

MODELING NETWORK MARKETING DISTRIBUTORS' MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS AS AN ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITY: A MULTIPLE REGRESSION APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This research paper establishes the model for network marketing distributors' motivational factors on network marketing as an entrepreneurial opportunity. The sample of the research work consists of 381 registered distributors of different network marketing companies operating in Delhi and National Capital Region of Haryana. Factor analysis technique has been applied to identify the network marketing distributors' motivational factors. Five factors namely network marketing company characteristics, income source, network marketing product attributes, entrepreneurial opportunity and social factors have been extracted. Multiple Linear Regression has been used to examine the impact of perception about network marketing company attributes, income source, network marketing product attributes, and social factors on network marketing as an entrepreneurial opportunity. The findings designate that network marketing company attributes, income source, network marketing product attributes and social factors have a significant positive influence on network marketing as an entrepreneurial opportunity.

Keywords: Network Marketing, Network Marketing Distributors, Motivational Factors, Multiple Linear Regression.

1. Introduction

According to the report published by Labor Bureau in 2012-13 under Ministry of Labor and Employment, India is having an unemployment rate of 4.7 per cent. The basic reasons for unemployment and underemployment include limited access to skill based education, work experience, recession etc. (Kaur, 2013). To cope up with these problems, one of the best options is to become an entrepreneur. Among the options for being an entrepreneur, one is to become an independent distributor under network marketing, which requires little starting cost with flexibility of time and place. Network marketing does not require regular working hours in an office. Most of the distributors perform their entrepreneurial function by working after office hours to earn extra income. Network marketing is an entrepreneurial opportunity for those who are unemployed and also for those who are looking for an additional source of income. The decision to become an entrepreneur in the form of network marketing distributor requires proficiency in terms of creativity, innovation, capability to inspire one self and others and daring to take risks. Distributors should also have the competency, commitment and motivation for becoming an entrepreneur (Siahaan *et al.*, 2014).

Network marketing is a subset of direct selling and also known as 'multilevel marketing' or 'multilevel direct selling' (Muncy, 2004). It is a method of distribution of products or services from manufacturer to end users directly through distributors using word of mouth marketing (Coughlan and Grayson, 1998). It eliminates the middlemen and offers a profitable entrepreneurial opportunity. It includes both selling of products or services as well as recruitment of other sales people as down line (Clements, 2002). Under network marketing, distributors get commission at multiple levels. They get commission on their individual sales as well as on the sales made by their recruits and their recruits' recruit (Brodie *et al.*, 2002). It is not only for those who need the products, but also for who need an additional income and want to be an entrepreneur. Network marketing is a paradigm shift in terms of distribution of products; bypassing the intermediaries in the traditional channels by going direct to the ultimate consumers. It is a process of working up a network of consumers getting unique and better quality products at a reasonable price. Network marketing companies provide training and support to its distributors to enhance their confidence and boost up their productivity as well as competency (Bloch, 1996).

1.1 Global Outlook of Direct Selling Industry

Direct selling is more than a century old merchandizing method, which has been adopted in more than 170 countries and has achieved a status of global industry. The conventional selling method involves a hierarchical network of participants like manufacturer, wholesaler, retailer, agents, carrying and forwarding agents, customers, consumers etc. Direct selling method is suitable for those products and consumers who require demonstrations before purchase. The direct selling industry has a noticeable competency for providing income opportunity to millions of individuals around the world who may be looking for employment opportunity, flexible working hours, having own business with low investment, and personal time freedom. The performance of the direct selling industry has been remarkable over the many years. Globally, direct selling industry has generated sales of USD 178,521 million in 2013-14 as against about USD 165,200 million in 2012-13 with a remarkable growth rate of 8.1 per cent over 4.3 per cent in 2012-13. The direct selling industry has provided employment opportunities to 43.8 million direct sellers in 2001, which was 89.7 million in 2012-13, and now, in 2013-14 became at 96.3 million, registering a growth rate of 7.4 per cent (Bureau, 2013-14).

