



Market Competition and Market Status of Women Micro-Enterprises in Malabar Region of Kerala State

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Abstract

Women Micro Enterprises are formed under the umbrella of Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) of women affiliated to Kudumbashree Mission. They are come out to be in business as part of any of the poverty eradication/self-employment programmes of the State Government. Women Entrepreneurs have the status of owner-member in such entities. The goal of the current study is to assess the market competition and status of women-owned micro-enterprises. The nature of the current study is descriptive as well as inferential. Total 165 owner-members of women micro enterprises made up the sample. The primary data was gathered using a framework and pre-tested question schedule with closed-ended and Likert scales. The methods of statistical techniques utilised for this study were percentage, mean, standard deviation, independent sample t-test, analysis of variance and regression. The analysis conveys that there is no significant difference in the market competition and market status of women micro enterprises in the Malabar region based on locality and type of activity. The study also discloses that market status is the significant predictor of market competition of women microenterprises in the Malabar region.

Keywords: Women Micro-Entities, Neighbourhood Groups, Market Status, Market Competition.



Introduction

Microenterprises are small companies with few workers and low income. They have a positive effect on the economy by stimulating innovation, employment growth, and local development. These are business entities that engage in trade, manufacture and service. A microenterprise is a business unit that was initiated by a poor individual or group of impoverished people with an investment between 5,000 and 2,500 rupees, where the entrepreneurs are able to earn at least ₹1500 per month. Such a business should be entirely owned, run, and controlled by its members in order to benefit members of families from the economically backward segment.

Women microenterprises are small business units, usually in the unregulated and informal sector, that are owned and operated by women. Women empowerment and economic growth are the prime and essential motives of these kinds of business entities. The Women Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) of Kudumbashree Mission are the umbrella organisations for women-owned business entities. It has been observed that they are working as part of the programmes of the state or national government to eliminate poverty and foster self-employment. Women entrepreneurs are regarded as owner-managers-employees of these business units.

Market competition is the competition that exists among the business entities in a market to acquire, attract and maintain or retain customers, which ultimately results in innovation, improved services, growth and development of products and services and an increase in the market share or market value of the commodities. Essential and basic features of a free-market economy are that businesses can compete for dominance, client loyalty, and market share.

In the framework of the present study, the term “market status” describes the current state or circumstance of a particular market or market sector within the current, larger economy. How women-owned small business entities are now doing in terms of market accessibility, funding, support networks, growth trends, and current benefits or disadvantages is discussed herewith.

Gandhali Divekar (2022) conducted a study titled ‘Literature Review Study on Marketing Problems Faced by Women Entrepreneurs’; it focuses on the study that looks at the marketing challenges that women entrepreneurs operating women-owned micro businesses (WMEs) face. It examines a number of marketing-related issues. An analysis of the marketing strategy problems and difficulties faced by women entrepreneurs during the last ten years served as the basis for the examination of the relevant literature. Among the various problems that women MEs deal with



are male domination, family pressure, education, company financing, and resource accessibility.

Peter G. Kimathi (2016) conducted a study on competition as a barrier for the sustainability of women-owned small and medium business enterprises in Kenya. The study employed desktop research. The research not only helps the government to identify appropriate women entrepreneurs but also leads the Kenyan women entrepreneurs in developing sound competitive skills and capabilities in doing business, which might help them to create and maintain profitable business ventures so as to help achieve Kenya's Vision 2030, which is based on the economic, social and political pillars with Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) as their cornerstone so as to create a knowledge-based economy.

Vasani, S., & Abdulkareem, A. M. (2024) conducted a study on 'MSME market presence and competitiveness in a global economy'. This study explores the challenges faced by Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in India, with a specific focus on export-related issues. Using a sample of 163 MSME service providers from 2019 to 2023, data were collected through structured questionnaires and analysed using ANOVA. The study concluded that the medium types of entities reveal that the largest percentage of issues are related to document compliance and quality requirements. In order to solve these kinds of issues and improve and enhance the capabilities of MSMEs, the report stresses the need for concentrated government funding and modification of policies.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the Market Status of Women Micro Enterprises of Malabar region of Kerala State.
2. To assess the Market Competition of Women Micro Enterprises of Malabar region of Kerala State.
3. To find out the influence of locality and type of enterprise on Market Status and Market Competition of Women Micro Enterprises of Malabar region of Kerala State.
4. To find out the influence of Market Status on Market Competition of Women Micro Enterprises of Malabar region of Kerala State.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the market status of women microenterprises in the Malabar region based on locality and type of activity.



