

IMPORTANCE AND PLACE OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN IMPROVEMENT OF WOMAN COOPERATIVES¹

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Abstract

The participation to labor force of woman is of great importance for country economy and the most important factor is cooperatives that ease women involved in economy. For that purpose, activities, facilitating services and support to cooperatives established by women, shall be carried out. As well, this is to improve for women's economical activities and involved in e commerce, strengthen. One of leading issue faced in cooperatives is marketing for product produced or services by own. When viewed from this stand point, Digital marketing platforms provide some facilitation to product of women cooperatives regarding quality, payment guarantee, standartisation. In this study, current view of women cooperatives in Digital Market Platforms is to be revealed by model of STP (Situation-Target-Path) and to state targets and strategies followed in this platform. Digital marketing provides women's cooperatives with both visibility and product/service marketing. Some of these cooperatives have their own websites. The strategies required to achieve the volume of marketing, secure sales and awareness provided by e-commerce sites and social media platforms, which are widely preferred today, will be revealed.

Keywords: Women cooperatives, digital marketing, STP Model

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INTRODUCTION

Women's participation into labour force and employment is an important element of sustainable development. Ensuring sustainability in economic growth, achieving social development and social justice in the full sense can be possible only through full and equal participation of women and men into all spheres of life as executors and beneficiaries of human-oriented sustainable development (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, 2022). As gender equity is increasingly seen as a pillar for sustainable economic development and broad social well-being, alternative models to development which incorporate women's equality in work are needed. Rooted in values of self-help, equality, and equity, as well as economic growth through cooperation and democratic processes, cooperative enterprises are well-positioned to answer this call (ICA, 2022).

ICA's Gender Equality Committee (GEC) has published a statement. Cooperatives play a key role in promoting gender equality, adds the GEC. "By increasing women's access to resources and economic opportunities; by empowering them not only economically but also individually and socially to challenge the social and cultural norms; by creating an enabling environment for them to use those opportunities and assets to achieve equal outcomes to men," reads the statement (ICA, 2022a). In Turkey, women are encouraged and supported to establish women's cooperatives through official documents and policy documents. In addition, with the support of the private sector and non-governmental organizations, the problems experienced by women's cooperatives are eliminated and their development is ensured. The main problems encountered in women's cooperatives are marketing of products, pricing, determining the products to be produced and developing new products. Digital marketing contributes to women's cooperatives in solving these problems.

In this study, the contribution and importance of digital marketing to the development of women's cooperatives was evaluated.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The material of the study consisted of studies on women's cooperatives, reports, statistics, data and researches obtained as a result of the social media content review of women's cooperatives.

As digital marketing platforms; Instagram (2nd place), Trendyol (6th place) and Hepsiburada (10th place), which are among the most used mobile applications in Turkey according to the number of active users, were evaluated (Digital Report, 2021).

In this study, STP (*Situation-Target-Path*) Model was applied. With the model, the current status of women's cooperatives on digital marketing platforms has been revealed, and the targets and strategies to be followed in this platform have been determined.

STP or Situation-Target-Path is a very simple overview of the strategic planning method, it divides the planning process into three parts, starting with defining *the situation* – evaluating and analyzing the current situation and how it came about.

The second component – *Target* – involves defining goals and objectives for the future. Sometimes this is referred to as defining the ideal or desired future state.

The third component – *Path* – involved defining a map or path to achieve the goals or future state.

The STP model, or methodology is that it is simple, but accurately describes, at least in a general way, what strategic planning involves (Strategies by Design, 2022).

The Situation-Target-Process (STP) group problem-solving process is one of many methods that can help clarify the communication process and, therefore, the outcomes of any given discussion. The STP method is also one of the easiest methods to use and involves only 3 steps (Figure 1):

- 1) Define the current SITUATION;
- 2) Define the TARGET (agree on the TARGET before proceeding),
- 3) Define the PROCESS, i.e., how to get from the SITUATION to the TARGET (and agree on the PROCESS before defining the Action Plan—who will do what by when).