1.2 Growth Outlook of Direct Selling Industry in India

The Indian direct selling industry is expanding and flourishing at a very fast speed. It has been beating the economic slowdown, notching up remarkable growth over the years and has been expanding its horizons in India as a rapidly emerging alternate distribution channel, boosting self employment and holds immense importance to the economic system, contributing to the exchequer, providing financial

stability and encouraging women empowerment. The sales revenue by the Direct Selling Industry reached at INR 74,722 million in 2013-14 from INR 71,641 million in 2012-13 and INR 63,851 million in 2011-12. However, during 2013-14, the industry has faced a decline in its overall growth scenario due to several hurdles such as volatile global economic milieu and policy environment and declining investments. The Direct Selling Industry has registered growth rate of about 4.3 per cent in 2013-14 as against healthy growth rate of 12.23 per cent in 2012-13, 22.13 per cent in 2011-12. The total distributor base of the Indian Direct Selling Industry during 2013-14 has increased up to 62,37,373 as against 57,75,345 distributors in 2012-13. The growth of total distributors' network stands at 8.03 per cent in 2013-14 over 18.9 per cent in 2012-13 (Bureau, 2013-14).

2. Literature Review

Network marketing is seen as an opportunity that provides residual income, which is not attainable by those who only enjoy linear income (Peterson and Wotruba, 1996; Hedges, 2001; Kiyosaki, 2004). It is a business that assures financial independence with personal time freedom and social freedom (Wotruba and Tyagi, 1995; Kiyosaki, 2004; Krige, 2012). It does not require work experience and formal education, but it only needs less capital for investment for becoming an entrepreneur (Cahn, 2008). Products of high quality, good image, culture and attitude of the management are the crucial factors for the prosperity of network marketing companies (Chen *et al.*, 2000). Kiaw and Run (2007) studied the reasons for joining and staying on in a multilevel marketing (MLM) company. It was found that the main reasons for joining and continuing in MLMs are 'financial independence', 'personal freedom', 'types of products and benefits', 'product credibility' and 'incentives'. Nga and Mun (2011) found a significant influence of MLM Company and agent attributes on the willingness to undertake MLM as a career option except MLM schemes. General agent attributes showed a significant negative influence. Keun (2004) concluded that social satisfaction is the most commanding factor effecting the decision making of respondents to adopt network marketing while financial satisfaction is the least commanding one. Chen *et al.*, (1998) found that the main reasons to join MLM business are 'establishing one's own business', 'needs for products', 'increasing incomes', 'effectiveness of the products', 'good company image', and 'bright future prospects of the industry'. Wotruba (1992) found that people join network marketing due to social rewards, sense of self satisfaction and time freedom. Respondents agreed that flexible working hours result in higher efficiency in their sales performance. Muncy (2004) examined the ethical and legal issues connected with multilevel marketing. He suggested that if any company satisfies the criterion of legality it does not mean that such company is also working ethically. The criteria of legality and ethically are related with the issues like process of making money, legitimacy of the product, cost involved and work requirement. Vyas and Batish (2009) investigated the

participation of women in different direct selling enterprises. It has been assessed that 'good reputation of the company' followed by 'success of friends', 'easiness to start the business', 'success of friends' 'popularity of products' and 'low investment' are the reasons to adopt network marketing.

Thus, most of the studies regarding factors leading to the adoption of network marketing have been conducted in foreign countries. However, not much work could be traced specifically focusing on impact of perception of motivating factors on network marketing as an entrepreneurial opportunity in Indian context. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to bridge this research gap.

2.1 Objectives of the Study

The study has been conducted to identify the network marketing distributors' motivational factors. It also establishes the model for perception of identified motivational factors on network marketing as an entrepreneurial opportunity.

3. Research Methodology

The current study is descriptive in nature. Primary data have been used in the present study. The population comprised of registered distributors who are also the consumers of different network marketing companies like Amway, Modicare, Tupperware, Oriflame, Avon, Modicare, Vestige, DXN, Forever Living Products (FLP), Monavie and Herbalife from Delhi and National Capital Region of Haryana. The respondents have been contacted in weekly meetings of the distributors of the various organizations. The primary data have been collected for the period October-December 2013 by applying snowball sampling technique. The data have been collected with the help of a questionnaire based on five point likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. First section of the questionnaire contains demographic profile of the respondents and second section contains a list of 25 statements regarding motivational factors leading to the adoption of network marketing. In all, 450 respondents had been contacted; out of which 381 were patient enough to give the answer of all questions. Finally, a sample of 381 respondents has been finalized for further analysis.

