



Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in the Globalized Era: Perspectives from Manipur, India

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Abstract

Globalization profoundly impacts women entrepreneurs in Manipur, influencing societal transformation and economic dynamics. This study explores how globalization interacts with entrepreneurship in the handloom sector, highlighting women's pivotal role as drivers of societal progress. While globalization enhances cultural exchange and connectivity, it also presents challenges like cultural pollution and market dominance by multinational corporations. Using a mixed-method approach with primary data from 50 entrepreneurs, the study identifies strengths in product awareness and innovation among women entrepreneurs. However, it also reveals weaknesses such as limited project development skills, risk-taking ability, and networking opportunities. Opportunities include broader market access, cultural preservation, and technological advancements, but threats like vanishing small businesses and intense competition require strategic management and supportive policies for sustainable development.

Keywords: Globalization, women entrepreneurs, handloom sector, Manipur, sustainable development

Introduction

Jawaharlal Nehru's assertion that "To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened" resonates deeply, highlighting women's pivotal role in catalysing societal change, particularly amidst the backdrop of globalization. Globalization, a pervasive phenomenon impacting economics, family dynamics, human rights, environmental policies, and education, represents a dynamic reformation akin to a modern renaissance (Giddens, 1999; Streeten, 2001). It facilitates unprecedented exchanges of cultural expressions, lifestyles, and consumption patterns, fostering interconnectedness across global dimensions (Harris, 2001). This multifaceted process of globalization encompasses the internationalization of production, distribution, and marketing, bolstered by technological advancements, reshaping economic landscapes globally (Streeten, 2001). Socially, globalization transforms trade, finance, employment, migration, and communication, influencing living standards, cultural practices, and governance structures on a global scale (UNDP, 1999; World Bank, 2002). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank describe globalization as integration of economies, cultures, technology, and governance, impacting every aspect of human existence (UNDP, 1999; World Bank, 2002). This integration necessitates adept management by developing countries to harness its benefits without succumbing to its challenges, thereby promoting tolerance, mutual relationships, and cultural assimilation while countering exclusionism and narrow-mindedness (Haq, 2002).

However, globalization's benefits are unevenly distributed, offering new opportunities alongside complexities and disparities. While consumers gain expanded choices, they also face challenges navigating rapid changes in global markets (Giddens, 1999). This uneven distribution underscores the imperative for nuanced global perspectives and strategic management, particularly in developing countries, to navigate the complex global interdependence effectively. In essence, globalization emerges as a transformative force shaping a more interconnected world, challenging societies to adapt and thrive amidst evolving global dynamics, with women playing a central role in steering this transformative journey.

Literature Review

Understanding the impact of globalization on the Indian state necessitates exploring concepts such as individual development, freedom, opportunities, and market dynamics, as articulated by Amartya Sen (2005). Entrepreneurship, a fundamental element in this discourse, transcends societal boundaries, manifesting across diverse classes, communities, and regions. Throughout human history, entrepreneurial motives have been intertwined with civilization's evolution, drawing perspectives from psychology, sociology, economics, and commerce (Sen, 2005). Joseph Schumpeter's seminal work defines entrepreneurship as a revolutionary force that harnesses new technological possibilities to innovate production processes, supply chains, and market outlets (Schumpeter, 1934). Building upon Schumpeter's framework, subsequent studies have elaborated on entrepreneurship as the introduction of unique products or services, involving a comprehensive process from idea conception to venture execution (Audretsch, 2006; Acs and Szerb, 2007). Regardless

of interpretation, entrepreneurship universally entails identifying investment opportunities, organizing enterprises, and fostering sustainable innovations crucial for societal advancement (Bruton et al., 2008).

Entrepreneurs, characterized by creativity, intelligence, self-confidence, and leadership, are pivotal in transforming societies, driving economic growth, and promoting sustainable development by converting resources into valuable assets and seizing opportunities for personal and national gain (Acs and Szerb, 2007). Studies underscore their contributions across sectors such as trade, manufacturing, agriculture, services, and technology, highlighting their role in societal development (Bruton et al., 2008). Notably, women entrepreneurs play a significant role in this narrative, adapting to market demands and enhancing consumer satisfaction with a focus on wealth maximization alongside profit maximization (Minniti and Naudé, 2010). Their involvement aligns with Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 8, emphasizing entrepreneurship's critical role in achieving sustainable economic growth (UN, 2015). Women entrepreneurs bring unique perspectives and innovations, crucial for driving societal progress and leveraging globalization for mutual benefit (Brush et al., 2009).

