

# Competitive Advantages Of Micro Level Women Entrepreneurs In Puducherry

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Eventhough micro-level women entrepreneurs face many challenges, they get some advantages because of existence of competition of their business. In this context, the researcher studied the competitive advantages of micro-level women entrepreneurs in Puducherry district and collected primary data from 545 samples using questionnaire. The researcher applied the statistical tools of percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, Cluster analysis and Linear Regression analysis for analyzing the data. The study evidenced that the sample micro women entrepreneurs in Puducherry area opined that they obtained advantages through competitive environments existed for their businesses. They opined that new business ideas were created in their minds on account of competition, which was the most benefited competitive advantage for them. Followed by they also obtained competitive advantages by way of to be active in business and the competition improved their communication and management skills and competitive environments let them think about an innovative way of attracting customers. They also felt that the competitive advantages did not help them to expand their business and they could improve CRM practices. It was also observed that the factors influenced in creating competitive environments, the level of perception of the respondents towards competitive environments, level of challenges faced by the women entrepreneurs due to competition and level of competency of the respondents to tackle competition of their business had significant impact on the competitive advantages of the sample women entrepreneurs in the study area.

**Key Words:** Competition, entrepreneurs, competitive advantages, perception, challenges, competency.

## Introduction

Micro-level women entrepreneurs play a vital role in the economy, particularly in developing regions. Their success is often driven by unique competitive advantages that allow them to thrive in challenging environments. Understanding these advantages is essential for fostering an ecosystem that supports women in business. One key advantage is their ability to leverage social networks. Women entrepreneurs often have access to a robust support system, including family, friends, and community networks. These connections can lead to collaborative opportunities, shared resources, and enhanced market reach. Additionally, micro-level women entrepreneurs tend to have a strong sense of community responsibility. They often prioritize ethical practices and sustainable business models, appealing to a growing market of conscious consumers. This commitment not only builds trust but also fosters customer loyalty, setting

them apart from larger, impersonal businesses. Innovation is another significant advantage. Women entrepreneurs often bring diverse perspectives and creative problem-solving skills to their ventures. This can result in unique product offerings and services that cater to unmet needs in the market. Moreover, women entrepreneurs often excel in relationship-building. Their focus on nurturing customer relationships can lead to higher satisfaction and referrals, providing a competitive edge in local markets. The competitive advantages of micro-level women entrepreneurs are multifaceted and crucial for their success. By recognizing and supporting these strengths, communities can stimulate economic growth and empower more women to make their mark in the business world.

Women entrepreneurs in Puducherry have several competitive advantages that set them apart in the business landscape. Firstly, Puducherry offers a conducive business environment with access to resources and support networks specifically tailored for women entrepreneurs. Additionally, the region has a growing market that presents opportunities for women to tap into niche markets and cater to specific consumer needs. Furthermore, there is a supportive ecosystem of mentors, incubators, and investors that empower women entrepreneurs to thrive and succeed in their ventures. Lastly, the diverse culture of Puducherry encourages creativity and innovation, allowing women entrepreneurs to bring fresh perspectives and unique solutions to the market, giving them a competitive edge over their counterparts.

## **Review of Literature**

**Sultan S.S. (2007)** studied the competitive advantage of small and medium sized enterprises in Jordan. The study concluded that the five competitive forces determine the profitability and attractiveness of the industry. These forces were important in shaping the prices that firms could charge, the costs they had to bear, and the required investments to compete within the industry. As well, the competitive advantage depends on the way the firms organize and perform their activities. **Singh R.K., Garg S.K., & Deshmukh S.G. (2008)** aimed to illustrate challenges and strategies for competitiveness of SMEs in India. The study observed that to be competitive, SMEs should have clarity of mission and should proactively develop their human resources and competencies to meet fast changing customer requirements. The study concluded that HIL greatly improved its competitiveness and could be a role model for other organisations. **Gunasekaran A., Rai B.K., & Griffin M. (2014)** reviewed the selected literature on some of the SME characteristics and new strategies, techniques and technologies that could provide a competitive advantage and sustainability in the global market and operations. Based on the literature review, a framework was developed by the researchers with the key factors/enablers that determine the resilience and competitiveness of SMEs. **Gardner L.M. (2019)** studied the competitive advantage for small businesses. The study stated that 3 themes were revealed by the study: financial capital, marketing and competitive advantages, and great customer service.