2. There is no significant difference in the market competition of women microenterprises in the Malabar region based on locality and type of activity.

3. There is no significant relationship between market status and market competition of women microenterprises in the Malabar region.

Methods

A survey method was adopted to gather data from the owner members of women microenterprises in the Malabar region. In the present study, the investigator developed and used an exploratory questionnaire to gather the information. The aim of this study was to explore the market status and market competition of women microenterprises in the Malabar region.

Tool used for the study

The researcher developed a tool to assess the market status and market competition of women microenterprises, and it was used to collect data. The instrument used was based on a conceptual framework developed specifically for the present study. It consists of two components with Likert-type response scales, namely, market status and market competition of women microenterprises. To ensure reliability, the researcher used internal consistency of reliability. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the reliability constant of the constructed tool. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each component, viz. market status and market competition of women microenterprises, are 0.789 and 0.799, respectively, which indicates that all items exhibit high levels of reliability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale is a value that indicates that the scale has adequate reliability.

Sample

The Malabar region constitutes the districts of Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode, Malappuram and Palakkad districts of Kerala state. For the present investigation Kozhikode and Palakkad districts were considered for the data collection. The owner members of Women Micro Enterprises of Kozhikode and Palakkad districts constitute the universe of the study. There were 20,688 women microenterprises in these two districts, of which 165 owner members of women microenterprises participated in the survey. The profile of the owner members of women microenterprises selected for the current research work from the Kozhikode and Palakkad districts is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Profile of the owner members of Women Micro Enterprises

Variable	Group	Number	Percentage
District	Kozhikode	87	52.73
	Palakkad	78	47.27
Locality of the enterprise	Rural	88	53.33
	Urban	77	46.67
Type of enterprise	Group	71	43.03
	Single	94	56.97
Type of Activity	Manufacturing	67	40.61
	Trade	32	19.39
	Service	66	40.00
Total		165	100.0

It is seen from Table 1 that of the total respondents, 52.73% of the women microenterprises belong to Kozhikode, and the remaining 47.23% of the respondents belong to the Palakkad districts; 53.33% of the respondents fall in rural areas, and 46.67% are from urban areas. Considering the type of enterprise of the respondents, 43.03% of respondents belong to group activity, and 56.97% of entrepreneurs are representing single ownership. Based on the type of activity of the respondents, 40.61% of the respondents belong to manufacturing, 19.39% represent trade and 40% have service as their activity.

Scope of the study

The purpose of the present study is to measure the market status and market competition of women microenterprises in the Malabar region. Understanding the market status and market competition of women microenterprises helps the women microentrepreneurs to enhance the potential for manufacturing and marketing their own products and services in the competent market era. This study is expected to be beneficial to micro-entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial policymakers who are planning to develop and implement entrepreneurial activities.

Data collection procedure

The tool to assess the market status and market competition of women microenterprises in the Malabar region was distributed among owner members of women microenterprises to collect data.



Statistical Techniques

Percentage analysis, One-sample t-test, independent sample t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), correlation and regressions were applied for the data analysis.

Market Competition of Women Micro Enterprises

In order to assess market competition, the researcher has developed five variables, such as brand name, quality of the product, goodwill, advertisement and price. Analysis of the market competition of women microenterprises is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Market Competition of Micro Enterprise

Components	Mean	SD	Test value	t-value	p-value
Lack of strong brand name affects marketing	3.8727	.80519	3	13.923	.000
Customers are doubtful about the quality of the product	3.8606	.80317	3	13.764	.000
Face difficulty in achieving goodwill	3.5152	.53654	3	12.333	.000
Incapable of resorting to high level advertising	4.0000	.73252	3	17.536	.000
High price affects marketing	3.5394	.60985	3	11.361	.000
Market competition (over all)	18.7879	2.10629	15	23.100	.000

Source: Primary Data.

Brand Issue: Examining and assessing responses of the respondents to the statement ‘lack of strong brand name affects marketing’, it is found out that mean score is (3.87) is greater than test value (3), its agreeability can be regarded as high. Since the p-value ($t=13.923$, $p=0.000$) is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that lack of brand name affects marketing among the Women Micro Enterprises.

