

A REVIEW OF THE MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF WOMEN VENDORS IN MANIPUR

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ABSTRACT: Women play a very important role in every society in economic and social status. Manipur portrays the active participation of women in the economic activity of the state. The study categorizes the different types of products, rare and important edible bio-resources plant species for the consumption of the local people and their income earned depends on the type of products they engage with and detect the problem faced by women vendors of Manipur. The Ima market which is known as the mother's market has been run exclusively by women vendors since ancient times and is the only place in Asia where the active participation of women is seen in economic aggressively. The market is a figurative representation of cultural intermingling, mutual respect, religious acceptance, and unity. Women vendors in Manipur are one of the biggest platforms where women perform their marketing skills not only to help them in financial stabilities but also in enhancing the economic and social status of the society and is the act as the best example of women entrepreneurs without having proper education background.

Keywords: *Ima market, women empowerment, marketing skills, women vendors*

INTRODUCTION

The position of women in India is still improving there is a place in northeast India where women do not do only household chores but also go out for business and do very well. Women play a very important role in economic development. They are involved in business activities at all levels making important contributions to economic growth. Every single task in North East such as harvesting, manufacturing, packing, and marketing is being done by women. In India, women are represented as the symbol of strength and hard work. Women empowerment is not possible unless women come out and help to self-empower themselves and that can be seen in the women of Ima markets of Manipur. Ima markets are the only

market in the whole of India that is solely maintained and controlled by women and is a unique example of women empowerment these women are not only considered as woman entrepreneurs because they play a major role in the political arena in terms of agitation against unlawful activities, conflicts, social evils, and violence in the state which is beyond the role of marketing. Women of Ima market set together not only to sell their goods but to discuss how they can bring change in their strategies of selling to improve marketing and cope with the adverse political atmosphere. The women also fight for their rights and the protection of their market stability assist in establishing moral values and behaviours among their family members and render financial support in the maintenance of their families.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bhowmik, S. K. (2005) conducted a review of Street vendors in the Asia countries of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Hanoi, Cambodia, Seoul, and India. The study mainly focuses on food vendors and women vendors in the selected countries of Asia and assess street vending by assembling the information on the extent of unionization of the vendors and other organizations, such as non-government organizations, self-help organizations, advocacy groups, etc., that work for their welfare.

Devi, O.S. et al. (2010) piloted a two-year study by regular surveys at the selected markets at least three times a month to find out the important edible bio-resources that are consumed daily by the local people of Manipur. The study results identified a total of 45 wild edible plants, 26 wild fruits, and 25 edible animal resources and suggested that the high diversity of wild edible bio-resources needs to be conserved for the livelihood sustenance of the local communities of Manipur.

Salam, S. et al (2012) study recorded 46 species of wild leafy vegetables that are found marketed by the women vendors of Ukhrul District. Ram, D. et al. (2013) study was also conducted to find the important role played by women in economic development and it was seen that women entrepreneurship has contributed to the empowerment of women by making them economically independent, enabling them to be self-employed or creating employment for others and supporting their family financially. According to their findings majority of the women entrepreneurs in the Ima market (66.60%) are middle-aged and around 23.30% are illiterate, 70% of the women in the Ima market are married, 45.30% of them established and started their enterprises with their own money without other sources.

Banerjee, S. (2014) studied the socio-economic condition of Ranchi vegetable vendors with special emphasis on reasons for women entering vending jobs and their problems. The study

has found that the socio-economic condition of both males and females is very poor but if a comparison is made between them, we can see that the condition of women is more vulnerable than that of male vendors. According to the study, reveals that the income of Ranchi women vendors is lower than that of male vendors because they have very little capital to invest in their business as they belong to the ST families.

Chavai, A.M., & Singh, K.B. (2017) focuses on studying the profile of women entrepreneurs and assessing their entrepreneurial behaviour. The study was conducted only on the women in the Ima market during the year 2015-2016 and studied the relationship between dependent and independent variables, constraints, and problems faced by women entrepreneurs. According to their study, it was found that most women entrepreneurs are middle-aged, middle school level of education, medium level of annual income, and 75% of women entrepreneurs had a medium level of entrepreneurial behaviour.