**Ogunyemi A.O. (2020)** studied the competitive strategies to improve small and medium enterprise sales. The study concluded that the four attributes that Porter identified as shaping competitive advantage were: (a) firm strategy, structure, and rivalry, (b) factor conditions, (c) demand conditions, and (d) related and supporting industries (Porter, 1991).

The environment in which a firm operates influences its ability to gain and sustain competitive advantage and to outperform its peers. **Fazal S.A., et al (2022)** examined the effects of entrepreneurs' competencies on the competitive advantage of microenterprises in Malaysia. The study revealed significant positive effects of organizing and commitment competency on the competitive advantage with a significantly negative effect of relationship competency on the competitive advantage. **Farida I., & Setiawan D. (2022)** examined the effect of business strategies to improve the competitive advantages of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The study found that business strategies had a positive impact on competitive advantage. Better business strategies improve the competitive advantage of SMEs. Further, business performance and innovation also mediate the relationship between business strategies and competitive advantages.

**Gupta N.K., & Kour S. (2023)** attempted to analyses various difficulties and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in their business operations. The study concluded that nowadays women have identified many new type of business opportunity where they can sit in home and do their business. Education has helped many women to realize their potential and work accordingly. Development of technology also made women smarter and they also found many innovative opportunities to do and flourish their business. **Balafoutas L., Batsaikhan M., & Sutter M. (2024)** found that in the private condition, entrepreneurs were less competitive than salaried workers, but in the public condition, this ordering was reversed. Survey data of the study suggested that perceived norms of appropriate behavior, along with beliefs about the instrumental value of competitiveness for professional success, could explain why entrepreneurs were more competitive when decisions were publicly observable. **Devi T., Badma Narayanan B., & Amala A. (2025)** aimed at fostering women entrepreneurship, the growth rate remains modest in Tirupati. The study concluded that succeed, a woman entrepreneur must leverage her experiences, evolve, and confront the hurdles in her path. Every opportunity must be seized to mitigate weaknesses and creatively harness strengths to overcome threats.

## Objectives

- To study competitive advantages of micro-level women entrepreneurs in Puducherry.
- To analyse the impact of factors influenced competitive environments, perception, challenges and competency of the respondents towards competitive environments on the level of competitive advantages of the respondents.

## Methodology

Eventhough micro-level women entrepreneurs face many challenges, they get some advantages because of existence of competition of their business. In this context, the researcher studied the competitive advantages of micro-level women entrepreneurs, the researchers selected Puducherry district as study area. For this purpose, the researcher selected a total of 545 micro level women entrepreneurs from the study area using convenient sampling method. The researcher framed and used a well-structured questionnaire for collecting primary data from the sample respondents. The researcher applied the statistical tools of percentage

analysis, mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, Cluster analysis and Linear Regression analysis for analyzing the data.

## Results and Discussion

The micro level sample women entrepreneurs had obtained certain advantages on account of competition existed in their businesses. The advantages may be obtained by obtaining various aspects such as business knowledge, improvements in customer relationship management, managerial skill development and business expansion. Table 5.20 presents the results of percentage analysis of competitive advantages attained by women entrepreneurs in the study area.

**Table 1: Competitive Advantages Attained by Women Entrepreneurs**

SN	Competitive Advantages	SA	A	NADA	DA	SDA	Total
<b>I Business Knowledge</b>							
1	Improved business skill	118 (21.7)	167 (30.6)	115 (21.1)	74 (13.6)	71 (13.0)	545 (100)
2	Helped to improve confidence level	104 (19.1)	142 (26.1)	124 (22.8)	83 (15.2)	92 (16.8)	545 (100)
3	Created new business ideas	184 (33.8)	128 (23.5)	120 (22.0)	58 (10.6)	55 (10.1)	545 (100)
4	Learn technologies related to business	119 (21.8)	151 (27.7)	89 (16.3)	88 (16.2)	98 (18.0)	545 (100)
<b>II Customer Relationship Management</b>							
5	Think over innovative way to attract customers	155 (28.4)	145 (26.6)	99 (18.2)	82 (15.1)	64 (11.7)	545 (100)
6	Taught the technique to retain existing customers	129 (23.7)	151 (27.8)	107 (19.6)	76 (13.9)	82 (15.0)	545 (100)
7	Improved CRM practices	89 (16.3)	104 (19.1)	130 (23.9)	135 (24.8)	87 (15.9)	545 (100)
<b>III Managerial Skill Development</b>							
8	Improved management skill	140 (25.7)	144 (26.4)	110 (20.2)	133 (24.4)	18 (3.3)	545 (100)
9	Improved decision-making skill	134 (24.6)	137 (25.1)	111 (20.4)	97 (17.8)	66 (12.1)	545 (100)
10	Improved leadership skill	110 (20.2)	93 (17.1)	101 (18.5)	169 (31.0)	72 (13.2)	545 (100)
11	Improved communication skill	171 (31.4)	135 (24.8)	98 (18.0)	64 (11.7)	77 (14.1)	545 (100)
<b>IV Business Expansion</b>							
12	Pulled to modernise my business	145 (26.6)	185 (33.9)	61 (11.2)	61 (11.2)	93 (17.1)	545 (100)

