

MARKETING

The female segment

Why should we as marketers be concerned with what is happening in the female segment of the market? Women are an important for a broad range of products and no marketer can ignore this segment. The purchase needs of women are undoubtedly linked to the stage they are at in their changing life cycle. What they buy, what they listen to, is influenced, among other things, by whether there is a man about and whether there are children.

Some analysis

Our analysis can start by attempting to understand female employment patterns, for this will have an important influence on purchasing power. The number of working women has been rising over the years having declined significantly during the recessionary period in the first half of the 1980's. If one considers the rate of decline this indicates that the downturn in the economy at this time affected more significantly companies that tended to employ women. The percentage of women out of the

The last 30 years have seen a dramatic cultural shift in the attitudes towards women and their needs.

Indeed women are an important market for a broad range of products and no marketer can ignore this segment, writes Albert Caruana.

total gainfully employed now stands at close to 27 per cent which is only marginally above what it was in 1974.

What has been taking place in the last 20 years has been a significant and steady increase in the number of married women that are going out to work. This has climbed from a mere 12 per cent of all employed women to almost 22 per cent. The accelerating rate in recent years has probably been aided by changes in the taxation laws they gave married women the right to a separate tax assessment.

Cultural shift

The last 30 years has seen a dramatic cultural shift in the attitude towards women and work. Broadly speaking one can distinguish an initial period when it was thought

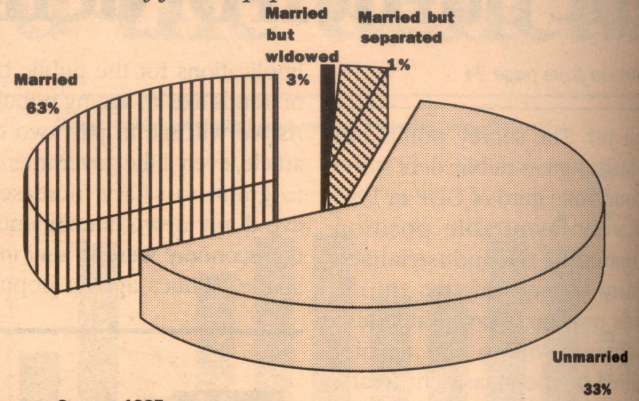
improper for women to go out to work. This eventually changed to acceptance of women going out to work provided they stopped when they were married.

Again this mentality changed and many married women continue to work until they have children. It appears that we are now moving to a situation where married women are increasingly going back to work once they have had children and these are old enough to go to school. This may initially be part-time work. Indeed a reply to a parliamentary question in 1993 indicated that there were 2,630 married women with a part-time job. In Malta two thirds of all working age women are married. From these around 11 per cent are now in full time. While from the remaining one third as much as 77 per cent are in full time employment with the rest generally continuing their education.

Why do women work?

There is no definitive answer to this question. Women work for a variety of reasons. They may work out of economic necessity as in the case of widowed divorced or separated persons as well as to supplement a low family income. Some may work because they see the opportunity of a second pay cheque enabling the family to improve its standard of living making holidays, a second car and a wider variety of clothes possible. Others may choose to work because they believe there is more to life than the kitchen sink and a job makes it possible for wider

Table 1: Status of female population



Source: Census 1985.
Total female population age 15 - 60 - 107,738

social interaction and friendships. Yet others may seek personal fulfilment in the pursuit of their chosen profession and career. A look at what jobs women in Malta perform indicates that around 12 per cent are in professional and managerial posts. A further 26 per cent are in executive and clerical jobs with the rest doing skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. The latest education statistics of 1993, show that during 1992 49 per cent of the university population consisted of women. In the years to come this should result in an increase in the number of women in the professions.

Women segments

Grouping all women together into one segment is apt to be insufficient. Thus, the working career woman is likely to be more affluent and has product needs that

are quite different from other working women who look upon their employment as 'just a job'. Both have a need for clothes and other products but the career woman is more likely to be attracted by status enhancing products. Similarly the housewife who is very happy to remain a housewife is quite different from the housewife who sees this as just a temporary role until the children move off to school. The way they see themselves plays a large part in the products they buy. Marketers need to be aware of these differences as this will greatly help them in the targeting of their product offerings.

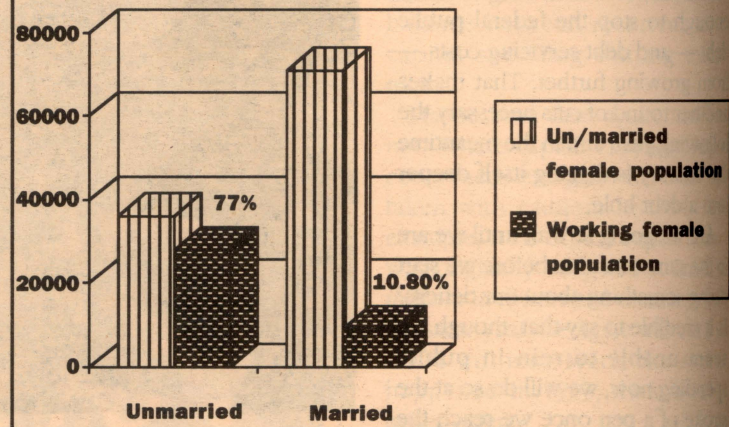
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Table 2: Women and employment 1974-1994

Year	Married women in employment (1)	Total women in employment (2)	Total gainfully employed (2)	Total women in employment as % of total gainfully employed	Married women in employment as % of total women in employment
1974	3244	26603	102310	26.0	12.2
1976	4095	28667	110518	25.9	14.3
1978	4475	30439	114264	26.6	14.7
1980	4155	30917	116698	26.5	13.4
1982	3229	27092	108353	25.0	11.9
1984	4045	27241	109189	24.9	14.9
1986	4823	28324	115109	24.6	17.0
1988	5553	31496	124973	25.2	17.6
1990	N/A	32865	127196	25.8	N/A
1992	7134	34627	131609	26.3	20.6
1994 (Jan)	7739	35353	132013	26.8	21.9

Source: (1) Parliamentary Questions
(2) Economic Trends

Table 3: Working females from the total un/married females



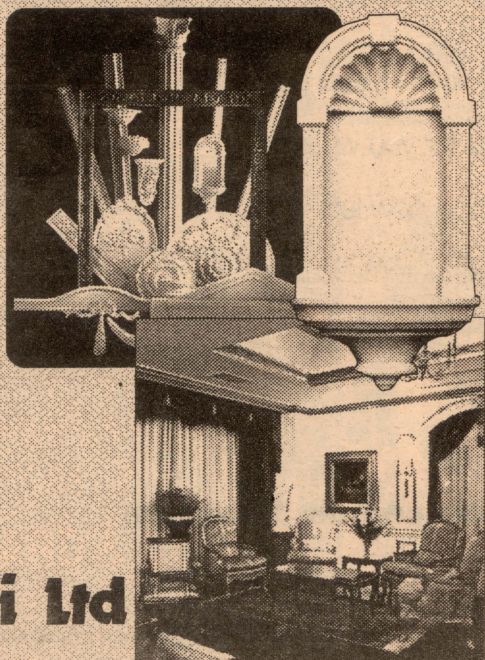
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