Panwar, T. (2017) focuses the study on the women of the Ima market, and their every task from producing, packaging, and selling their products by themselves. It describes the original position of women and their role in business and suggests a way to improve their position by comparing it with Northeast India. Zingkhai, M., & Anand, S. (2019) study focuses on finding the many reasons that drive the women in the Ukhrul district into food vending ventures and to draw light upon their daily struggle. The study was conducted by purposive sampling method by using an depth interview method with the help of a structured interview schedule. The study shows that the main reason that drove them into this business was due to less privilege poor education background and their lack of other employment background. One of the major challenges experienced by them was their continuous everyday struggle to get profitable perishable food items before they could spoil while keeping up with their fellow competitors.

Salimuddin, M.S. (2020) studied examined the socio-economic status, of their earning depending upon the types of goods, seasons, age, and educational level of women vendors of Khwairamband Keithel in Imphal. The study points out the conflicts and challenges among women into four major heads and suggests their problems should be addressed at the policy level. Roy, S. (2021) study identifies the societal and economic impact of Ima keithel and ascertains the motivations for the formation of this market and represents the creativity, positive thinking, innovation, and the strong will of women to drive their livelihood from the frontlines. According to the study, it shows that Ima keithel serves as the sole place of earning for 88% of these women entrepreneurs, and 33% of these women are the sole bread earners for their families.

Devi and Sachdeva (2022) studied the Ema market through a gendered perspective and economic anthropological analysis and its importance in society and a comparative analysis of the Ema markets in Manipur based on variables like income earned in a day and the type of products based on different markets of Ima keithel. The study also shows significant relationships among the income and the types of products.

According to Wahengbam, P. (2022) focuses on studying the social position of women vendors, random street vendors interrogated in the Kwairamband market. The study also indicates the findings of which varying complexities of balancing market life and family life along with many compromises and sacrifices. Mozhui, L et.al. (2023) emphasize on socio-economic analysis of edible insect species collectors and vendors in Nagaland, North-East India. The study lists 44 different marketed edible insects along with market value, seasonal availability, processing methods, and nature of availability.

METHODOLOGY

This study primarily uses the secondary research method technique to examine the marketing performances of women vendors and categorize the different types of products, rare and important edible bio-resources plant species for the consumption of the local people and their income earned depending on the type of products they engage with and detect the problem faced by women vendors of Manipur. The secondary research technique consists of gathering and analysis of pre-existing literature, information, records, and data from various sources. The extensive amount of information on the study topic and the necessity to synthesize and critically evaluate the existing knowledge support the methodology chosen for this study.

Academic journals and research articles from databases like Google Scholar, Research Gate, and Shodhganga will be thoroughly reviewed for this study. The socioeconomic status, the marketing skills, the different types of products, and their income earned depending on the type of products they engage with and the problems faced by women vendors of Manipur are valuable insights offered from these sources.

Reports from the non-government organizations (NGO) and development organizations active in Manipur are crucial for comprehending the local perceptive and the effects of various interventions on the women vendors. To gain insight into current events, problems, and public perception about women vendors in Manipur, news, articles, and media sources will be consulted. They can be used to place the results in context and point out the recent development.

SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN VENDOR

The social status of women vendors focuses on the background of the women vendors. It can be summarized that in Ram, D. (2013) the market was occupied by the highest number of women in the age range of 38-62 years and the lowest with women in the age range of 62- 75 years. Studies conducted by Devi and Sachdeva (2022) show that the Ima Market is mainly occupied by middle-aged women vendors in the age range of 55-65 years and the lowest age was found among the women with 75 years and above. In marital status, married women occupied the highest number. The highest education level found among the women was high school education. The keithel is occupied by a multi-ethnic religious community with Hindus being the highest followed by Sanamahi believers, Muslims, and Christians. Even with the changing of time the highest per cent of women in the age range of 38-65 years actively performed marketing and the percentage of illiterate women reduced drastically.

EDUCATION

Most women entrepreneurs understand the importance of education and encourage the youth of Manipur toward education. Poor education upbringing and the absence of employment opportunities compel most of the women to look for an occupation like vending that does not involve much start-up capital and requires little or no educational qualification. It is found in the study of Chavai, A.M., & Singh, K.B. (2017), that most of the women vendors in the Ima market completed middle school and a few can only read and write and in the work of Devi and Sachdeva (2022) shows that the highest educational level is high school completion, followed by graduation, secondary, middle school, and primary school, and few women were found doing business illiterate.