SN	Competitive Advantages	SA	A	NADA	DA	SDA	Total
13	Helped to expand business	73 (13.4)	60 (11.0)	161 (29.5)	121 (22.2)	130 (23.9)	545 (100)
14	Helped to introduce new products in business	128 (23.5)	133 (24.4)	103 (18.9)	126 (23.1)	55 (10.1)	545 (100)
15	Makes me to be active in the business	182 (33.4)	119 (21.8)	94 (17.3)	83 (15.2)	67 (12.3)	545 (100)

### Competitive Advantages in the aspect of “Business Knowledge”

Table 1 reveals that majority of the sample women entrepreneurs (52.3%) agreed that they obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Business Knowledge” by way of improving their business skills. A considerable portion of the respondents (45.2%) agreed that they obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Business Knowledge” by way of improving their confidence level. Majority of the respondents (57.3%) agreed that they obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Business Knowledge” by way of new business ideas were created in their minds. About half of the respondents agreed that they obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Business Knowledge” by way of learning technologies related to their business.

### Competitive Advantages in the aspect of “Customer Relationship Management”

Majority of the sample women entrepreneurs (55%) agreed that they obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Improvements in Customer Relationship Management” by way of thinking over innovative way to attract customers. Majority of the respondents (51.5%) agreed that obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Improvements in Customers Relationship Management” by way of they learned the technique to retain existing customers. A considerable portion of the respondents (40.7%) disagreed that they obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Improvements in Customers Relationship Management” by way of improving CRM practices in their business.

### Competitive Advantages in the aspect of “Managerial Skill Development”

Majority of the sample women entrepreneurs (52.1%) agreed that they obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Managerial Skill Development” by way of improving their management skill. About half of the respondents (49.7%) agreed that they obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Managerial Skill Development” by way of improving decision-making skill. A considerable portion of the respondents (44.2%) disagreed that they obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Managerial Skill Development” by way of improving leadership skill. Majority of the respondents (56.2%) agreed that they obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Managerial Skill Development” by way of improving their communication skill.

### Competitive Advantages in the aspect of “Business Expansion”

Majority of the sample women entrepreneurs (60.5%) agreed that they obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Business Expansion” by way of modernizing their business. A considerable portion of the respondents (46.1%) disagreed that they obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Business Expansion” by way of expanding their business. A considerable portion of the respondents (47.9%) agreed that they obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Business Expansion” by way of introducing new products in business. Majority of the respondents (55.2%) agreed that they obtained competitive advantages in the aspect of “Business Expansion” by way of participating in business actively.

With the view of understanding which competitive advantage was most beneficial for them as opined by the respondents vice versa, the researcher calculated mean, standard deviation and Co-efficient of variation for the competitive advantages obtained by the sample women entrepreneurs in Puducherry area and they were ranked based on their mean values and the results are presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Rank Analysis of Competitive Advantages Attained by Women Entrepreneurs**

Sl. No.	Competitive Advantages	Mean	SD	CV	Rank
<b>I Business Knowledge</b>					
1	Improved business skill	3.34	1.31	39.17	VII
2	Helped to improve confidence level	3.15	1.35	42.93	XII
3	Created new business ideas	3.60	1.32	36.58	I
4	Learn technologies related to business	3.19	1.41	44.27	XI
	Overall Score	3.32	1.35	40.59	
<b>II Customer Relationship Management</b>					
5	Think over innovative way to attract customers	3.45	1.35	39.16	V
6	Taught the technique to retain existing customers	3.31	1.37	41.34	IX
7	Improved CRM practices	2.95	1.32	44.59	XIV
	Overall Score	3.24	1.35	41.61	
<b>III Managerial Skill Development</b>					
8	Improved management skill	3.47	1.20	34.74	IV
9	Improved decision-making skill	3.32	1.34	40.33	VIII
10	Improved leadership skill	3.00	1.35	44.97	XIII
11	Improved communication skill	3.48	1.40	40.32	III
	Overall Score	3.32	1.32	39.86	
<b>IV Business Expansion</b>					
12	Pulled to modernise my business	3.42	1.42	41.65	VI
13	Helped to expand business	2.68	1.31	48.99	XV
14	Helped to introduce new products in business	3.28	1.32	40.24	X
15	Makes me to be active in the business	3.49	1.40	40.17	II
	Overall Score	3.22	1.36	42.35	

