and marketing infrastructure constraints. Despite these challenges, many women have shown resilience and innovation in promoting their dairy products. The study emphasizes the need for targeted policy interventions, skill development programs, and marketing support systems to empower women in this sector. The research contributes to the broader understanding of gender and entrepreneurship in rural agribusiness and highlights the potential for women-led growth in the dairy industry of Kanyakumari district.

Keywords: women entrepreneurs, dairy products, innovations, promoting

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has emerged as a powerful tool for the economic empowerment of women, especially in rural areas. Among the various sectors, dairy farming and dairy product marketing have become accessible and sustainable avenues for women to generate income, contribute to their family welfare, and participate actively in local economies. In India, women play a crucial role in the dairy sector, not only in milk production but also in processing and marketing value-added dairy products such as curd, ghee, paneer, and flavored milk.In Kanyakumari district, where agriculture and allied activities are prominent, many women have ventured into dairy-based entrepreneurship, either individually or as part of self-help groups and cooperatives. Their engagement in dairy product marketing reflects not only their economic aspirations but also their ability to manage production, handle customers, and adapt to changing market demands.Despite their growing involvement, women entrepreneurs face various challenges including inadequate training, limited access to credit, restricted market reach, and social constraints. However, their contribution to the rural economy remains significant and often under-recognized.This study focuses on identifying the marketing practices adopted by women entrepreneurs, the barriers they face, and the socio-economic outcomes of their entrepreneurial activities in the dairy sector in Kanyakumari district. With a sample of 75 women entrepreneurs, the research aims to provide insights that can guide policy makers, NGOs, and development agencies to design effective support mechanisms to enhance women's participation in dairy product marketing

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Women in rural areas, particularly in Kanyakumari district, have increasingly taken up entrepreneurship in dairy product marketing as a means of livelihood and empowerment. However, despite their active involvement, they face numerous challenges such as limited access to credit, lack of formal training in marketing, poor infrastructure, and societal constraints that hinder their business growth. Many operate on a small scale with minimal exposure to broader markets, making it difficult to expand their ventures and achieve sustainable income. While various support schemes exist, the gap between policy and practice often leaves these entrepreneurs without the necessary tools to thrive.

This study seeks to understand the key challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in dairy product marketing, analyze their current practices, and suggest ways to enhance their effectiveness and contribution to the local economy

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Arun Hindurao Patil (2024) conducted a study to explore how microfinance and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) influence women's participation in dairy entrepreneurship in India. The findings revealed that women who were part of SHGs and had access to microfinance experienced greater economic empowerment. These women were more confident in managing their dairy businesses, improving not only income levels but also their role in household decision-making. The study also highlighted that such support enabled better practices in clean milk production, improved hygiene standards, and helped the women access broader markets for their products. Overall, the research emphasized the critical role of financial inclusion and collective support systems in strengthening women's positions in the dairy sector.**Dahiya, Rani, and Kaushik (2021)** carried out a field study in Haryana involving 50 rural women who were members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and actively engaged in producing value-added dairy products. The study aimed to assess the impact of training on their skills in making paneer and curd. After attending hands-on training programs, the women showed a significant improvement in their technical knowledge and production practices. The knowledge gain reached up to 94%, indicating that practical, skill-based training can substantially enhance the competency of rural women in dairy product processing. The study highlights the importance of experiential learning in empowering women entrepreneurs. It also emphasizes the role of SHGs in facilitating training and improving livelihoods through dairy entrepreneurship.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the socio-economic background of women entrepreneurs involved in dairy product marketing.
2. To study the types of dairy products marketed by women entrepreneurs in Kanyakumari district.
3. To understand the marketing strategies used by women entrepreneurs in dairy business.
4. To examine the challenges faced by women in marketing dairy products.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Method

Primary Data: Collected through structured questionnaires and personal interviews.
Secondary Data: Gathered from books, journals, websites, government records, and previous research studies.
Sampling Method: The study used **purposive sampling** to select women actively involved in dairy product marketing.
Sample Size: The sample consists of **75 women entrepreneurs** from various parts of Kanyakumari District.

