

## A study on role of women in direct selling with special reference to Coimbatore district

**Deepalakshmi M**

Assistant professor, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Tamil Nadu, India.

### Abstract

The traditional gender role expectations and attitudes in a developing nation like India, women are coming up in a big way. Enabling women to help themselves through direct selling enterprises raises their sense of self-worth and has social, economic and community benefits.

One is that the expertise and experience are usually perpetuated and passed on to others making them successful as well. Women entrepreneurs in the earlier years after independence and up to 1970s were confined to entrepreneurship in traditional areas like food processing, preservation, embroidery, knitting and stitching. However, later in the 1980s subsequently women have branched out to several nontraditional areas like engineering, consultancy, advertising, nursery education, beauty parlors, health clinics, boutiques, fine arts and latest being direct selling enterprises. In the modern scenario with rising aspirations of people and increasing prices, direct selling is a good career opportunity for women as compared to other jobs. It can be self-employment training for the poor women and entrepreneurship to those who are educated, skilled and more resourceful. Most of the women entrepreneurs are engaged in direct selling companies like Avon, oriflamme, Tupperware etc. Their investment is less than Rs.2000 so they will earn profits in a short period of time and increase their living standard.

**Keywords:** direct selling, food processing, preservation, embroidery, Coimbatore district

### 1. Introduction

The Vedic literature says that gods send prosperity to the house where women are worshipped. The essence of Indian culture lies in its respect to the mother, father and teacher. Mother's rank is regarded as the highest as she is the originator and sustainer of life. The society which allows freedom to its women and enables them to make a suitable contribution to it is an ideal society. It is worthy of being called civilized and cultured. Modern women nowadays capable of achieving any task and creative have a significant role in business. It's hard to imagine, how the world of business would be without direct intervention of women.

Direct selling is a dynamic, vibrant, rapidly expanding channel of distribution for marketing of products and services directly to consumers. Direct selling provides important benefits to individuals for those who desire an opportunity to earn an income and build a business of their own. It offers an alternative to traditional employment for those who desire to choose a flexible income earning opportunity to supplement their household income or whose responsibilities or circumstances do not allow for regular part-time or full time employment. In many cases, direct selling opportunities develop into a fulfilling career for those who achieve success and choose to pursue their independent direct selling business on a full time basis. The origins of India's direct selling industry are dated to 1995 or 1996, 1996 being the year when IDSA was formally established. IDSA directly has 18 members and indirectly, more than 1 million independent salespeople. However, the number of direct sellers is estimated to be almost 4 million in 2010-11. There are presently over 60 national DSAs represented in its membership, and in 2012 it is estimated that worldwide retail sales accounted for more than US\$169 Billion through the activities of more than 89.7 million independent sales representatives.

### 2. Objectives

To study the socio economic profile of the respondents.

To study the factors that motivated the respondents to enter into the direct selling business.

#### 2.1 Scope of study

This study mainly focuses on the socio economic impact of women-owned businesses through direct selling companies. This study creates awareness to household women to start up their own business with a small investment and to earn money in a short period of time and to become a successful entrepreneur in future.

#### 2.2 Sources of data

Both primary and secondary data have been used in this study. Primary data have been collected using a structured questionnaire.

Secondary data have been collected from newspapers, journals, magazines and websites.

#### 2.3 Sample size

Purposive random sample technique has been adopted to select 125 respondents from Coimbatore district.

#### 2.4 Area of study

The study is conducted in and around Coimbatore district.

#### 2.5 Period of study

The period of study is from June 2014 to September 2014

#### 2.6 Percentage Analysis

Simple percentage analysis is carried out for most of the questions. The analysis describes the classification of the

respondents falling under each category. The percentage analysis is used for standardization and comparison. Diagrams

and charts depicted are in support of the analysis.

**Table 1:** Personal profile of the respondents

		No.	%
Age	18-30 Years	38	30.4
	31-40 Years	43	34.4
	41-50 Years	35	28.0
	Above 50 Years	9	7.2
Educational Qualification	No formal education	6	4.8
	School Level	26	20.8
	Graduate	67	53.6
	Diploma	2	1.6
	Post Graduate	20	16.0
	Professionally Qualified	4	3.2
Marital Status	Married	105	84.0
	Single	20	16.0
Occupational Status	Student	12	9.6
	Employed	26	20.8
	Professional	8	6.4
	Business	31	24.8
	Housewife	45	36.0
	Full time direct selling distributor	3	2.4
Family structure	Nuclear Family	104	83.2
	Joint Family	21	16.8
Size of the family	2 members	9	7.2
	3-4 members	83	66.4
	5-6 members	31	24.8
	Above 6 members	2	1.6
Family Monthly Income	Up to Rs.50,000	48	38.4
	Rs 50,001- Rs 1,00,000	37	29.6
	Rs 1,00,001 - Rs 1,50,000	31	24.8
	Rs 1,50,001 - Rs 2,00,000	5	4.0
	Above Rs 2,00,000	4	3.2
No. of earning members in the family	1-2		
	3-4		
	5-6		
	Above 6		
Residential Area	Urban	93	74.4
	Semi-Urban	16	12.8
	Rural	16	12.8
Awareness about Direct Selling Companies	Tupperware	120	96
	TIENS	12	9.6
	Oriflame	70	56
	Max Life Insurance	55	44
	Hindustan lever	70	56
	Daehsan trading (India)P.Ltd	6	4.8
	Herbalife international india	52	41.6
	Elken international India P. Ltd	3	2.4
	Amway	118	94.4
	Avon beauty products	47	37.6

- 34.4 percent of the respondents belong to the age group ranging from 31 to 40 years.
- 53.6 percent of the respondents are graduates.
- 84 percent of the respondents are married.
- 36 percent of the respondents are housewives.
- 83.2 percent of the respondents are from nuclear family.
- 66.4 percent of the respondents have 3-4 members in their family.
- 38.4 per cent of the respondents have a monthly income ranging up to Rs. 50,000.
- 87.2 percent of the respondents have 1-2 earning members in their family.

