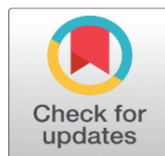
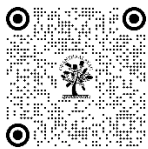


WOMEN FISH VENDORS IN THOOTHUKUDI: A STUDY OF THEIR MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION APPROACHES

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ABSTRACT

Women merchants in the fish market transcend mere business ownership; they embody a distinct identity. Their ascent to brand recognition is characterized by a commitment to excellence, a personalized approach, and a focus to fostering robust, enduring connections with the people they serve. This study aims to examine and evaluate the marketing and distribution strategies utilized by these female sellers, highlighting the challenges they face and the creative methods they choose to maintain their livelihoods. Comprehending these aspects is crucial for formulating targeted interventions to enhance the economic empowerment of women in the fish selling sector.

Keywords: Women Fish Vendors, Distribution, Marketing, New Techniques

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to succeed in the highly competitive and demanding seafood industry, women fish merchants use a variety of marketing techniques. A fundamental approach that supports their success is a steadfast dedication to product quality and freshness. They acknowledge that the foundation of customer retention is the provision of seafood products that are of superior quality and carefully kept. Whether sourced from local waterways or meticulously prepared, these providers recognize that product quality is of utmost importance.

A crucial strategy in their portfolio is diversity. Female fish merchants frequently provide a variety of seafood goods to accommodate the different tastes and preferences of their customers. This may encompass a variety of fresh fish, dried fish, and value-added products such as marinated seafood or pre-prepared meals, ensuring they satisfy the culinary requirements of their clientele. Market research is essential, enabling them to remain responsive to local demand, evolving client preferences, and industry trends. Equipped with this knowledge, they may make informed judgments regarding product offerings and optimal pricing strategies.

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Women merchants in the fish market transcend mere business ownership; they embody a distinct identity. Their ascent to brand recognition is characterized by a commitment to excellence, a personalized approach, and a focus to fostering robust, enduring connections with the people they serve.

Establishing robust customer ties is fundamental to their strategy. By providing exemplary customer service, tailored attention, and a sincere concern for their clients' requirements, these suppliers establish enduring relationships that ensure repeat business.

Consequently, the researcher has undertaken measures to ascertain the marketing methods employed by the female fish merchants in Thoothukudi.

1.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the marketing strategies employed by women fish vendors in Thoothukudi.
- To assess the distribution channels and logistics used by women fish vendors in the region.
- To identify the challenges faced by women fish vendors in marketing and distributing seafood.
- To evaluate the role of traditional and modern marketing methods in the success of women fish vendors.
- To explore the impact of local market conditions on the marketing and distribution practices of women fish vendors.
- To study the influence of socio-economic factors on the marketing approaches of women fish vendors.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Women fish merchants in Thoothukudi are integral to the local seafood market, considerably impacting the rural economy. Nevertheless, these women frequently encounter numerous obstacles pertaining to marketing and distribution, such as restricted access to official market frameworks, transportation difficulties, and competition from larger commercial entities. Despite their crucial function, little is known about the precise tactics and methods they use to successfully market and distribute their goods. This study aims to examine and evaluate the marketing and distribution strategies utilized by these female sellers, highlighting the challenges they face and the creative methods they choose to maintain their livelihoods. Comprehending these aspects is crucial for formulating targeted interventions to enhance the economic empowerment of women in the fish selling sector.

This statement highlights the importance of the issue, the gaps in existing research, and the need for understanding and addressing the challenges faced by women fish vendors.

Research Plan and Methodology

Methodology is an essential aspect of any research. In order to make meaningful research, a suitable methodology has to be adopted. It enables the investigator to look at the research problem in a systematic, meaningful and orderly way. This section examines in detail the methodology adopted in carrying out the study. The following is the research plan adopted in this study:

Research design : Descriptive Research Design

Data source : Primary and Secondary Data

Research instrument: Interview Schedule

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For any research, the survey of related literature is of utmost importance; because it throws light on the problems in hand. It helps the researcher for a well conceived and planned approach in conducting the study. A review of literature relevant to study has been presented.