In the above views, globalization intertwines deeply with entrepreneurship, shaping contemporary societies by integrating diverse cultures, economies, and governance structures (Friedman, 2005). Entrepreneurs, particularly women, emerge as pivotal actors in navigating this intricate landscape, driving sustainable development and economic growth through their innovative and risk-taking initiatives (Minniti and Naudé, 2010; Audretsch, 2006). These insights underscore the transformative potential of entrepreneurship in leveraging globalization for societal advancement and economic prosperity.

Objectives

The primary objective of the present paper is to analyse comprehensively the current status, challenges, and economic environment of women entrepreneurs in Manipur. Specifically, it is i) to investigate their strategies for overcoming obstacles and seizing opportunities, focusing on business models, marketing strategies, technology use, and product innovation; and ii) to evaluate how globalization influences these entrepreneurs, examining its impact on market expansion, technological adoption, competition, and cultural dynamics within traditional sectors like handloom production. By addressing these aspects, the paper aims to offer insights into enhancing policy and practices to foster sustainable growth and development for women entrepreneurs in a globalized economy.

Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-method approach, incorporating both primary and secondary data sources to ensure comprehensive and reliable findings. The Primary data were obtained through a carefully designed and pre-tested questionnaire administered to a sample of 50 women entrepreneurs operating in the handloom sector within various regions of the Manipur valley. This approach facilitated the collection of first-hand information on the experiences, challenges, and successes of these entrepreneurs. The secondary data were sourced from a range of reputable materials, including statistical handbooks, academic books, peer-reviewed journals, relevant websites, and official documents. These sources provided a broader context and supplemented the primary data with historical and contextual insights. To derive meaningful conclusions, the study utilizes a comparative analysis employing percentage calculations to compare and contrast the gathered data. This method allows for the identification of patterns and trends, ensuring the validity and reliability of the study's results.

Results and Discussion

Women Entrepreneurs in Manipur:

Manipur has a rich history of successful collective women's power, with the role of Manipuri women in social movements dating back to the pre-British period when the region was under a monarchical system (Sharma, 2004). Historically, female cultivators and workers in household industries have far outnumbered their male counterparts. Women have also significantly contributed to trade and commerce, construction, mining, quarrying, and activities related to livestock, forestry, fishing, and the plantation of orchards and allied activities (Devi, 2001). Women in Manipur have always been active participants in various aspects of economic life. From ancient times, women have not only engaged in selling goods but have also owned industrial sectors and mastered their products (Singh, 2012).

Handloom is the largest traditional cottage industry in Manipur, providing substantial employment opportunities (Sangai, 2010). Most handloom weavers in the state are self-employed artisans who work from their homes with the assistance of family members in both pre-loom and post-loom processes (Devi, 2009). According to Hudson, a British political agent, nearly every housewife in Manipur could weave all the clothes needed by her family, with looms commonly found in the verandas of their homes (Hudson, 1900). Dun, quoting the political agent in 1879, stated, "The more I see of them, the more I am impressed with the excellence of the Manipur cotton manufacturers, which are of first-rate quality and very cheap when their weight is considered" (Dun, 1879). Silk cultivation, if properly developed, could become a significant export article. The people of Manipur have possessed good knowledge of dyeing fast colours and hard printing on clothes since ancient times, using indigenous plant leaves (Roy, 2013). Artistic weaving in Manipur features many unique designs, each with its own history (Chanu, 2011). In the handicraft sector, Manipuri women also hold a prominent position. They engage in various handicraft activities, such as pottery, mat making, cushion making, sofa seat crafting, and creating decorative items like handbags, shoes, flower pots, and the Potloi dress (a bride's dress) (Nongthombam, 2015). This activity combines ethnic art and is also used in the famous classical dance of India, Raslila

(Singh, 2016). Nowadays, women engage in numerous handicraft activities, including nachom making, fashion accessories, garland making, and crafting gift items (Devi, 2017). The share of textiles, apparel, and handicrafts in India's total exports was 11.4% in 2020-21 (Ministry of Textiles, 2021). Manipur ranks fourth in the country regarding the number of looms, with more than 280,000 looms, including fly shuttle, throw shuttle, and loin-looms, supporting a weaver population of over 462,000, placing it second among the states according to the latest National Handloom Census (NHDC, 2022). The total export from Manipur stood at US \$0.86 million in the financial year 2022, with cotton fabrics accounting for a majority (44.18%) of the merchandise exports from the state (EXIM Bank, 2022).