Tools of Analysis

Percentage Analysis
Weighted Average Method
Ranking Technique

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Obj 1: To identify the socio-economic background of women entrepreneurs involved in dairy product marketing.

Table 1Socio-economic background of women entrepreneurs

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (Years)	25–35 years	24	32.0
	36–45 years	30	40.0
	46–60 years	21	28.0
Education Level	SSLC	15	20.0
	HSCy	25	33.3
	Under Graduate	22	29.3
	Post Graduate	13	17.3
Marital Status	Married	61	81.3

	Unmarried	8	10.70
	Widowed	6	8.00
Family Type	Nuclear	48	64.00
	Joint	27	36.0
Monthly Income (INR)	Below ₹10,000	19	25.3
	₹10,001 – ₹20,000	38	50.7
	Above ₹20,000	18	24.0
Experience (Years)	1–5 years	29	38.7
	6–10 years	31	41.3
	Above 10 years	15	20.0

Source: Primary Data

The socio-economic profile reveals that a majority of women entrepreneurs (40%) fall within the age group of **36–45 years**, indicating that women in their middle age are more actively engaged in dairy marketing. This is followed by 32% in the 25–35 age group and 28% in the 46–60 age group, showing a balanced age distribution.

In terms of **education level**, 33.3% have completed **Higher Secondary (HSC)** education, while 29.3% are **undergraduates**. Only 17.3% are **postgraduates**, and 20% have completed **SSLC (Secondary School Level)**. A vast majority (81.3%) are **married**, showing that dairy entrepreneurship is predominantly taken up by married women who may be contributing to household income. Unmarried (10.7%) and widowed (8%) participation is relatively low but still significant.Regarding **family type**, 64% of the respondents live in **nuclear families**, indicating greater individual decision-making roles, while 36% are from joint families.The **monthly income** of most women (50.7%) falls between **₹10,001 – ₹20,000**, showing that dairy marketing provides a modest but stable source of income. About 25.3% earn below ₹10,000, and only 24% earn above ₹20,000 per month.When it comes to **experience**, the largest group (41.3%) has **6–10 years** of experience in dairy marketing, followed by 38.7% with **1–5 years**,. Only 20% have more than 10 years of experience, showing room for long-term enterprise development.

Obj 2: To study the types of dairy products marketed by women entrepreneurs in Kanyakumari district.

Table 2 Types of dairy products marketed by women entrepreneurs

S.No	Dairy Product	Frequency	Percentage
1	Milk	60	80.0
2	Curd	52	69.3
3	Ghee	38	50.7
4	Paneer	30	40.0
5	Butter	26	34.7
6	Buttermilk	42	56.0
7	Flavored Milk	18	24.0
8	Khoa (Mawa)	16	21.3
9	Ice Cream (Local)	10	13.3
10	Whey-based Products	8	10.7

Most women entrepreneurs market basic dairy products like milk (80%), curd (69.3%), and buttermilk (56%), as these have regular demand in the local market. About 50.7% sell ghee, and 40% are involved in paneer making, which shows they also focus on value-added products. Fewer women sell items like flavored milk (24%), khoa (21.3%), ice cream (13.3%), and whey-based products (10.7%), likely due to the need for more resources, storage, or lesser demand. This shows that most women prefer to market easily perishable and widely used products.

Obj 3:To understand the marketing strategies used by women entrepreneurs in dairy business.

Table 3 Marketing strategies used by women entrepreneurs

S.No	Marketing Strategy	Average Score	Rank
1	Word of Mouth	61.3	2
2	Attractive Packaging	43.3	8
3	Sales through SHG Groups	59	3
4	Participation in Exhibitions	49.3	6
5	Home Delivery	63.3	1
6	Discounts to Regular Buyers	51.7	5
7	Social Media/WhatsApp Promotion	45.7	7
8	Local Market Sales	54.7	4

Source: Primary Data The analysis of marketing strategies used by women entrepreneurs in dairy product marketing reveals that **Home Delivery** is the most preferred and effective method, with the highest average score of 63.3, followed by **Word of Mouth** (61.3) and **Sales through SHG Groups** (59), highlighting the strong role of personal networks and group-based selling. **Local Market Sales** also remains important, securing the fourth rank with a score of 54.7. Moderate importance is given to strategies like **Discounts to Regular Buyers** (51.7) and **Participation in Exhibitions** (49.3). However, digital approaches such as **Social Media/WhatsApp Promotion** (45.7) and **Attractive Packaging** (43.3) ranked lower, indicating limited adoption or effectiveness of modern marketing techniques among the respondents.To examine the challenges faced by women in marketing dairy products.