Table 2 reveals that the calculated mean value of the competitive advantage of “Created new business ideas” was scored highest by the sample women entrepreneurs (Mean: 3.60) and it was ranked first. Hence competitive environments exist in the business of the respondents let the entrepreneurs think over new business ideas in order to compete with their competitors. Comparatively lower level of deviation was found in the opinion of the respondents on the above from the mean value as shown by the results of SD (1.32) and CV (36.58%). The sample women entrepreneurs also felt that on account of competitive environments in their business they were able to be active in the business, they could improve their communication skill, management skill, they can think over innovative way of attracting customers and they can modernize their business. The calculated values of SD and CV revealed that there was low level of deviation in the competitive advantages of “Improved management skill” and there was moderate level of deviation of other competitive advantages. The level of the following competitive advantages are moderate as opined by the sample women entrepreneurs, they are “Improved business skill”, “Improved decision-making skill”, “Taught the technique to retain existing customers”, “Helped to introduce new products in business”, “Learn technologies related to business” and “Helped to improve confidence level”, their calculated mean values were at moderate level (3.34, 3.32, 3.31, 3.28, 3.19 and 3.15) and they were ranked 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> respectively. There was moderate level of deviation in the above competitive advantages from their respective mean values as per the results of SD and CV. “Helped to expand business” was the lower level of competitive advantage as opined by the sample women entrepreneurs, it recorded lowest mean value (2.68) and it was ranked last (15<sup>th</sup>). Followed by “Improved CRM practices” and “Improved leadership skill”.

The competitive advantages obtained by women entrepreneurs in the study area are analysed under four broad aspects and the results are presented in the above tables. All together the researcher analysed a total of 15 competitive advantages obtained by the sample women entrepreneurs. In order to cluster these results, the level of advantages obtained by sample women entrepreneurs are clustered into two, namely High and Low. For this purpose, K-Means cluster analysis was undertaken. These results are given in the following table.

**Table 3: Final Cluster Centers (Competitive Advantages Obtained)**

SN	Competitive Advantages	1	2
1	Improved business skill	3.50	3.42
2	Helped to improve confidence level	4.37	2.01
3	Created new business ideas	3.98	2.39
4	Learn technologies related to business	3.21	3.49
5	Think over innovative way to attract customers	3.47	3.42
6	Taught the technique to retain existing customers	3.44	3.12
7	Improved CRM practices	2.91	3.13
8	Improved management skill	2.60	2.80
9	Improved decision-making skill	3.21	3.38
10	Improved leadership skill	3.04	2.81
11	Improved communication skill	3.22	3.05



SN	Competitive Advantages	1	2
12	Pulled to modernise my business	3.67	3.50
13	Helped to expand business	3.21	3.16
14	Helped to introduce new products in business	3.62	3.30
15	Makes me to be active in the business	3.61	3.27
	Average Score	<b>3.40</b>	<b>3.08</b>
	Rank	<b>I</b>	<b>II</b>
	Cluster Name	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>

Table 3 divulges the final result of cluster analysis of the level of competitive advantages obtained by the sample women entrepreneurs in Puducherry area. The respondents were clustered into two categories such as high level of advantages and low level of advantages. The mean score of the cluster one and two were 3.40 and 3.08 respectively. The highest mean score was found in cluster 1 (3.40) and it was labelled as the competitive advantages obtained by the sample women entrepreneurs was “High”. The cluster 2 was recorded low mean value followed by cluster 1 (3.08), it was labelled as “Low” level of competitive advantages obtained by the sample women entrepreneurs in the study area. The following table presents the results of number of respondents fall under each cluster and their respective percentage with regards to competitive advantages of the sample women entrepreneurs in the study area.

