

## SWOT ANALYSIS OF SELECTED ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES PERFORMED BY RURAL WOMEN

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### ABSTRACT

Women are increasingly seen as an important index for the development of nation. It is necessary to foster economic development among women and encourage them to take up entrepreneurial activities so that the significant workforce of the country may be utilized more effectively for the progress of the country. The reason of the study aim to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the selected entrepreneurial activities i.e. shawl weaving, carpet weaving, alpina making and pine work. SWOT analysis of these selected entrepreneurial activities showed good product life, long work experience and good family support as strengths. The common weaknesses were low rate of return, too much competition in the market, inappropriate location of enterprise to sell the goods and high cost of the product. Main threats revealed by the respondents were scarcity of raw material and machinery and low demand of the product in the market. Major opportunities reported by rural women were good quality of the product and remarkable designs features. Therefore focus should be given to overcome the weaknesses and reduce the threats.

### INTRODUCTION

In rural areas development of women is still a challenging task and calls for attention and priority treatment. Promotion of women entrepreneurship is a dependable path to economic stability of women and her family. The entrepreneurship shows path of independence to women who are living in situation of extreme poverty, doing hard work and have poor infrastructural support (Namasivayam, 2003). Entrepreneurial development among women offers mental satisfaction and provides diversion to women from routine work. It gives psychological satisfaction or relief to the educated women, profiles a sense of achievement and a separate identity in the society (Kaur, 2006). There are so many entrepreneurial activities, performed by rural women viz., embroidery, carpet weaving, shawl weaving, dari weaving, milk selling, papad making, making bamboo articles, vegetables selling, pot making etc., where women are found working in numbers. Since rural women are adopting different micro enterprises at their own level, it is must to analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning method used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats involved in a project or in a business venture. SWOT Analysis helps in different ways i.e. it is a source of information for strategic planning, builds organization's strengths, reverse its weaknesses, maximize its response to opportunities, overcome organization's threats, helps in identifying core competencies of the firm, helps in knowing past, present and future so that by using past and current data, future plans can be chalked out. It is not simply enough to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of a company (Management study guide). In applying the SWOT analysis it is necessary to minimize or avoid both weaknesses and threats. Weaknesses should be looked at in order to convert them into strengths. Likewise, threats should be converted into opportunities. Lastly, strengths and opportunities should be matched to optimize the potential of a firm. Applying SWOT in this fashion can obtain leverage for a company (Ferrell et al.,

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1998). In order to know experiences of the women run enterprises, efforts were made to do SWOT analysis of selected entrepreneurial activities. The present paper attempts to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) of the selected entrepreneurial activities undertaken by the rural women.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted purposively in Almora District of Uttarakhand State. Four activities i.e. shawl weaving, carpet weaving, alpana making ('apan') and pine work (peeruk work) were selected for the present study as these activities are the specialty of the area. Also these activities are more popular and well recognized in the market. Four panchayat samities namely *Hawalbagh*, *Takula*, *Dhauladevi* and *Bhainsiachana* were selected purposively for the present study. Sample of the present study consisted of 60 rural women entrepreneurs from 13 villages of selected panchayat samities. Interview

technique was used for data collection. Responses on a different items were recorded on four point continuum viz. strongly applicable, applicable, partially applicable and not applicable assigning 3, 2, 1 and 0 scores, respectively and Mean Weighted Score (MWS) was used for statistical analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Background Information

Majority of the respondents (55%) were in the age group of 31-45 years, married (83%), belonged to nuclear families (76.66%) and had farming as main occupation (61.66%). More than half of the respondents (66.66%) had no organizational membership. About half of the respondents (48.33%) belonged to upper middle class and educated up to high school (28.33%). More than one third of the respondents (38.3%) had 5-2.5 bighas of land resided in mixed houses (40%) and majority of the respondents (78.33%) had low socio economic status.