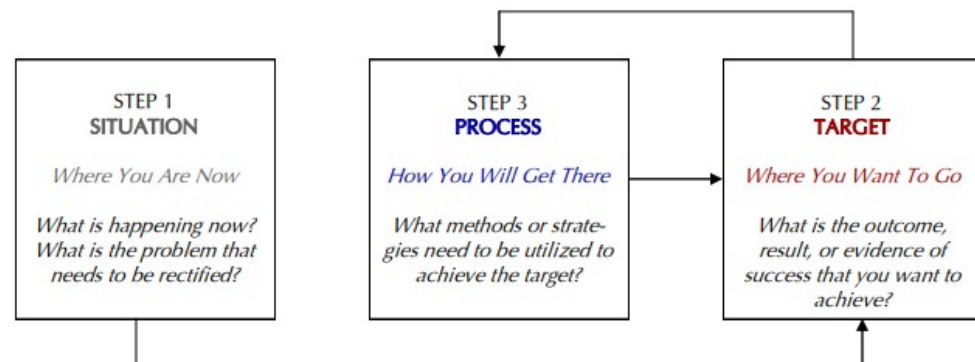


Figure.1 The Situation-Target-Process (STP) group problem-solving process (Strategies By Design, 2022)

DIGITAL MARKETING

With the revolution of the internet and mobile, the understanding of commerce and marketing emerge digital marketing. Digital marketing method is the name given to the marketing process of a company or brand in the digital environment. The pioneers of this efficient marketing method using digital channels are internet, social media and mobile platforms. Digital marketing is a set of strategies that enable to reach more potential customers, a more accurate audience, faster and more effectively.

Between traditional marketing and digital marketing; There are differences in terms of cost, time and continuity, communication and interaction, performance analysis and target audience reach.

Costwise; You are not in need of paying for most of the marketing processes or need a large budget.

Time and continuity; Thanks to digital marketing, your ads are on the air 24/7. An ad to be viral can quickly increase brand awareness.

Communication and interaction; There are communication options such as commenting and messaging, especially in the social media line of digital marketing. Those seeing the ads are able to express their opinions and become real customer by allaying the question marks.

Performance analysis; digital ads can be measured. The number of views and clicks is clearly visible. In product sale, It is measured how many people clicked on the advertisement and bought that product.

Target audience communication; In digital marketing, it can be adjusted to whom the advertisements will be shown. Thus, people interested in products and services can be reached directly.

Types of digital marketing; search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, email marketing, social media marketing, affiliate marketing, influencer marketing, remarketing, search engine marketing (SEM), display ads (display advertising) and viral marketing.

The study dwell on social media marketing and affiliate marketing.

Social Media Marketing; Social media marketing is the process of promoting products and services on social networks. It is often preferred, as let reach large masses with a low budget. Advertisements presented on social networks provide maximum efficiency. Details such as interest, age, gender, region, feedback from potential customers as comments and messages can be adjusted.

Affiliate Marketing; In the type of affiliate marketing, which we can define as advertising or sales made by the user, there are two parties that earn a profit. The sales partner takes on different roles and enables the product or service to be sold through the marketing or proposition method.

While the manufacturer earns from the product, the affiliate earns a commission, too. Influencer marketing and viral marketing methods can also be included in the affiliate marketing group (Pazarlama Teknikleri, 2022).

WOMEN COOPERATIVES IN TURKEY

The sectoral distribution of women's cooperatives in Turkey is not different from the world. There are women's cooperatives that produce goods and services in one or more of the fields such as agriculture, textile, souvenirs, food and services. The women's cooperative movement, having a history of about 20 years, contributes to the economic strength of women by including them in working life and making them earn income. Moreover, meeting with other women and sharing their experiences and problems increases the social and psychological well-being of women.

Policy document about women cooperatives;

- “*Works will be made to enable the women to organize under the roof of cooperatives, with the aim of improving their entrepreneurial ability and their participation in the economy as actors.*” are among the strategic targets and activities in the Turkish Cooperative Strategy and Action Plan (2012–2016) (National Cooperative Union of Turkey, 2022).
- In ILO’s Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, 2002 (No.193) “Special consideration should be given to increasing women’s participation in the cooperative movement at all levels, particularly at management and leadership levels” advice is given to governments (ILO, 2022).
- The First 100-Day Presidential Action Plan; *Strengthening Activities of Women's Cooperatives*: The First 100-Day Presidential Action Plan includes the goal of strengthening women's cooperatives, ensuring their sustainability, improving their institutional capacities and increasing their visibility. In this context, “The Cooperation Protocol on Strengthening Women's Cooperatives” was signed on 30 October 2018 in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of Trade. The Protocol was renewed on 12 July 2021 for a period of 2 years. In order to ensure the local applicability of the aforementioned Protocol and to guide the implementers, the "Implementation Principles of the Cooperation Protocol for the Strengthening of Women's Cooperatives" was prepared for the Provincial Directorates of the Ministries and shared with 81 provinces. In this context, Women's Cooperatives Working Groups were established in