**Table 4: Number of Respondents in each Cluster**

Cluster	No. of respondents	percentage
High	326	59.82
Low	219	40.18
Total	545	100.0

The table 4 shows the results of number of respondents in each cluster and their respective percentage on the total of studying the level of competitive advantages of women entrepreneurs in Puducherry area. It was observed that 59.82% of the respondents came under ‘High Level’ of competitive advantages obtained by the sample women entrepreneurs on account of competitive environments for their business in the study area, 40.18% of the respondents came under ‘Low Level’ of competitive advantages obtained by the sample women entrepreneurs in the study area. As stated by the results of cluster analysis, majority of the sample respondents opined that the level of competitive advantages was high for them. Hence, women entrepreneurs doing business in Puducherry area felt that the level of competitive advantages was high for them.

The factors influenced in creating competitive environments, perception of the respondents on various aspects of competitive environments, challenges faced by the sample women entrepreneurs related to competitive environments and competency of the women



entrepreneurs to tackle competition may have significant impact on the level of competitive advantages of the sample women entrepreneurs. To test this the researcher framed the following null hypothesis and the same was tested using Linear Regression Analysis. These results are presented in the below mentioned tables.

H<sub>011</sub> : There is no significant impact of Influencing factors, perception on competitive environments, challenges faced on account of competition and competency of the respondents to tackle competition on the level of competitive advantages.

Table 5 brings out the results of ANOVA under regression analysis of analysing the impact of factors influenced in creating competitive environments, perception of the respondents towards competitive environments, challenges faced on account of competition and competency of the respondents to tackle competition on the level of competitive advantages obtained by the respondents.

**Table 5: ANOVA of Regression Analysis of Factors, Perception, Challenges on Competency**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	19.691	4	4.923	2.661	0.032 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	998.903	540	1.850		
	Total	1018.594	544			
	Adjusted R Square				0.312	

a. Dependent Variable: Competency to tackle competition; b. Predictors: (Constant),

Table 5 shows that the calculated F-value under ANOVA stood at 2.661 for the regression model testing the impact of factors influenced in creating competitive environments, perception of the respondents on competitive environments, challenges faced on account of competition and competency of the respondents to tackle competition on the level of competitive advantages, it was statistically significant at 5% level (P-value 0.032), hence the model framed for the study is fit. The factors influenced in creating competitive environments, perception of the respondents on competitive environments, challenges faced on account of competition and competency of the respondents to tackle competition explained the level of competitive advantages to the extent of 31.2%. The following table brings out the results of regression analysis of the above factors on on the level of competitive advantages obtained by the sample women entrepreneurs in the study area.

**Table 6: Regression Coefficients of Factors, Perception, Challenges, Competency on Competitive Advantages**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.710	0.275		9.852	.000
	Influencing Factors	0.098	0.042	0.102	2.373*	0.018
	Perception Level	0.097	0.044	0.094	2.198*	0.028

	Challenges Faced	0.131	0.043	0.131	3.052*	0.002
	Competency	0.088	0.042	0.089	2.080*	0.038

a. Dependent Variable: Competency to tackle competition

Table 6 reveals that the factors influenced in creating competitive environments in the study area, perception of the respondents on competitive environments, challenges faced on account of competition and competency of the respondents to tackle competition had significant positive impact on the level of competition advantages of women entrepreneurs in. Since their calculated regression coefficients (0.102, 0.094, 0.131 and 0.089) are statistically significant at 5% as shown by the results of t-values (2.373, 2.198, 3.052 and 2.080) and p-value (0.018, 0.028, 0.002 and 0.038). Hence the null hypothesis was rejected.

## Conclusion

Micro level women entrepreneurs in Puducherry have several competitive advantages that set them apart in the business landscape. Firstly, their ability to be agile and adapt quickly to changing market conditions gives them a competitive edge. They are often more resourceful and innovative in finding solutions to challenges, making them stand out in their industries. Micro level women entrepreneurs in Puducherry have a unique perspective and a deep understanding of the local market. The study analysed the advantages of the micro level women entrepreneurs through competitive environments in their business in Puducherry. The study evidenced that the sample micro women entrepreneurs in Puducherry area opined that they obtained advantages through competitive environments existed for their businesses. They opined that new business ideas were created in their minds on account of competition, which was the most benefited competitive advantage for them. Followed by they also obtained competitive advantages by way of to be active in business and the competition improved their communication and management skills and competitive environments let them think about an innovative way of attracting customers. They also felt that the competitive advantages did not help them to expand their business and they could improve CRM practices. It was also observed that the factors influenced in creating competitive environments, the level of perception of the respondents towards competitive environments, level of challenges faced by the women entrepreneurs due to competition and level of competency of the respondents to tackle competition of their business had significant impact on the competitive advantages of the sample women entrepreneurs in the study area.

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