**Table 1. Mean Weighted Scores (MWS) of Strengths and Weaknesses perceived by the respondents in selected entrepreneurial activities**

n= 60

Categories	Shawl weaving n <sub>i</sub> =15		Carpet weaving n <sub>i</sub> =15		Alpana making n <sub>i</sub> =15		Pine work n <sub>i</sub> =15	
	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W
Rate of return	0.533	0.870	0.733	2.230	1.230	0.086	1.066	2.430
Experience	1.330	0.467	2.450	0.000	1.600	0.000	1.000	0.270
Feminine nature of work	0.466	0.400	1.533	0.200	2.340	0.270	0.266	0.380
Creativity	1.200	0.270	1.933	0.000	1.340	0.000	.0860	0.340
Cost	0.333	0.730	0.000	1.750	0.670	0.133	0.400	0.680
Skills	1.400	0.330	1.733	0.000	0.086	0.000	0.900	0.200
Compatibility	0.470	0.200	0.733	0.330	0.670	0.066	0.600	0.133
Business background	0.133	1.733	2.360	0.900	0.400	1.530	0.066	0.180
Product features	1.066	0.270	1.786	0.000	0.600	0.133	1.600	0.340
Packaging	0.333	0.800	0.240	1.460	0.066	0.730	0.500	0.270
Product life	1.770	0.000	0.933	0.060	1.133	0.000	0.133	1.760
Unique	0.470	0.270	1.890	0.267	1.133	0.073	1.500	0.460
Scope for selling	1.467	0.270	1.600	0.400	1.800	0.000	1.600	0.240
Stocks	0.200	0.670	0.460	0.760	0.270	0.730	0.600	0.400
Location	0.060	1.800	0.000	1.733	0.400	1.530	0.460	1.000
Family support	1.400	0.330	2.580	0.200	1.530	0.000	1.133	0.270
Profit margin	0.340	1.730	0.000	2.33	0.400	0.600	0.270	1.133

S- Strengths, W-Weaknesses, O-Opportunities, T-Threats

**Table 2. Mean Weighted Scores (MWS) of Opportunities and Threats perceived by the respondents in selected entrepreneurial activities**

Categories	n=60							
	Shawl weaving n <sub>i</sub> =15		Carpet weaving n <sub>i</sub> =15		Alpana making n <sub>i</sub> =15		Pine work n <sub>i</sub> =15	
	O	T	O	T	O	T	O	T
Competition	0.330	1.270	0.000	2.533	0.800	1.780	0.890	1.730
Demand	0.220	1.330	0.470	1.330	0.933	1.330	0.330	1.540
Government policies	0.133	0.933	1.060	0.600	0.200	0.800	0.460	1.40
Technical assistance	0.470	1.200	1.060	0.800	*	*	*	*
Raw material	0.560	2.670	0.340	1.870	2.78	0.500	2.780	0.280
Cost	0.560	0.670	0.270	0.730	0.133	0.900	0.133	0.860
Product quality	0.400	0.000	1.330	0.230	1.780	0.240	1.470	0.240
Expansion	1.250	1.000	1.060	0.270	0.200	0.900	0.270	1.200

O-Opportunities, T-Threats, \* Technical assistant is not required in alpana making and in pine work.

## 1. SHAWLWEAVING

### Strengths and Weaknesses

Data in the Table 1 show the strengths and weaknesses perceived by the respondents in the shawl weaving enterprise. The strongest point revealed by the respondents was good product life as the woolen shawls if not sold immediately can be stored for next season without getting them spoiled (MWS-1.17), this was followed by another strength i.e. scope for selling (MWS-1.47) as the respondents had liaison with cooperative centers and with shopkeepers. Besides that respondents perceived good family support (MWS-1.4) and skills (MWS-1.4) as strengths in shawl weaving. The family members helped the respondents in procurement of machinery, raw material, in finishing of shawls and in acquiring of license. Respondents were creative in design making and in shawl weaving production process (MWS-1.2). Further respondents reported that they had long years of work experience, full-fledged knowledge and expertise in their field (MWS-1.33). Further Table 1 reveals that the weakest point perceived by all the respondents engaged in shawl weaving enterprise was inappropriate and poor location of the enterprise (MWS-1.8). The reason was that mostly the respondents were residing in villages, which were away from market place. This was followed by another weakness i.e. lack of family business background (MWS-1.73), as majority of the

respondents main occupation was agriculture. Respondents also reported low profit margin (MWS-1.73), as they were not receiving whatever profit they have fixed and compelled to compromise with the situation. Besides this, respondents also perceived low rate of return in the enterprise (MWS-0.87) as a weakness to some extent.