Profile of respondents:

Studies conducted before 2019 highlight the significant role of age in shaping the entrepreneurial behaviours and capabilities of women. Different age groups display varying levels of perception, physical endurance, confidence, and available time due to other responsibilities, which in turn affect their entrepreneurial activities. The relationship between age and entrepreneurship can vary across different regions and over time. In the study, 46% of the women entrepreneurs fell within the 20-40 age group, 44% were in the 40-60 age group, and 10% were in the 60-80 age group. This distribution indicates that a majority of the respondents were between 20 and 60 years old (Table - 1). Many of these women entrepreneurs are involved in the handloom sector, and a significant number also engage in embroidery, which is another key industry predominantly managed by women. These activities are deeply intertwined with cultural and traditional practices. However, there is a growing trend among women entrepreneurs to venture beyond traditional enterprises into various other fields. These new areas include IT services, kindergartens, health clinics, beauty parlours, restaurants, horticulture, agroforestry, compost fertilizer production, aromatic industries, agriculture, animal husbandry, incense stick making, candle making, dairy farming, and sericulture.

Despite this diversification, the focus of this paper is specifically on the handloom sector. This sector continues to be one of the largest and most significant areas dominated by women entrepreneurs. On August 23, 2022, Union Minister of State for Textiles, Darshana Vikram Jardosh, underscored the importance of large-scale production of handloom and handicraft products in Manipur for export purposes. She noted that Manipuri handloom and handicraft products are highly esteemed not only within India but also internationally. The Union Minister highlighted the export potential of three handloom products from Manipur that have received Geographic Indication (GI) tags, which are in high demand outside the state. The superior quality of designs and finishing produced by the state's weavers is likely to be appreciated by customers both domestically and globally. India ranks as the second-largest exporter of handloom products worldwide, with exports valued at \$3804 million in 2018-19. Indian textile products, including handloom and handicrafts, are exported to more than 100 countries.

Many women start their enterprises at a young age, often before marriage. Examining the marital status of women managing their enterprises is essential, as factors such as family support, role conflict, and overall work-life balance are significantly influenced by whether a woman is married. The survey shows that 14% of the women are unmarried, 60% are married, and 26% are either widowed or divorced. This indicates that a majority of these women have the support of their husbands. Education is a crucial factor for the success of enterprises. In the era of globalization, education fosters diversification, modernization, and development. According to the survey, 10% of women entrepreneurs have education up to class 12, 70% are graduates, and 20% hold postgraduate or other advanced qualifications. The data suggests that the higher education levels among women entrepreneurs contribute to greater modernization and diversification in their businesses.

Training Programmes:

Entrepreneurial activity is closely linked to skills, which can be significantly enhanced through proper training. Training involves acquiring specialized knowledge that goes beyond general studies. Attending training programs is thus a crucial criterion for becoming a successful entrepreneur. Knowledge and skills are key drivers of any work, and entrepreneurial activity is no exception. In India, the National Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Policy 2015 aims to meet the challenge of skilling at scale with speed, quality, and sustainability, linking skills development to improved employability and productivity for inclusive growth. According to the study, 60% of women entrepreneurs attended training programs before starting their enterprises, 40% attended both before and after starting their enterprises, and 28% attended training or skill development programs only after their enterprises were established. This data reveals that significant number of women entrepreneurs have participated in training programs.

Motivational Factors:

Motivation is a crucial factor for the success of women entrepreneurs. It generates the drive and willingness to perform tasks that lead to the achievement of goals. According to the survey, the motivating factors for becoming an entrepreneur are varied and multiple. The largest group of women entrepreneurs, 16%, cited a combination of factors (options c, d, e, and i). Another 16% indicated a combination of options e and i. The 14% of women entrepreneurs identified a combination of a, c, d, and e, and another 14% pointed to c, e, and i. A 12% mentioned combinations of a, g, and h, and b, e, and f. 8% cited a, d, and e, and 4% each chose f, g, and h, and g, h, and i (Table -2). The data indicates that the most common motivational factors among women entrepreneurs include a desire for individual identity and personal interest, specialized knowledge and skills to start the enterprise, scarcity of government jobs, government

initiatives, and the availability of training programs. The least cited factors were financial support from the government, availability of free time and finance, flexibility of job hours, and specialized knowledge and skills. These varied motivations reflect the diverse reasons women choose to embark on entrepreneurial ventures.