Quality Issue: Considering the responses of the respondents to the statement ‘Customers are doubtful about the quality of the product’, it is found that the mean score is 3.86 with a standard deviation of 0.803, which is greater than the test value (3); its agreeability can be regarded as high. Since the p-value ($t=13.764$, $p=0.000$) is less than 0.05, it can be understood that respondents agree with the observation that there are quality issues among the Women Micro Enterprises.

Goodwill Issue: Based on the examination of responses to the statement ‘face



difficulty in achieving goodwill’, the mean score is found to be 3.51, SD is 0.53 and the p-value ($t=12.333$, $p=0.000$) is less than 0.05. Hence, the agreeability to the statement related to goodwill is significantly high.

Advertisement Issue: After collecting responses to the statement, ‘incapable of resorting to high-level advertisement’, it is examined, and the mean score is found to be 4.00 with an SD of 0.73, and the p-value ($t=17.536$, $p=0.000$) is less than 0.05; it can be concluded that agreeability to the statement ‘incapable of providing high-level advertisement is significantly high.

Price Issue: Responses to the statement ‘high price affects marketing’ are collected and studied, and the mean score is found to be 3.53 with an SD of 0.60, and the p-value ($t=11.361$, $p=0.000$) less than 0.05 gives the result that agreeability to the statement ‘high price affects marketing is significantly high.

Overall Competition: Since the mean score of overall marketing completion (18.78) is greater than the test value (15), it can be stated that the overall completion of women micro-enterprises is significantly high.

A comparison of market competition based on the locale and activity is presented in Table 3.

H0: *There is no significant difference in the Market Competition of Women Micro Enterprises of Malabar region based on locality and type of activity.*

Table 3: Market Competition based on locale and activity

(p-value)	Category	Number	Mean	SD	F/t Value (p-value)
Locale	Rural	88	18.8864	2.19943	0.641 (0.522)
	Urban	77	18.6753	2.00290	
Activity	Manufacturing	67	18.9104	2.18626	0.407 (.666)
	Trade	32	18.9063	1.85541	
	Service	66	18.6061	2.15463	

Source: Primary Data.

Market Competition– Locale (Rural/Urban)

In order to compare the market competition based on locale, independent t-test was applied; in the rural area, the mean score is 18.88, and in the urban area, it is 18.67, and the p-value (0.522) is greater than 0.05. Hence, there is no significant difference in the market competition with regard to locale. The hypothesis stated



that ‘There is no significant difference in the market competition of women microenterprises in the Malabar region based on locality’ is accepted.

Market Competition – Activity-wise Analysis

The mean scores of market completion-based activities such as manufacturing, trade and service are 18.91, 18.90 and 18.60, with standard deviations of 2.18, 1.85 and 2.15, respectively. Since the calculated p-value ($F=0.407$, $p=0.666$) is greater than 0.05, there is no significant difference in the market competition with regard to region. The hypothesis stated that ‘There is no significant difference in the market competition of women microenterprises in the Malabar region based on type of activity’ is accepted.

Market Status of Women Microenterprises

In order to find out the market status of women microenterprises under the supervision of the Kerala Kudumbashree Mission, the researcher has developed six variables, such as sales, period, demand, after-sales service, competition, help from NHGs and government, and customer retention, in order to collect relevant data.

In addition to examining each of them, their overall market status was also subjected to study, and it is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Market Status of Women Micro Enterprises

Components	Mean	SD	Test value	t-value	p-value
Goods sold within the time limit	3.6364	.79703	3	10.256	.000
Capable to meet the market demand	3.5455	.71954	3	9.737	.000
Provides after sales service	3.4424	.66582	3	8.535	.000
Competition is not affected	3.5515	.73589	3	9.627	.000
Retain the customers	3.5576	.72710	3	9.850	.000
Got helps from Govt. /SHGs to marketing goods	3.4788	.68599	3	8.965	.000
Overall Market Status	21.2121	3.56608	18	11.570	.000

Source: Primary Data.

Sales Period: Considering the responses of the respondents to the statement ‘Goods sold within the time limit’, the mean score is 3.63 with a standard deviation of 0.797, which is greater than the test value (3), and the p-value ($t=10.256$,



$p=0.000$) is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that respondents agree with the statement.

Market Demand: Analysing the responses of the respondents to the statement ‘Capable to meet the market demand’, the mean score is 3.54 with a standard deviation of 0.719, which is greater than the test value (3), and the p-value ($t=9.737$, $p=0.000$) is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that respondents agree with the statement.