### Opportunities and Threats

Perusal of Table 2 reveals the opportunities and threats in shawl weaving unit reported by the respondents. It was found that the respondents perceived unique product quality as an opportunity (MWS-1.25) for their enterprise. The respondents reported that their shawl were traditional, hand made woven and had intricate designs which give feeling of warmth and softness that lured the buyers and tourists. Further Table 2 reveals that scarcity of raw material in the local and city market was a major threat for their enterprise (MWS-2.67). The reason was that respondents had to go outside the city namely, Dharchula, Panipat, Hissar, Ludhiana etc. for purchasing of raw material like Pashmeena wool, Marino wool, Newzealand wool and lambs wool. Besides, these the demands of the product in local and city market was low (MWS-1.33) due to high cost of shawls. Another threat perceived by the respondents was tough competition (MWS-1.27) which was a hurdle for their enterprise. The respondents said that it was difficult to sustain the unit due to the existence of large scale industries in

nearby areas that were making use of machines and getting good return, so it was hampering their progress.

## ii) CARPET WEAVING

### Strengths and Weaknesses

Data in the Table 1 depict the Strengths and Weaknesses in carpet weaving enterprise which was perceived by the respondents. The strongest point revealed by the respondents was great family support (MWS-2.58) and long work experience (MWS-2.45) in the enterprise due to traditional nature of activity. Besides this, respondents revealed that business family background was also strength for their enterprise (MWS-2.36) as 40 per cent respondents were artisans. Further, creativity in the enterprise was reported as strength (MWS-1.93) as the respondents were using new designs, which were both traditional and contemporary. Rural women also revealed unique features like smoothness, resiliency, good colour combination, brightness in the design and well-finished product as credible features (MWS-1.89). With regard to weaknesses respondents reported less profit margin in the enterprise as the main weakness (MWS-2.33). This was followed by low rate of return (MWS-2.23). The reason was that due to high selling price the local people could not afford the carpet, so they were solely dependent on tourists, district fairs and on cooperatives for their sale. Another weakness reported was the high cost of product (MWS-1.75) due to which only affluent class bought their product.

Ramchandran and Selvarni (2005) observed in a study on, "Problems and Prospects of Women Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas" that women entrepreneurs faced many problems viz. financial problems, shortage of raw material, heavy competition, social barriers, family conflicts, problems by middle man, lack of information, lack of self confidence, high cost of production and absence of entrepreneurial aptitude.

### Opportunities and Threats

The data in Table 2 depict the opportunities and threats in the carpet weaving enterprise. Respondents reported that quality of the product was good as it provides feeling of warmth, had

attractive designs, long shelf life, can be made of different sizes and was easy to maintain (MWS-1.33). They further perceived favourable government policies like notification for sale in fairs, in exhibitions and new schemes for weavers followed by expansion of enterprises in future (MWS-1.06) as opportunities. Further Table 2 reveals threats faced by the rural entrepreneurs in carpet weaving enterprise. Tough competition was reported a major threat by the respondents (MWS-2.53) due to the existence of large scale industries in nearby areas so the value of hand made carpet is deteriorating day by day and people are going for machine made carpet. This was followed by another threat i.e. non availability of raw material in the market (MWS-1.87) and low demand of the product due to its high cost.

Babel et al. (2006) also observed the constraints faced by the household handloom weaving units in Rajasthan state related to finance unavailability of raw material, lack of demand and low income returns. Under such circumstances it was difficult to continue traditional work sincerely.