PRODUCTS THAT ARE MARKETING BY THE WOMEN VENDORS OF MANIPUR

Ima keithel in Kwairamband Bazaar is divided into three markets: Nupi keithel 1- Leimarel Sidabi Ima Keithel, Nupi keithel 2- Emoinu Ima Keithel and Nupi Keithel 3- Phouoibi Ima Keithel. The products sold in these three markets are different from each other having their seating arrangement according to the products they wish to sell so it will not be mixed up. Emoinu and Phouoibi Ima Keithel have 14 different sets while Leimarel Sidabi Ima keithel has 27 sets. Some of the common products marketed by women vendors of Imphal are different types of vegetables, fruits, flowers, fresh and fermented bamboo shoots, local indigenous and eatable products, local sweets, household items, different types of handicrafts and handloom products, bamboo and cane, pottery, iron items, fresh fish, smoked and dry

fish, ornaments, jewellery, luxury items, ready-made garments, imported shoes and slippers from Moreh, traditional and modern women's garments, cotton and woollen clothing, religious and rituals ceremony clothing and items.

While the work of Devi, O.S. et al. (2010) show the women vendors from Khwairamban Bazaar, Singjamei Bazaar, Kwakeithel Bazaar, Tera Bazaar, Khurai Lamlong Bazaar, Kongba Bazaar, and Chingmeirong Bazaar situated at Imphal East District were found to produce a total of 45 wild edible plants 37 are common species 35.5% are summer species, 55.5% are winter species and 8.9% are found throughout the year and eight are rare species including two mushroom and two edible fungus varieties, 26 wild fruits 19 are Common and seven are rare varieties 53.8% of these are summer varieties, 38.5% are winter varieties and 7.7% are year-round varieties and 25 edible water resources 17 are common species and eight are rare species. Out of the total species, 16% are found in summer, 52% are found in winter and 32% are found throughout the year.

WILD EDIBLE LOCAL PLANTS FOUND MARKETING BY THE WOMEN VENDORS IN IMPHAL:

Summer	Loklei, Eshing Kombong, Tanging, Uyen, Ishing Yempat, Kanglayen, Uchina, Kanghuman, Chuchurangmei, Pullei
Winter	Chengkruk, Komprek Tujombi, Yelang, Komprek, Kaothum, Peruk, Tharo Mari, Ekai Thabi, Heibi Mana, Kambong.
Year-round	Singjupal, Lam Pal, Shougree, Shilhot Shougree
Common	Yelang, Loklei, Peruk, Kengoi, Pullei, Uchina, Chengum, Komprek, Pullei, Kaothum, Lam Pal, Shougree, kengoi, Yaipal, Eshing Kombong
Rare	Chengkruk, Uyen, Kanglayen, Komprek Tujombi, Yensil, Torong Khongchak, Angom Yensil, Tharam.

WILD EDIBLE LOCAL FRUITS FOUND MARKETING BY THE WOMEN VENDORS IN IMPHAL:

Summer	Heirit, Heiyai, Heijampet, Jam, Chorphon, Heikru, Heinou, Chumbrei, Heining, Nonganghei, Heigree, Nonganghei, Heirangkhoi, Heitroi
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Winter	Heimang, Malhei, Lemphu, Heibum, Heitup, Heibi, Boroi, Theibong, Heinijom.
Year-round	Heibung, Mange.
Common	Lemphu, Malhei, Heirit, Heiyai, Heitup, Heibi, Heibung, Chorphon, Boroi, Theibong, Heikru, Mange, Heinou, Heining, Motokhei, Heigree, chumbrei
Rare	Heimang, Heibum, Heijampet, Nonganghei, Heirangkhoi, Heirukothong, Heitroi

EDIBLE WATER RESOURCES FOUND MARKETED BY THE WOMEN VENDORS IN IMPHAL:

Summer	Ngahei, Nga Cheklaobi, Pheteen, Nhachep.
Winter	Ngaprum, Ngaril, Pengba, Ngakijou, Ngarep, Ngakra, Meitei Ngamu, Sareng, Kongreng, Labuk tharoi, Tharoi Ningrabi, Laitharoi
Year-round	Phabounga, Ngachik, Nagmhai, Ngapema, Ukabi, Ngamu, Porom, Khajing
Common	Ngaprum, Phabounga, Ngakijou, Ngakra, Ngachik, Nagmhai, Meitei Ngamu, Pheteen, Ngapema, Ukabi, Ngachep, Ngamu, Porom, Labuk tharoi,
Rare	Ngaril, Pengba, Ngarep, Ngaten, Ngahei, Nga Cheklaobi, Sareng, Laitharoi

Sources: Devi, O.S. et al. (2010)

Of the women vendors interviewed in each market, the majority revealed that they had collected the resources from one or two local distributors and the rest of the respondents said that they had collected the bio-resources themselves.

WILD EDIBLE LOCAL PLANTS FOUND MARKETED BY THE WOMEN VENDORS IN THE UKHRUL DISTRICT:

Summer	Sachian, Harana, Phanang kahakpasi, Sungphenghan, Pakhangleiton, Nareihan, Ching moirang khanum, Ananba, Yendang, Heiba, Lelkuihan
Winter	Chamtruk, Kazingtareihan, Rameihanghor, U-hawai maton, Hantekhan, Kengoi

Year-round	Somchan, Uthum, Puding Uri, Kongrihan, Revival, Kahorathe, Lam sachikom, Ngayung, Kolamni, Sipchang, Thingpai
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Sources: Salam, S. et al. (2012)

The study by Salam, S. et al. (2012) records 55 species of wild leafy vegetables that are marketed by the women vendor of Ukhrul. Some plants like Sunghenghan, Kongrihan, Nareihan, Kohorathe, Hantekhan, Lam karopthe, Sitapor, and Zalep are in excessive demand in the local market for their medical values. The price of different leafy vegetables fluctuates from season depending upon their availability. It is also required to take further detailed ethno botanical study and research that needs to be carried out on the investigation of preservation status and socio-economic importance and benefit of these leafy that is sold by the women.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar visited Ima Market on Sunday, November 27, calling it a “Great example of Nari Shakti (women’s power) powering economic growth”. In February 2023, one of the foreign delegates from New York of B20 from the G20 forum visited Ima Market and said, “I will tell the world that there is a beautiful market run by women that sells authentic handicrafts, clothes and other”. Another woman delegate from Russia said that she had never known that India has a beautiful state that has an extraordinary culture and tradition that is different from other states in the country; she also added that handicrafts and others need to be exposed to the world. Different foreign delegates praise the women of Ima Market, calling it a symbol of women's empowerment in India.

MARKETING STATUS

The unit of measurement the women vendors used to sell their vegetables and fruits is in weight and volume of kilogram, per cup, bundle, heap, or twig. Among the fish varieties, Ngahei fish associated with the Chaumba ceremony cost around Rs. 250-350 /kg but it can go up to Rs. 500-700 / kg in the off-season. Similarly, Pengba is associated with the Ningol Chakouba Festival and costs around Rs. 300-500 /kg but these fish species have become so scarce that they are hardly available in the market nowadays. Devi, O.S. et al. (2010).