Standard of Technology:

The technological standard and customer satisfaction are closely linked. Most women entrepreneurs strive to satisfy their customers, which require the integration of multiple factors. However, many women entrepreneurs in the state still employ traditional or out-dated tools and techniques for certain products. For example, they use traditional methods to weave fine silk clothes like rani muga and rani phee, which are renowned worldwide and command high prices, often ranging from forty to fifty thousand rupees. These entrepreneurs avoid using machines for these products because the unique designs cannot be replicated by machines. They also lack knowledge of advanced technologies, such as modern machinery and computer tools, having learned the process through traditional methods rather than mechanized units. Conversely, for less expensive items like simple phanek (a type of women's wrap), khudei (men's wear), towels, bed sheets, pillow covers, curtains, tablecloths, cushion covers, and other similar products, machines are used. According to the survey, 70% of women entrepreneurs cater to the local market, 22% target the national market (outside the state), and 8% aim for the international market (Table -3).

Marketing Strategy:

Marketing is crucial for entrepreneurs as it facilitates the sale of their products to consumers. It begins with the fundamental idea that most human behaviour is a purposeful quest for need satisfaction, rooted in the notion of exchange. Marketing involves discovering and translating consumer needs and wants into product and service specifications, creating demand, and expanding this demand. This process introduces new varieties, quality, and beneficial goods to consumers and holds significant importance for society. According to the field survey, 70% of women entrepreneurs sell their products to local consumers, 11% sell to both local and national consumers (outside the state), and 8% sell to foreign countries (Table - 5). The price of a product or service reflects its monetary value, but consumers perceive price as a way to obtain desired products. Consumer reactions to price changes vary with the nature of the product. High-priced products are often associated with superior quality and may involve some degree of risk, leading consumers to prefer expensive items for their perceived durability and quality. However, very costly goods might only be purchased when absolutely necessary.

The survey also indicates the types of items sold in different markets. In the local market, all types of handloom items are sold, including expensive traditional clothes, medium-priced items, and low-priced items. In the international market, women entrepreneurs sell expensive clothes like silk items, pure cotton clothes like bed sheet sets, decorative items, and fashion clothes with unique designs, often preferring naturally dyed items. Price is less of a concern for international buyers who prioritize quality. In the national market, a mix of expensive and medium-priced items is sold. Some women entrepreneurs noted that products need to be modified according to the needs and wants of consumers outside the state. Regarding distribution channels, 82% of women entrepreneurs use a combination of a showroom at home and social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. Another 10% combine rented shops at marketplaces with social media, while 8% have their own shop at the marketplace and use social media to sell their products (Table - 6). Channel decisions are critical in marketing as they affect product, price, and promotion decisions. Unlike price and promotion, which can be adjusted, marketing channels are less flexible. Therefore, entrepreneurs must choose distribution channels that minimize costs and maximize sales volume.

Impact of Globalization:

Globalization, often discussed on various platforms, has numerous dimensions, particularly in its economic aspect. It is a blend of many factors and produces both positive and negative outcomes. If not approached with the right knowledge and decisions, the results can be detrimental. Lack of consensus and increasing competition over scarce resources can overshadow public interest. The demand for integration and reduced tolerance for diversity can become significant social forces, especially as multicultural encounters and the flow of global culture intensify. This process can lead to new patterns of inequality and polarization, as many resources are extracted from underdeveloped countries. Multinational corporations (MNCs) often try to dominate small markets to maximize their benefits. However, globalization also brings a wide range of products and favourable conditions for particularization, localization, and even fragmentation (Robertson, 1995). To better understand the impact of globalization on women entrepreneurs, a SWOT analysis can be helpful.

Strengths of Women Entrepreneurs: Women entrepreneurs possess significant strengths that contribute to their success. They are highly knowledgeable about their products and aim to sell them both nationally and internationally. They also bring innovation to product design, quality, and standards, which enhance the uniqueness of their offerings.

Weaknesses: Women entrepreneurs face several challenges that hinder their progress. They often lack skills in project development and have limited risk-taking ability due to insufficient knowledge. Networking opportunities are scarce, as they rarely connect with designers or producers. Additionally, there is a lack of infrastructure and proper guidance. Marketing and promoting their products to foreign customers is challenging, compounded by the absence of formal

training programs. Limited exposure prevents them from making direct contact with international customers, and there is also a lack of product diversification and support from various sectors.

Opportunities: Globalization provides women entrepreneurs with access to wider markets, fostering openness, mutual relationships, and sharing. It offers the chance to preserve local products and traditions while promoting the development of new tools and technologies through knowledge exchange programs. Additionally, government policies may adjust to create more opportunities, further supporting their entrepreneurial endeavours.