## III) ALPANAMAKING

### Strengths and Weaknesses

Data in the Table 1 show the strength and weaknesses perceived by the respondents in alpana making enterprise. Respondents perceived feminine nature of the job as a major strength (MWS-2.34). The reason was that mostly the female members were making alpana in the Almora district. Besides this they had better scope for selling of their articles in footpath markets which are famous tourist destinations. Further rural women had linkages with shopkeepers who sold their articles (MWS-1.8). Another strength reported by respondents was that they had long years of work experience in this enterprise (MWS-1.6) which was advantageous for them. Further respondents reported that good product life (MWS-1.13) and unique features (MWS-1.13) as a strengths for their enterprise. The respondents revealed that Kumauni alpana (apan) was an exclusive product and specialty of Almora town. Another strength which was perceived by the respondents was support of the family members (MWS-1.53) in running the enterprise. Regarding weaknesses majority of the respondents had no business family background (MWS-1.53). All the

respondents mostly engaged in agricultural tasks. This was followed by the poor location of the enterprise which was inappropriate in terms of marketing as they were residing in the villages (MWS-1.53).

#### **Opportunities and Threats**

Data in the Table 2 represent the opportunities and threats in alpana making enterprise. The respondents perceived easy availability of raw material in the city market like colours, paints, hard ply as an opportunity (MWS-2.78). Besides this, the quality of the product was remarkable (MWS-1.78). The reason was that the designs like Pooja ki chauki, Laxmi ki chauki, Vishnu ki chauki were exclusives and the shelf life of product was also long. The fine and intricate design was also a good feature of the product. Respondents reported too much competition among different women who were also making alpana in the city was a major threat for their enterprise (MWS-1.78). Women reported low demand of their product was a threat (MWS-1.33). The reason was that now a day's shopkeeper sale artificial/machine made alpana which are cheap and easy to carry so automatically the demand of their product goes down in the market which is a hurdle for them.

#### **IV) PINE WORK**

##### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

Data in the Table 1 indicate the strengths and weaknesses in pine work perceived by the respondents. In pine work rural women entrepreneurs perceived scope for selling of the articles in footpath markets which are famous tourist destinations, through cooperatives and in district markets as strength (MWS-1.6). The reason was that they had good linkages with the other organizations who sold their products and their own selling efforts, followed by the remarkable features of the product (MWS-1.6). The respondents further revealed that the product was unique (MWS-1.50) as it was specialty of Almora and made by fresh pine leaves. Respondents further reported that they had good family support also (MWS-1.13). The weakest point perceived by the respondents was low rate of return in terms of money (MWS-2.43). The reason was that customers do lot of bargaining

so they had to compromise with them. Lack of business family background (MWS-1.8) was also reported as a weakness, mostly the respondents main occupation was agriculture. Rural women also reported that the product life of pine article was not too good as it is delicate and could be damaged easily (MWS-1.76).

##### **Opportunities and Threats**

Data in the Table 2 highlight the opportunities and threats in Pine work. Respondents reported that easy availability of raw material like pine leaves from forest, varnish and fevicol from local market as an opportunity for them (MWS-2.78). Another opportunity was product quality (MWS-1.47) which was unique due to its design and braiding techniques. Table 2 shows that the respondents perceived competition as a major threat (MWS-1.73) as many male artisans were also involved in this activity in near by villages. Besides this the demand of their product in the market was low (MWS-1.54). The reason was that people were generally purchasing bamboo and wooden articles which had more durability as compared to pine work. Respondents also revealed weak government policies for the rural artisans who had no facilities like marketing of their product (MWS-1.4). Women entrepreneurs were also striving for the expansion of their enterprise in future (MWS-1.2).

#### **CONCLUSION**

To overcome the weaknesses and reduce the threats it is suggested that government should provide the raw material at lower subsidy in the local and city market. District Industrial Center, District Rural Development Agency, Non Government Organizations must take measurable steps and locate the right place for marketing. For the availability of raw material the government should take proper initiatives and should create the liaison with other state departments so that they can meet out the demand of the raw material. The personnel of the NGO's and local extension workers should motivate the family members to help the rural women in her business and enhance the product features so that rate of return could be raised. To reduce the threats it is suggested to raise the demand and market value of the product in city, state and

national market. For rural women loaning process and getting license is a cumbersome and difficult job, the government officials from rural development department and lead bank officers should take measurable steps to remove this hurdle. The introduction of branding of the handloom and handicraft products is another important measure that increases the marketability of the product. A handloom and handicraft research center must be set up at the state level to undertake research on demand patterns, designing weaving and craft technology.

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