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Broking houses ride the bull to woo her

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WHEN it comes to Desperate Housewives, the viewers have to be largely men. For housewives in India have got some serious business to take care of — they're tracking the bull run. Women and senior citizens are now slowly but surely finding their feet in the bastion of day traders, which was considered to be a 'men-only' zone. Infact, according to industry data, over a quarter of all trading accounts are operated by women and senior citizens.

Take the case of 60-year old granny, Roma Arora, who is busy dabbling her savings on the India story. She is one among the new set of retail investors who trade on the bourses. And, brokerage houses such as Reliance Money, Religare and Kotak are coming out with innovative business models to tap this exciting segment. Not only they are bringing varied products but are also setting up teams of women relationship managers to train, nurture and service the new investors.

"Around 26% of the total accounts are today operated by women and senior citizens. In the first and last trading hour, we receive around 100-150 calls only from women. They call in at our help desk and ask questions on the research reports that we provide, they compare their stocks with all the peers. For example if they have invested in Infosys, they would like to compare it with the performance of Wipro and Satyam," says Prasanth Prabhakaran, senior vice-president, Kotak Securities.

Mr Prabhakaran believes that their risk appetite has gone up and the understanding of the stock market has improved considerably. The company's 'auto invest' scheme is particularly popular with this new set of investors. "Under this scheme, around 50% of the accounts are held by women or senior citizens," he says.

Reliance Money too has a similar story. Of the total demat accounts that they manage, women and senior citizens operate around 25%. "This segment is now expanding their horizon and looking beyond traditional investment options such as national saving certificates or bonds. Mutual Funds are very popular among the lot. But it's not a blanket definition that this segment is risk averse, quite a number of them also do day trading," says Sudip Bandyopadhyay, director & CEO, Reliance Money. The company is giving special training to these investors on how they can trade online. "Our employees, wherever possible go to their homes and make them understand the intricacies. Overall, the result have been overwhelming," he says. **Women are more tech savvy**

ASHU Madan, national head, Religare Securities believes that it is a very exciting and challenging business opportunity for this industry. "We have observed that women go for buying more volumes than normal traders. If a normal trader is ordering 1,000 or 2,000 shares of a stock, women are buying in lots of 5,000 and 10,000 shares. Especially from cities such as Dehradun, Coimbatore, Chandigarh, Faridabad, the response has been pretty good. Housewives have turned out to be an aggressive lot. And with average disposable income increasing, certainly the husbands are also happy letting their wives contribute to family earnings," says Madan.

For some women the experience of earning money is like adding a new chapter to their life.

"It's more the women from non-metro cities who are trading on the bourses. In a way, they feel confident that they are equally contributing to the household earnings," says Madan.

Another factor the companies feel more women are on the online platform is because they are more tech savvy. "On the other hand, senior citizens are reluctant to trade online. It is really difficult to convince people with old psyche. They still prefer going to the terminal and asking the broker to trade on his behalf," says Madan. The company has set up a team of female relationship managers to deal with this segment.

The popularity of stock trading among women is largely because of more exposure. "Earlier women and senior citizens didn't have anyone to help them understand the intricacies of stock markets, these companies are now acting as facilitators and that's why there is this surge," reasons Sunil Sinha, head and senior economist, Crisil.

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