4. Data Analysis Techniques

The data have been analyzed using Principle Component Analysis (PCA) method of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The Direct Oblimin factor rotation method has been used as the factors are related to each other. Factor loadings above 0.30 have been considered significant in this study. Significance of the factor loading depends on the sample size. For a sample size of 300 factor loading should be greater than 0.298 (Stevens, 2002; Hair *et al.*, 2010). Eigen values related with a construct indicate the substantive importance of that factor. Constructs having Eigen values one or more than one have been retained as it represents the substantial amount of variation explained by a factor (Kaiser, 1960). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy (KMO) has been

used to measure the sample adequacy. It varies between 0 and 1 (Kaiser, 1970). The Bartlett's test of sphericity is used to test for the adequacy of the correlation matrix i.e., the correlation matrix has significant correlations among at least some of the variables (Ho, 2006).

Reliability means that a measure should consistently reflect the construct that it is measuring. The reliability of all the constructs of the present study has been measured through Cronbach's alpha as it is an estimate of the average of all the correlation coefficients of the variables within a test (Ho, 2006). The touchstone for Cronbach's alpha of above 0.60 has been followed for the present study.

The hypotheses of the present study have been tested by using Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) method. The dependent construct of the study is perception of network marketing as entrepreneurial opportunity. The independent constructs are perception of network marketing company attributes (NM_COMPANY), Income source (INCOME), network marketing product attributes (NM_PRODUCT), and Social factors (SOCIAL).

Model fit is deemed to be achieved if the *F*-statistic generates a *p*-value of less than 0.05 (Field, 2009). The critical value of 0.05 has been adopted to approach the significance of the *t*-values coupled with each of the hypotheses of the present study.

4.1 Hypotheses of the Study

Four alternate hypotheses have been developed for the present research work to investigate the influence of (NM_COMPANY), (INCOME), (NM_PRODUCT), and (SOCIAL) factors on entrepreneurial opportunity (ENTREPRENEURIAL).

H1: The perception of network marketing company characteristics (NM_COMPANY) has statistical significant influence on entrepreneurial opportunity (ENTREPRENEURIAL).

H2: The perception of income source (INCOME) has statistical significant influence on entrepreneurial opportunity (ENTREPRENEURIAL).

H3: The perception of network marketing company products (NM_PRODUCT) has statistical significant influence on entrepreneurial opportunity (ENTREPRENEURIAL).

H4: The perception of social factors (SOCIAL) has statistical significant influence on entrepreneurial opportunity (ENTREPRENEURIAL).

5. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

The sample incorporates 50.1 per cent females and 49.9 per cent males representing almost equal distribution of females and males. Majority of the respondents (26.5 per cent) belong to 32-38 age group, 19.4 per cent belongs to 25-31 age group, 18.1 per cent belongs to 39-45 age group, and 13.9 per cent belongs to 46-52 age group. 62.4 per cent respondents are married, 22.6 per cent are unmarried, 8.2 per cent are widow,

and 6.8 per cent are divorcee. Majority of the respondents (44.9 per cent) respondents belong to Rs. 25000-50000/- monthly income group, and 25.7 per cent belong to Rs. 50000-75000/- monthly income group. As far as experience is concerned, majority of the respondents 30.7 per cent have 1-3 years and 30.2 per cent respondents have more than three years experience in network marketing industry which indicates the long term association of the respondents with their network marketing. The percentage of the respondents having experience 10-12 months is 21.5 per cent, while 17.6 per cent respondents have experience 6-9 months. Distributors having experience less than six months have not been taken into consideration. Distributors (66.9 per cent) indicated that they have another job along with their network marketing activity, out of which 28.6 per cent distributors consider other activity as primary and 71.4 per cent consider

network marketing as their primary work. 33.1 per cent respondents do not have another job along with their network marketing activity. The above data show that for many of the respondents network marketing activity is a source of income.

5.2 Factor Analysis Approach

The tests of assumptions of the EFA were satisfied with the KMO measure of sample adequacy of 0.87 and Bartlett's test of Sphericity X^2 returning a value of 3368.79 (df=300; p-value<0.05). Table 1 depicts major network marketing distributors' motivational factors. All the constructs have Eigen values of above one indicating that they are valid factors and the cumulative percentage of variance explained by all the constructs is 55.01 per cent.