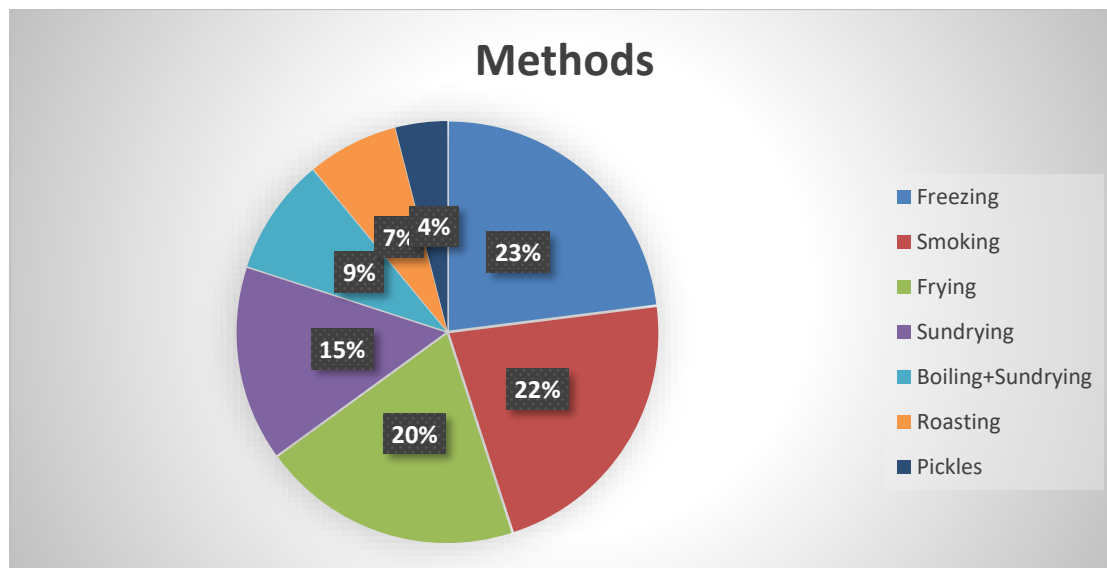


Fig: Preservation methods of edible insects in Nagaland.

(Sources: Mozhui, L et.al. 2023)

The study by Zingkhai, M. & Anand, S. (2019) mentioned that most of the women vendors get their supplies of food items from wholesalers and the remaining women vendors get their products marketed from their gardens, farms, or directly collected from the forest to sell. The relationship of tribal women vendors with their forest is unimpeachable, as the forest is like an old friend that never fails to provide them with all the seasonal resources that are needed in their everyday lives whether it is food, fodder, or medicines. The method practiced to cope with losses in their business, most of the women adopted and learned methods to preserve fruits or vegetables either dried or made into pickles, jams, juice, etc., which can be sold to make better profits and the rest sell their goods from house to house when they are not able to finish selling it off sitting at one place, or they distributed to their neighbours, this way instead of keeping their food and letting it get spoiled and get wasted they give them away which helps them with their social bonding, and maintaining a good relationship with their neighbours or sells at a cheaper rate.

Devi and Sachdeva's (2022) study confirmed that in Leimarelshidabi keithel women vendors marketed products like fruits, vegetables, fish, fermented bamboo shoots, local Indigenous products, smoked fish, etc. Phouibe keithel marketed all kinds of traditional and modern needs of women's garments and Emoinu keithel engaged with religious and ritual ceremony clothing needs. Chakrikom keithel sells local sweets, salts, and fruits. In the study of Wahengbam, P. (2022), the market starts from early in the morning till late in the evening. It

always remains busy with the women handling the businesses independently. It is also a symbolic representative of cultural intermingling, mutual respect, religious tolerance, and unity. For instance, the chicken market which constitutes a part of Kwairamband Market is run solely by the Meitei Pangans and Hao Keitel wherein primary vendors from the hilly areas sell their products in bulk on a wholesale basis.

Overall, based on the secondary data, it has emphasized that women come from all corners of Manipur to sell the products in the Ima market serves as the centre for cultural and ideological exchanges among women of different upbringings, traditions, and religions. The society of Manipur State is diverse, with many different cultural groups, socioeconomic classes, and religious upbringings; it overlaps the lines between tradition and modernity. Their participation in political matters of the state or against drug abuse in Manipur showcases their strong will and determination to maintain a firm, prosperous, and self-sustaining society and secure our nation's future.

INCOME OF WOMEN VENDORS

Marketing the different products by the women vendors differ according to the nature and types of the products and their income earned depends on the type of products they engaged with. Salimuddin (2020) argued that earnings depend upon the type of goods, seasons, age, educational level of the vendors, and the spatial location of the stall.

The study by Ram, D. (2013) shows that most women vendors were found to have medium total annual income earning Rs 73, 000 to Rs 2, 19,000 annually. The profit earned by an individual woman was found to be Rs 300 to 500 per day (Rs 1,09,500 to Rs 1,32,500 annually) on an average normal day which is off-season and the minimum margined earned per day was found to be rupees 100 to 300 daily (Rs 36,500 to Rs 1,09,500 annually). There is a varied difference in terms of the types of products for sale and the amount of profit gained during a particular season. So, the need for analyzing the interrelationship among various types of products and income earned needs further inquiry. According to the study conducted by Devi and Sachdeva (2022) it is found that women vendor of Chakrikom keithel seems to be the most profitable with the highest mean value income but this result is considered a standard error due to their minimum size representable as it is the smallest market compared with other markets, the second most profitable market seems to be the street vendor, followed by women vendors of Session court, Phouibe keithel, Laimeralshidabi