- 74.4 percent of the respondents are residing in urban area.
- 96 percent of the respondents are aware of Tupperware products.
- 38 percent of the respondents have taken Tupperware distributorship.
- 44 percent of the respondents have earned a monthly income ranging from Rs.5001 to Rs.10000 through direct selling business.

**2.7 Weighted Average**

Mean in which each item being averaged is multiplied by a number (weight) based on the item’s relative importance. The

result is summed and the total is derived by the sum of the weights. Weighted averages are used extensively in descriptive

statistical analysis such as index numbers. It is also called weighted mean.

**Table 2:** The weightage for the level of importance on the motivational factors that respondents consider in conducting the direct selling business

S. no	Extrinsic Factor	VI	I	MI	SI	NI	TOT	AVG	RANK
1.	To make a lot of money	40	46	17	11	11	468	3.744	3
2.	To get rich quickly	15	45	31	13	21	395	3.16	6
3.	To be free to name my own hour	20	50	34	15	6	438	3.504	4
4.	To be free to work wherever I want-including from home	35	44	28	15	3	468	3.744	3
5.	To have influence over and create a positive impact upon my community	19	38	38	15	15	406	3.248	5
6.	To be able to have lavish lifestyle	18	35	37	16	19	392	3.136	7
7.	To have financial security	50	34	32	7	2	498	3.984	1
8.	To be able to vocation more often	46	44	24	8	3	497	3.976	2

Source: Computed

The above table shows the weightage for the level of importance on the motivational factors that respondents consider in conducting the direct selling business and it is inferred that ‘financial security’ has been the most important motivational factor influencing the respondents to become distributors which is evident with the highest mean score of 3.984 and hence it is assigned rank I followed by ‘able to vocation more often’ (mean 3.976). Next rank has been given to the factors ‘to make a lot of money’ (mean 3.744) and ‘to be free to work wherever I want-including from home’ (mean 3.744). ‘To be free to name my own hour’ has been given rank four with the mean score of 3.504. Next rank has been given to ‘To have influence over and create a positive impact upon my community’ with a mean followed by the factor ‘to get rich quickly’ (mean 3.16) and the least important is given to the motivating factor ‘to be able to have lavish lifestyle’ (mean 3.136).

The weightage for the level of importance on the motivational factors that respondents consider in conducting the direct selling business, to have financial security ranks 1<sup>st</sup>.

**3. Suggestions**

Women distributors operate individually, which limits their business function. To achieve more in terms of sales volume as well as in widening network they could team up with their co-applicants in order to reach the desired goals by gaining their moral support.

Most distributors focus on meeting the new members and try to recruit them as their down-lines, which leads only to widen their network but they give less importance to sales promotion activities. If they concentrate on both the aspects equally, there would be a remarkable change in the volume of the business which ultimately increases their income.

The IDSA (Indian Direct Selling Association) prohibits direct selling companies from advertising their products, as they insist that sales must be through word of mouth only. Because of this the people residing at rural areas are not aware of direct selling companies. Flexibility in this rule would help the entrepreneurs to capture more sales, as advertising is a very powerful tool.

**4. Conclusion**

In spite of traditional gender role expectations and attitudes in a developing nation like India, women are coming up in a big way. Enabling women to help themselves through direct selling enterprises raises their sense of self-worth and has

social, economic and community benefits. One of them is that expertise and experience are usually perpetuated and passed on to others making them successful as well. Direct selling is one of the fastest growing methods of sales in the world. Many millions of people of all nationalities are now enjoying the benefits of this method compared to the traditional way of selling through retail stores. From the study it was concluded that it is easy for anyone to join any enterprise, as the membership fee is less than Rs.2000 only. Mostly women join the different enterprises due to typically feminine nature of products and the success of friends in business. Almost all the respondents engaged in different direct selling entrepreneurial activities and earned income per month from their enterprises ranging from rupees Rs.5001-Rs10000 per month. Most of the respondents will continue to be a distributor of direct selling company.

**5. References**

1. Babener, Jeffrey. Network marketing: Window of opportunity, Legaline Publications US, Oregon, 1992.
2. Berry, Richard, Direct seller, from door to door to network marketing, Butterworth Heinemann. 1997.
3. Crittenden VL, Crittenden WF. Developing the sales force, growing the business: The direct selling experience. Business Horizons. 2004; 47(5):39.
4. Ki sun Hwang. The best way of network Marketing, Academy Book, 2003.
5. Sunon Supanit, Explanation of distribution in direct selling system and direct marketing, Winyuchon publication house, 2002.
6. Uma Sekaran and Roger Boougie, Research methods for business- A skill building approach, Sareen Printing Press, New Delhi, Reprint, 2012.
7. Yammarino FJ, Dubinsky AJ. Superior-subordinate relationship: A multiple level of analysis approach. Human Relations. 1992; 45(6):575-560.