Table 1: Network Marketing Distributors' Motivational factors for Exploratory Factor Analysis

Constructs

	NM_Company	Income	NM_Product	Entrepreneurial opportunity	Social
Transparent and Reliable system	0.875				
Financially and operationally stable	0.865				
Working with a company with which proud to be associated	0.846				
Legal and ethical in operation	0.679				
Support system for training and motivation	0.494				
Setting up own business		0.724			
Infinite income potential		0.708			
Residual income		0.633			
Opportunity for supplementary income		0.606			
Life time security of job		0.589			
Financial independence		0.552			
Money back guarantee		0.483			
No money down deal		0.442			
Low investment		0.434			
Quality products			0.724		
Wholesale/retail rebates			0.674		
Convenience in buying of products			0.651		
Personal time freedom				0.763	
Personal growth and development				0.673	
Flexibility to work at one's own pace and time				0.506	

	NM_Company	Income	NM_Product	Entrepreneurial opportunity	Social
Make use of skills one have				0.417	
Broadening of social circle					0.730
Opportunity to work closely with others in a team					0.670
To have influence over and create a positive impact upon community					0.503
Opportunity to teach and learn					0.450
Eigenvalues	6.657	3.021	1.763	1.287	1.025
Percentage of Variance Explained	26.63	12.08	7.05	5.15	4.10
Cumulative Percentage of Variance Explained	26.63	38.71	45.76	50.91	55.01
Cronbach's Alpha	0.852	0.812	0.634	0.675	0.672
Scale Mean	3.15	3.66	3.82	3.51	3.13
Scale Standard Deviation	0.97	0.68	0.73	0.72	1.12
KMO Measure of Sample Adequacy	0.878				
Bartlett's test of sphericity	3368.79				
Degree of Freedom	300				
p-value	0.00				

Source: Primary Data

The Cronbach's alpha for the independent constructs of the study namely NM_COMPANY, INCOME, NM_PRODUCT, and SOCIAL are 0.852, 0.812, 0.634, and 0.672 respectively. As for the dependent construct, ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITY the Cronbach's alpha is 0.675. Since, these figures are above 0.60, they have satisfied the assessment of reliability for exploratory research.

Table 1 indicates that five motivational factors have been extracted through exploratory factor analysis leading to the acceptance of network marketing.

5.2.1 Factor I: Network Marketing Company attributes (NM_Company)

The pattern matrix has disclosed that network marketing distributors have perceived this factor to be the most significant factor with the highest explained variance of 26.6 per cent. This factor has been dominated by items such as 'transparent and reliable system (factor loading=0.875)', 'financially and operationally stable (factor loading=0.865)', and 'working with a company with which proud to be associated (factor loading=0.846)'. It reflects that most of the distributors who adopted network marketing considered the NM_Company attributes like its stability, reliability, transparency, ethicality & legality and image of the particular company.

5.2.2 Factor II: Income Source (INCOME)

It has been discovered to be the next important factor with explained variance of 12.08 per cent. Network marketing distributor emphasized on 'setting up own business (factor loading=0.724)', 'Infinite income potential (factor loading=0.708)' and 'residual income (factor loading=0.633)'. They considered network marketing as an additional source of income through which residual income (money that keeps coming long after completion of initial work) can be generated without interfering present job or business.

5.2.3 Factor III: Network marketing Product attributes (NM_Product)

The next crucial factor, which accounts for 7.05 per cent of the total variance, is network marketing product attributes. The success of every marketing company primarily depends on the quality of the products or services. Respondents get attracted towards 'product quality (factor loading=0.724)', 'wholesale/retail rebates (factor loading=0.674)' and 'convenience in buying (factor loading=0.651)'. They buy the products at discount (wholesale/retail rebates) for resale as well as their entrepreneurial opportunity consumption. In this way, such discounts or rebates also lead to the adoption of network marketing. Due to home delivery, convenience is felt in buying the products through network marketing.

5.2.4 Factor IV: Entrepreneurial opportunity (ENTREPRENEURIAL)

Respondents stated that their desire for own entrepreneurial opportunity directed them toward network marketing. This factor explains 5.15 per cent of the total variance. The most commanding entrepreneurial opportunity attributes are 'personal time freedom (factor loading=0.763)' and 'personal growth and development (factor loading=0.673)'. Many of the respondents expressed that network marketing is that platform which allows working freely at anytime from anywhere. It does not lay down any time or place restrictions. They also emphasized on 'flexibility to work at one's own pace and time (factor loading=0.506)'. Female respondents indicated that they got a chance to create their own identity by using their skills and to contribute in their family income.