keithel, and the least profitable seems to be Emoinu keithel. The highest income-generating source of product earned by the women vendors was silk products, followed by fermented fish, rice, iron items, fruits, livestock, smoked fish, salt, vegetables, fresh fruits, woollen clothing, traditional religious cloths, local sweets, life cycle ritual, cotton cloths, flowers, pottery, handicrafts, bamboo and cane, egg, and the least income-generating source of products that were not profitable at all was found to be under the category of miscellaneous products like exchanging of new money notes for the old notes.

Based on secondary data and from the various studies, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the types of products and the income a woman vendor can earn in a day for her family. The women vendors of Manipur enjoy financial independence and thus prime by example and this inspires the future generation and gives them hope, confidence, strength, and drive to excel in all other fields as well.

The State Government has constructed and inaugurated seven women's markets at Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong, Chandel, Churachandpur, Jiribam, and Kangpokpi district headquarters. Manipur Police Housing Corporation Limited under the One Time Special Assistance of Central Plan Scheme, 2017-2018 constructed the women's markets. Therefore, there are a total of 10 women's markets in Manipur i.e.; 7 in hill districts and 3 in valley. There is a lack of studies in hill areas so more studies need to be done on these areas.

PROBLEM FACED BY THE WOMEN VENDORS.

Banerjee, S. (2014) study reveals the problems faced by the women vendors are due to lack of capital, civic amenities, exploitation, and harassment from the municipal authorities, police, local bodies, and male vendors. The study by Salimuddin (2020) points out the different conflicts of women vendors into four major heads. The conflict among the women vendors themselves due to the types of commodities, the dimension of the stalls, and the malpractice arising because of the increasing of new stalls in the markets by some influential executive members of the informal organization. Secondly, the conflict between the licensed vendors and the street vendors were assaulted and meted out of the atrocities by the licensed vendors. Thirdly conflict against the government on many occasions and issues to the state affairs or directly related to women vendors of the market and many leaders' parties, protesters or civil society organizations try to take support and blessing from the women vendors. Lastly, conflicts between the street vendors and the police as street vendors do not

pay any tax or GST that can generate the economy of the state so as part of the police duties; they discharge the street vendors from selling in the roadside.

Further studies reveal that the common problems faced by the women street vendors are the high rate of municipal taxes and the lack of finances which led them to borrow from financiers at a high rate of interest, struggle to find a fixed avenue to run their business, and are not enclosed under legal provisions, the nature of their working state considered them under unorganized or informal work segments. Their working environment usually lacks sufficient facilities sometimes even the basic facilities of toilets or proper workspace, vending sheets.

Various studies have shown that there is a need for future development and improvement of women vendors in marketing. Some of them are to improve the condition and promote Ima markets in different places of India as an example of women empowerment and women entrepreneurs, the government should take the initiative in financing the women vendors by opening savings accounts which most of them are not aware of, their economic status will largely improve and give proper awareness programs to the women vendors to aware of social, and political, and to improve in trading and marketing. *Devi, O. S. (2010)* suggested that it is important to identify the rare edible bio-resources that are the livelihood of many indigenous Manipuri people so that proper conservative measures may be taken to preserve these local gene pools for our future generations because of the rapid destruction of forests and the filling up of wetlands for expansion of land area and developmental activities, most of these wild bio-resources are becoming rare and threatened. The study of *Salam, S. (2012)* also proposed taking further detailed ethno botanical study, and research needs to be carried out on the investigation of conservation status and socio-economic importance and benefit of Ukhrul leafy that is sold by the women vendors.

CONCLUSION

The deep-rooted principles of women staying at home and being housewives had changed and now women have become more independent and involved in any employment of their choice to give financial stability. The Ima market is based on variables like income earned in a diurnal and the category of products based on the different markets of Ima market and street vendors displays that there is a significant relationship between the type of products and the income a woman vendor can earn in a day for her family. The women vendors of the Ima market represented women's empowerment. The women vendors always try to protect not

only the interest of their family but also the interest of the state at large and possess a sense of discipline, regularity, and systematic management of their domestic affairs as well as trade and business in the market.

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