Challenges faced by women in marketing dairy products.

S.No	Challenge	Weighted Average Score	Rank
1	Low Market Price for Products	4.52	3
2	Lack of Transport Facilities	4.43	2
3	Difficulty in Accessing Urban Markets	4.29	5
4	Inadequate Storage/Preservation Facilities	4.17	6
5	Lack of Awareness about Market Demand	4.04	4
6	Competition from Branded Products	3.78	1
7	Lack of Training in Marketing Techniques	3.66	7
8	Social and Family Constraints	3.52	8

Source: Primary Data

The weighted average analysis of challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in marketing dairy products reveals multiple constraints impacting their business activities. One of the most prominent issues is **Low Market Price for Products** (weighted score 4.52, Rank 3), showing that women often do not receive fair value for their efforts. **Lack of Transport Facilities** (4.43, Rank 2) and **Difficulty in Accessing Urban Markets** (4.29, Rank 5) highlight logistical challenges that limit the reach and profitability of their dairy ventures. Furthermore, **Inadequate Storage/Preservation Facilities** (4.17, Rank 6) and **Lack of Awareness about Market Demand** (4.04, Rank 4) point to infrastructure and knowledge gaps. Interestingly, **Competition from Branded Products** (3.78) received Rank 1, indicating that well-established commercial brands are seen as major obstacles to local marketing success. Lower-ranked but still relevant issues include **Lack of Training in Marketing Techniques** (3.66, Rank 7) and **Social and Family Constraints** (3.52, Rank 8), emphasizing the need for targeted training and social support systems to enhance women's participation in the dairy sector.

FINDINGS

· Most women entrepreneurs (40%) are in the age group of 36–45 years.

· The majority have studied up to Higher Secondary or undergraduate level.

· Most of them (81.3%) are married and come from nuclear families (64%).
· Half of the women earn between ₹10,001–₹20,000 per month from dairy marketing.
· Many women (41.3%) have 6–10 years of experience in dairy business.
· Commonly sold products are milk (80%), curd (69.3%), and buttermilk (56%).
· Fewer women sell value-added items like ghee, paneer, and flavored milk.
· Popular marketing methods include home delivery, word of mouth, and SHG group sales.
· Use of social media and attractive packaging is less common.
· Main challenges are competition from branded products, low prices, and transport issues.
· Other problems include lack of market knowledge, poor storage, and less training

1. ·**Conduct regular training programs** on dairy processing, hygiene, and marketing.
2. **Improve transport facilities** to help women reach distant and urban markets.
3. **Establish storage and preservation units** to reduce spoilage of dairy products.
4. **Create direct market linkages** with shops, cooperatives, and online platforms.
5. **Promote digital marketing tools** like WhatsApp and Facebook for local sales.
6. **Encourage formation of dairy cooperatives or SHG collectives** for group marketing.

CONCLUSION

The study on *Women Entrepreneurs in Dairy Product Marketing in Kanyakumari District* reveals that women play a significant role in the local dairy sector, contributing to both household income and rural economic development. Most of these women operate on a small scale, using traditional marketing strategies such as home delivery and word of mouth. Despite their enthusiasm and commitment, they face several challenges including low market prices, poor transport facilities, competition from branded products, and lack of storage or preservation options. However, with proper training, financial support, and improved infrastructure, their entrepreneurial potential can be significantly enhanced. The findings suggest that strengthening SHG networks, adopting digital tools, and providing government support can empower women entrepreneurs and enable them to expand their market reach, improve product quality, and achieve sustainable growth in the dairy sector.

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