provinces, annual business plans were prepared, various activities and meetings were organized. (Ministry Of Family, Labour and Social Services, 2022). With the protocol, it is aimed to strengthen women's cooperatives, ensure their sustainability, develop their institutional capacities, increase their visibility, expand them, and ensure effective participation of women in economic and social life through cooperatives, and women's participation in the management of cooperatives at a higher rate. One of the outputs of the protocol is the EU-financed “Empowerment of Women Through Cooperatives” Project (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2022).

Empowerment of Women through Cooperatives Project: With the aim of strengthening women's cooperatives, ensuring their sustainability, improving their institutional capacities, increasing their visibility and disseminating them, the "Empowerment of Women through Cooperatives Project" being carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The technical preparatory work of the project, which is planned to last 30 months, continues. Within the scope of the project; Studies will be carried out to inform women and men who have the potential to establish a cooperative, to become members in cooperatives, and to raise awareness, and to develop cooperation, and the establishment of new women's cooperatives will be encouraged (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, 2022, p.46)

In Turkey, women’s cooperatives play both economic and social functions for their members: they initiate and implement economic activities which generate income and employment, provide care and education services, and carry out social activities that encourage women to participate in social life. In 2005, the women’s cooperatives came together to create the Women’s Cooperatives Communication Network. In 2014, they established Simurg (Phoenix) Women’s Cooperatives Union as an official secondary level structure. The members of the Simurg Women’s Cooperative Union are 70 women’s cooperatives from 60 provinces of Turkey operating in various economic fields, such as organic agriculture, home textiles and souvenirs, and child care. Simurg aims to increase awareness of the contribution of women’s cooperatives to the country’s economy, improve their institutional capacities, and strengthen communications between them. It also advocates for its member cooperatives’ common needs and interests and creates opportunities for sharing knowledge and experience at the national and global levels (ILO, 2022a).

According to “*The Current State of Women's Co-Operatives In Turkey 2015*” report, women's cooperatives are small-scale structures, the number of which usually does not exceed 25. The majority of the members are women

with different education levels, between the ages of 40-60, married and with children. These small cooperatives, having little access to foreign capital, derive most of their income from the sale of products and services (Duguid, Durutas & Wodzicki, 2015)

Women's co-operatives are more connected to their local institutions (e.g. municipalities) and to NGOs, associations and foundations. Women's cooperatives are affiliated to two ministries. In the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, there are 137 Agricultural Development Cooperatives whose members are mostly women (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2022). In the Ministry of Trade, there are approximately one thousand women's cooperatives registered. These cooperatives are four different types (Ministry of Trade, 2022).

4.1.STP Method for Women Cooperatives

Different frameworks make decision making easier (Sells, 2022). When choosing a framework, the goal is to ensure that all decision makers understand the need for a decision, the options available, and the consequences of their choices in providing a solution. When a call to action is needed, the Statuation, Target, Path (STP) tool is a great way to show leaders this information while suggesting a solution. For this purpose, STP analysis was conducted to evaluate the digital marketing practices of women's cooperatives and to draw a roadmap in this regard (Table 1).

Table 1. STP Method for Women Cooperatives

The SITUATION	The TARGET	The PATH
• The number of women's cooperatives is very large (close to 1000) • They usually produce traditional products that they know how to make. • Financial literacy is not at a sufficient level. • Pricing of the product is not done correctly. • Women's cooperatives are competing with each	• Making women's co-operatives more visible in digital markets • To contribute to the economic empowerment of women by increasing the sales of cooperative products through digital markets • Increasing the awareness of women's cooperative	• Support should be obtained from individuals and organizations that specialize in marketing, sales and branding. • E-commerce site established with the Ministry of Commerce should be registered • It should be ensured that they promote the product by establishing a