After Sales Service: Assessing the responses to the statement ‘Provides after sales service’, the mean score is 3.44 with a standard deviation of 0.665, which is greater than the test value (3), and the p-value ($t=8.535$, $p=0.000$) is less than 0.05; it can be concluded that respondents agree with the statement.

Competition: The mean score of the response to the statement ‘competition is not affected’ is calculated to be 3.55, with an SD of 0.73. The agreeability of the statement market status is not affected on account of competition’ is found to be significantly very high, since the p-value ($t=9.627$, $p=0.000$) is less than 0.05.

Retention of Customers: The response of the respondents in relation to the statement ‘retention of customers’ was collected and subjected to analysis as part of the study. In this, the mean score was found to be 3.55, SD was 0.72 and p-value ($t=9.850$, $p=0.000$) is less than 0.05; it can be found out that retention of customers was possible.

Support from Govt./NHGs: Assessing the responses to the statement ‘Got help from Govt./SHGs to market goods’, the mean score is 3.47 with a standard deviation of 0.685, which is greater than the test value (3), and the p-value ($t=8.965$, $p=0.000$) is less than 0.05; it can be concluded that respondents agree with the statement.

Overall market status: Based on the responses to six statements, analysis is carried out, and after close examination of this, overall market status has been evaluated. Then the mean score is found to be 21.21 and the SD is 3.56, and the p-value ($t=11.57$, $p=0.000$) is less than 0.05; it can be concluded that there is greater agreeability in relation to overall market status.

A comparison of the overall market status of the women microenterprises based on locale and activity is presented in Table 5.

H₀: There is no significant difference in the Market status of Women Micro Enterprises of Malabar region based on locality and type of activity.

**Table 5:** Overall Market Status based on locale and activity

Group	Category	Number	Mean	SD	F/t Value (p-value)
Locale	Rural	88	21.6932	3.40506	1.866 (0.064)
	Urban	77	20.6623	3.68714	
Activity	Manufacturing	67	21.2985	3.99627	0.446 (.641)
	Trade	32	21.6250	3.74812	
	Service	66	20.9242	2.99903	

Source: Primary Data.

Market Status: Locale

Upon the examination of rural-urban status, the mean score of market status of rural MEs is 21.69 and the SD is 3.40, and in urban areas, the mean score is 20.66 and the SD is 3.68. The mean score of rural MEs (21.69) is slightly greater than that of urban areas. Since the calculated p-value ($t=1.866$, $p=0.064$) is greater than 0.05, there are no significant differences between rural and urban areas with regard to market status. The hypothesis stated that '*There is no significant difference in the market status of women microenterprises in the Malabar region based on locality*' is accepted.

Market Status: Activity-wise

On the basis of activity such as manufacturing, trade and service, the analysis has been carried out. When responses related to manufacturing are examined, the mean score is found to be 21.29 with an SD of 3.99. The mean score in the trade category is 21.62 with an SD of 3.74. The mean score in the service category is 20.92 with an SD of 2.99. The calculated p-value ($F=0.446$, $p=0.641$) is greater than 0.05; there is no significant difference in overall market status with regard to activity. The hypothesis stated that '*There is no significant difference in the market status of women microenterprises in the Malabar region based on type of activity*' is accepted.

To know the relationship between the marketing status and market competition, correlation was calculated, and it is presented in Table 6.

H0: *There is no significant relationship between Market Status and Market Competition of Women Micro Enterprises of Malabar region.*

**Table 6.** Correlation and regression summary of Marketing Status and Market Competition

Model	R	R-square	Adjusted R square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	-0.298 ^a	.089	.083	2.01648
Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F (p-value)
Regression	64.784	1	64.784	15.932*
Residual	662.792	163	4.066	(.000)
Total	727.576	164		

Dependent Variable: Market Competition

Predictors: Constant, Market Status.

* Significant at 0.05 level

Correlation analysis reveals that there exists a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.298$; $p = 0.000$) between the variables marketing status and market competition of women microenterprises in the Malabar region. The hypothesis that 'There is no significant relationship between market status and market competition of women microenterprises in the Malabar region' is rejected.