Threats: Small economic activities are gradually disappearing, and increasing cultural pollution threatens traditional cultural activities and products. Small enterprises face significant threats from free trade and advanced technologies, making it difficult for them to compete against large companies that easily capture markets. Globalization also amplifies problems for small enterprises, including those run by women, adding to the challenges they face.

Conclusion

Globalization represents a contemporary strategy of power with profound historical and social consequences. While it benefits some countries, for many, including most women entrepreneurs, its impact remains more symbolic than transformative. Their expansion into national and global markets owes much to advancements in information technology, yet globalization also brings challenges such as deregulation, flexible labor laws, public sector disinvestment, and increased privatization. Thus, effective political leadership and wise decision-making are essential to fully harness its potential benefits. Despite its complexities, globalization yields mixed outcomes, with women entrepreneurs aged 40-60 playing dynamic roles bolstered by formal training and a blend of traditional craftsmanship with modern technology. Their marketing efforts primarily focus on local markets, although opportunities exist to broaden their appeal nationally and internationally, especially through social media and technological innovations. While globalization pervades daily life unevenly, maximizing its benefits demands cohesive efforts and robust governmental backing.

Table - 1: Profile of women entrepreneurs

Profile	Category	No. of entrepreneurs	No. of entrepreneurs (in %)
Age	20 – 40	23	46
	40 – 60	22	44
	60 – 80	5	10
Marital Status	Unmarried	7	14
	Married	30	60
	Widow	13	26
Educational qualification	Up to class 12	5	10
	Graduate	35	70
	Post Graduate level	10	20
Total		50	100

Table - 2: Motivating factors of women entrepreneurs

Factors	Presence of factors	No. of cases	No. of cases (in %)
a) Economic needs & pressure	a, c, d, e	7	14
b) Family business & family support	e, d, e	4	8
c) Scarcity of Govt. Jobs	e, i	8	16
d) Gov't initiative & availability of training programme	f, g, h	2	4
e) Individual identity & own interest	a, g, h	6	12

f) Financial support from Govt.	b, e, f	6	12
g) Availability of free time and finance	g, h, i	2	4
h) Flexibility of Job hours	c, e, i	7	14
i) Specialise knowledge and skills to start the enterprise	c, d, e, i	8	16

Table - 3: Technological infrastructure in their enterprise

Items	Mechanise	Non Mechanise/ traditional method
1. Rani fee (fine silk clothes) and wangkhei phee fine colour cloth	No	Yes
2. Phige phanek (expensive raper made by silk)	No	Yes
3. Khawng phanek (a kind of women's wear)	No	Yes
4. Muga suits (women wear with designs)	No	Yes
5. Mapan naiba (in colour combinations made by polister, wool & other synthetic threads)	Yes	Yes
6. Khudei (simple men's wear)	Yes	Yes
7. Bed sheet, table cover, curtains sofa cover etc.	Yes	Yes
8. Small items like towel, daily needs items men's and women	Yes	No

Table - 4: Target consumers and sales

Options	No. of entrepreneurs with option	No. of entrepreneurs with option (in %)
a) Local consumers	(a) 35	70
b) National consumer (outside state)	(a, b) 11	22
c) International consumer	(c) 4	8
Total	50	100

Table - 5: Marketing Strategy by Women Entrepreneur

Strategy	Items	Price level		
		Low	Medium	High
Local market	Expensive clothes	No	Yes	Yes
Medium price clothes	Bed sheet, sofa cover and many other items	Yes	Yes	No
Low price clothes	Towels, daily wear and ritual items	Yes	Yes	No
National market	Silk Saries, silk scarfs, salwar suits	No	No	Yes
	Bed sheets with pillow cover (cotton & silk)	No	Yes	No
	Sofa covers with designs	No	Yes	No
International market	Silk cloths (with natural dying)	No	No	Yes
	Pure colour clothes like, Bed sheet set	No	No	Yes
	Decorative items fashion	No	No	Yes
	Clothes with unique designs	No	Yes	No

Table - 6: Channels of marketing

Options	No. of entrepreneurs choosing more than one option	No. of entrepreneurs (in %)
a) Market place (own shop)	(a, d) 4	8
b) Rented shop at market place	(b, d) 5	10
c) Showroom at home	(e, d) 41	82
d) Social media: You-tube, Instagram, Facebook etc.		

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