other because similar products are produced. • It is difficult for them to continue their activities without the support of local governments. • The number of partners in cooperatives is not enough. • Cooperatives are not seen as a business both among their members and in the society. • Cooperatives do not have sufficient equipment to create and develop their own brands. • Not having enough knowledge about digital marketing • Women's cooperatives do not conduct market research. • Especially the products sold on e-commerce sites are not modern and up-to-date. • No value has been created for the products and services produced in women's cooperatives • The packaging and visuals of the products	members on digital marketing • Creating partnerships in the digital market • Creating a structure that includes up-to-date information about manufactured products and customers • Build loyal customers • Increasing sales by reaching more customers through local governments and organizations such as “<i>İyimser abla</i>”, collaborating with other women's cooperatives • Uncovering local and especially vanishing values • Emphasizing the social aspect of women's cooperatives besides the economic aspect • To follow up data and reports for digital use	connection with the female figures taken as an example on social media. • Get support for digital marketing • Determine the target audience and plan accordingly. • Must accurately identify the needs of the target audience. • Campaigns and promotions should be organized on special days and times • Small promotions or gifts, small brochures describing the women's cooperative should be added with the purchased product. • It should be stated that environmental and health conditions are taken into account in product presentation and packaging. • Tailor-made production concept can be applied • Women should follow the agenda and the current • They should analyze their competitors; what they produce, how much they sell,
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offered are far from making the product attractive. • More visibility of cooperatives that produce local products under hygienic conditions and standards • Women need expert support to exist and maintain their presence, especially in the digital market. • Inadequacy in developing new products. • Most of the cooperatives have few followers.		what way they follow for sales • Advertising or slogans should be created that will attract attention • Slogans or advertisements should be prepared to convince customers and potential customers why they should buy the cooperative product. • Support given to women's cooperatives should be followed • Market research for products and services
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CONCLUSION

Innovations brought by technology and the internet have not only changed the way of communication, but also changed the speed, impact, cost, needs and expectations of customers. Businesses have had to develop new strategies on these issues and revise their marketing communications according to the new rules brought by digital media.

In this research, suggestions were made for the application of digital marketing in women's cooperatives. These recommendations are intended to provide guidance. For this purpose, the most preferred shopping sites (e-commerce) and the most widely used social media platform were evaluated.

Women's participation into labour force and employment is an important element of sustainable development. Ensuring sustainability in economic growth, achieving social development and social justice in the full sense can be possible only through full and equal participation of women and men into all spheres of life as executors and beneficiaries of human-oriented sustainable development. In order to raise women's social status and promote their participation into development, it is of significant importance

to enhance the indicators of education, health, social security and to ensure equality between women and men legally and in practice (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, 2022).

A support program for women's co-operatives has resulted in the importance of digital marketing for women's cooperatives and its contribution to its development. With these results, it is aimed that the project will reach more women's cooperatives. "I Can Manage My Money Project" was brought to life in the December of 2009, with the involvement of United Nations Development Programme, Habitat Association, Visa Turkey, and 30 member banks. This Project goal is to make the budget of the personal financial resources of individuals living in Turkey and aims to provide an educational opportunity for financial services to support their use (Financial awareness, 2022). Within the scope of this project, 14 women's cooperatives were selected for the "From Labor to Basket (Ekmekten Sepete) Support Program for Women's Cooperatives", which was piloted in January 2021. Women were supported with the necessary trainings to be included in the e-commerce ecosystem, marketing their products on the internet on e-commerce sites established specifically for their cooperatives, and the establishment of websites of their cooperatives. Thus, visibility was provided on the internet and it contributed to the strengthening of the socio-economic status of the cooperative members (Emekten sepete kadın kooperatiflerini destekleme programı, 2022). In the social impact research carried out regarding the program; It has been determined that 86% of women's cooperatives have increased their sales, 93% have made new collaborations, 76% have started e-commerce thanks to the program, 71% have diversified their sales channels and 47% target exports (Emekten sepete, 2022).

Initially, in women's cooperatives, started with mostly non-competitive products in the market, today there are cooperatives developing products, becoming brands and offer products to the national market. These cooperatives not only give their members economic independence, but also make them active participants in the society and strengthen them with solidarity networks.

Use of new technologies can increase member participation in expressing their unmet needs (Roshina, 2022) in voting and in economic participation and can provide metrics that accurately and inclusively measure the tangible and intangible impacts those cooperatives have on major crises (Hoyt, 2022).

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