Table 6 also shows the value of the parameters of the regression analysis between the predictor variable Market Status and the dependent variable Market Competency. The result of the analysis shows that the predictor variable market status predicts the market competency of women microenterprises. The predictor variables taken against the criterion variable yielded a coefficient of multiple correlations (R) of 0.298 and an adjusted multiple correlation square (R^2) of 0.089. The R^2 value translated is 08.9%. The analysis also gave a standard error of 2.01 and an F-value of 15.932, which is greater than the table value and significant at the 0.05 level of significance.

The Betas of the Predictor Variable to the Predictor are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: The Betas of the Predictor Variable to the Predictor

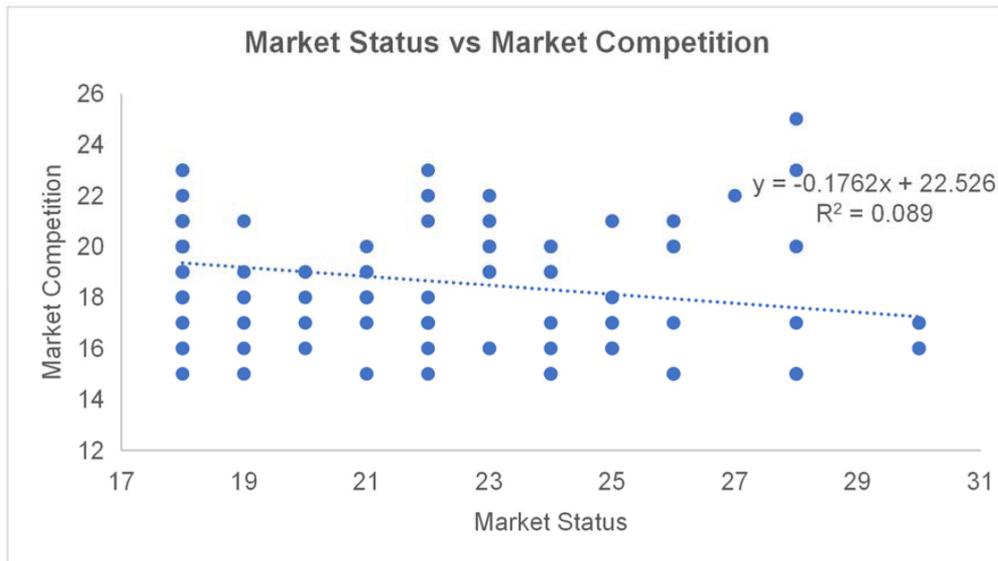
Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t-value	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	22.526	.950	-	23.720	.000
Marketing Status	-.176	.044	-.298	-3.992	.000



Table 7 gives the predictor variables and their coefficients in the regression equation. The beta values, corresponding to the variable Marketing Status' and the constant, are -0.176 and 22.526, and the t-values are 3.992 and 23.72, which indicate that Marketing Status and the constant are significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Among the variables, the beta value of all variables shows that they are the positive predictors of market competition. To develop a regression equation for predicting the dependent variable, market competition (Y), from the predictor variable, market status, the following procedure has been used.

The general regression equation of the criterion variables Y, in terms of the predictor variables, Market Status (X), is given by

$$\text{Market Competition (Y)} = \text{Market Status X} - 0.176 + 22.526.$$



Findings

- Market competition (18.78) of women microenterprises in the Malabar region is significantly high.
- There is no significant difference in the market competition of women microenterprises in the Malabar region with regard to locale.
- There is no significant difference in the market competition of women microenterprises in the Malabar region with regard to type of activity.
- Market status (21.21) of women microenterprises in the Malabar region is significantly high.



- There is no significant difference in the market status of women microenterprises in the Malabar region with regard to locale.
- There is no significant difference in the market status of women microenterprises in the Malabar region with regard to type of activity.
- There exists a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.298$; $p = 0.000$) between the variables Market Status and Market Competition of Women Micro Enterprises of the Malabar region.
- Market Status is the significant predictor of market competition among women microenterprises in the Malabar region.

Conclusion

The aim of the present study is to assess the market competition and status of women's microenterprises in the Malabar region. A study shows that market competition and the status of women microenterprises in the Malabar region are significantly high. The analysis reveals that there is no significant difference in the market competition and market status of women microenterprises in the Malabar region based on locality and type of activity. The study also discloses that there exists significant negative correlation between market status and market competition among women microenterprises, and market status is the significant predictor of market competition of women microenterprises in the Malabar region.

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