5.2.5 Factor V: Social Factor (SOCIAL)

This factor accounts for 4.10 per cent of the total variance. Distributors considered network marketing as an opportunity to 'Broadening of social circle (factor loading=0.730)' and 'work closely with others in a team (factor loading=0.670)'. It reflects that most of the distributors look for entrepreneurial opportunity and social development.

Significant correlation has been found among the selected constructs within a range from 0.217 to 0.504.

5.3 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The MLR model for the testing of the hypotheses of the present research work is as follows:

$$\text{ENTREPRENEURIAL} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{NM_COMPANY} + \beta_2 \text{INCOME} + \beta_3 \text{NM_PRODUCT} + \beta_4 \text{SOCIAL}$$

Table 2: Coefficients of Multiple Linear Regression

	Standardized Coefficients		t	Sign.	Collinearity Statistics	
	Beta	Std. Error			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		0.190	4.709	0.000		
NM_Company	0.233	0.036	5.040	0.000*	0.730	1.370
Income	0.277	0.049	6.010	0.000*	0.735	1.360
NM_Product	0.104	0.043	2.387	0.017*	0.815	1.227
Social	0.286	0.030	6.073	0.000*	0.704	1.421

Source: Primary Data

*p-value<0.05

The significance of model fit has been achieved with an observed *F*-statistic of 66.541 with a *p*-value of less than 0.05. The adjusted *R*² is 0.608 which indicates that all the four motivational factors account for 60.8 per cent of the total variation in dependent construct i.e., entrepreneurial opportunity. It means that 39.2 per cent of the variation in entrepreneurial opportunity cannot be explained by these four motivational factors alone. Therefore, there must be other variables that have an influence also. The variance inflation factor (VIF) indicates whether a predictor has strong linear relationship with other predictor(s) (Field, 2009). The variance inflation factors are below the suggested threshold of 10 indicating acceptable degree of collinearity (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Based on Table 2 perception of network marketing company attributes (NM_Company) exerts a significant positive influence on network marketing as an entrepreneurial opportunity (ENTREPRENEURIAL) (t-statistic=5.040, *p*<0.05), H1 is statistically supported. INCOME, NM_PRODUCT and SOCIAL factors also have a significant positive impact on network marketing as an entrepreneurial opportunity (INCOME) (t-statistic=6.010, *p*<0.05); (NM_PRODUCT) (t-statistic=2.387, *p*<0.05), and (SOCIAL) (t-statistic=6.073, *p*<0.05). Hence, H2, H3, and H4 are statistically supported. Overall, all of the constructs, SOCIAL factor is the most important explanatory variable in the model with a *β*-value of 0.286 followed by INCOME (0.277), NM_COMPANY (0.233), and NM_PRODUCT (0.104).

5.4 Major Findings

The present research work has been carried out to model the perception of motivating factors on network marketing as an entrepreneurial opportunity. Five motivational factors have been extracted. The findings indicate that 'NM_Company attributes' is the most motivational factor leading to the acceptance of network marketing. Network marketing companies must be equipped with the qualities of financial and operational stability, transparent and reliable system, ethicality and legality in operations and effective support system for training and motivation. The second motivating factor is 'Income Opportunity'. Distributors considered network marketing as one of the alternatives to supplement their livelihood. Third factor is 'Network marketing product attributes (NM_Product)'. It indicates that distributors recognize the products offered by their network marketing companies as quality products available at discount. The other factors are 'entrepreneurial opportunity' and 'social' factors. These findings are in agreement with Keun's (2004) and Dai's *et al.*, (2009).

The Multiple Linear Regression analysis shows that the factors i.e., 'NM_COMPANY', 'INCOME', 'NM_PRODUCT' and 'Social' have a statistical significant positive influence on network marketing as an entrepreneurial opportunity.

6. Implications

Due to unemployment, rise in cost of living and increased consumption basket of families, network marketing is being considered as an entrepreneurial opportunity. Network marketing industry could grab this golden opportunity to attract more and more distributors through strengthening its credibility and reliability in terms of services, products, training and support. It can be enlarged by following legal as well as ethical path. Government should also take necessary and sufficient actions to create a positive as well as legal identity of network marketing industry.

6.1 Areas for Future Research

Similar type of study can be undertaken by collecting data from the respondents operating in other areas of the country. The future research can also be conducted by taking non-distributors (only consumers) as respondents. The impact of demographic dynamics on the willingness to consider network marketing as an entrepreneurial opportunity can also be examined.

7. References

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