Diana Tempelman (1987) has carried out a socio-economic study of fisherwomen in four coastal villages in Vishakhapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh in India, in order to identify pilot projects to upgrade the living conditions of fisherwomen in coastal villages. According to her, women are engaged in fish marketing between 7 and 10 hours a day

and 5 to 7 days a week. Usually, the women try to sell the fish while it is still fresh. Fish is marketed mainly by head load. Buses and lorries are used to transport fish to towns. Within the towns, bicycles and auto rickshaws are important means of transport. Fish marketing provides women with higher returns than coir making, small business or other activities.

Radhakrishnan and Sellammalle (2001) have analysed the role of fisherwomen in generating income through micro-entrepreneurial activities in the fishing community in Pondicherry. According to them, women are doing commendable work in fish marketing. These women are called as microentrepreneurs. They are engaged in fish marketing for reasons namely, to earn more income and to overcome the problems of middlemen to attain socio

economic empowerment. They have observed that all fisherwomen are self-employed and none go for coolie work. Because of the dynamic nature of the women in the fishing community, female contribution to the family is higher than the male. With the entrepreneurial motivation and readiness to take risk in the competitive market, they are able to overcome the problem of middlemen in fish procurement. They are also able to possess some movable and immovable assets. Significant changes have been noticed with respect to improvement in demographic and economic status of the family.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Nature of Fish Vendor

Every type of distribution of fish has its own marketing techniques and challenges. Dry fish selling techniques differ from the fresh fish selling. Some of the respondents sell both dry and fresh fish. So every type has unique marketing strategies and challenges. The table portrays the classification of respondents on the basis of the nature of distribution of fish.

Type of Fish Vendor	No of Respondents	Percentage
Dry Fish Seller	5	1.33%
Fresh Fish Seller	106	28.19%
Both Dry Fish and Fresh Fish Sellers	221	58.78%
Fish Processing	44	11.70%
Total	376	100.0%

The above Table reveals that majority (58.78 percentage) of the respondents sell dry fish as well as fresh fish followed by the respondents who sell only fresh fish (28.19 percentage) and the respondents who are engaged in fish processing with 11.70 percentage. Only 1.33 percentage of the respondents sell only dry fish in the study area.

From the above table, it is evident that most of the women fish vendors sell both dry fish and fresh fish.

5. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF VARIABLES OF EACH FACTOR

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test is a statistical measure used in factor analysis to assess the suitability of data for this analytical technique. It helps determine whether the data is suitable for factor analysis or whether it is too disorganized to yield meaningful results. The KMO test evaluates the sampling adequacy of the data and quantifies how well the data fits the assumptions required for factor analysis. A KMO value is obtained on a scale from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating better suitability for factor analysis. The KMO value is interpreted as follows:

In practice, researchers typically aim for a KMO value of 0.7 or higher to ensure that the data is suitable for factor analysis. Factor analysis is used to identify underlying factors or latent variables within a dataset and is often applied in fields such as psychology, economics, and social sciences to uncover hidden patterns and relationships within data. The KMO test is a valuable preliminary step to assess whether the data is conducive to this type of analysis. The researcher has applied Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy test to check the adequacy of the response of the sample.

The Bartlett's test, also known as Bartlett's test of sphericity, is a statistical test used in factor analysis to determine whether the correlation matrix of the observed variables is significantly different from an identity matrix, which would indicate that the variables are suitable for factor analysis. In other words, it assesses whether there are significant relationships or correlations among the variables that make them appropriate for factor analysis.

The null hypothesis for Bartlett's test is that the variables are uncorrelated, which is not conducive to factor analysis. The alternative hypothesis is that the variables are correlated, which is a prerequisite for factor analysis. Bartlett's test focuses on assessing the statistical significance of correlations among variables, which is one aspect of determining suitability for factor analysis. If the correlations are significant (rejected null hypothesis), it suggests that factor analysis might be appropriate. On the other hand, the KMO test examines the overall sampling adequacy of data for factor analysis. It considers the magnitude and patterns of correlations among variables and provides a KMO value to indicate the suitability. A KMO value above 0.7 is often considered acceptable for factor analysis. In practice, both tests are often used in conjunction to make a more informed decision about whether data is suitable for factor analysis. If Bartlett's test indicates significant correlations and the KMO value is acceptable, it provides stronger support for proceeding with factor analysis.

5.1. KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.701
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4042.345
	Df	171
	Sig.	<0.01

Source: Primary Data

The table reveals that the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) test of sampling adequacy value (0.701) is high enough to accept the adequacy of data collected from the sample. The results of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicate that the variables in the dataset have significant correlations, making them suitable for factor analysis and the p value less than 0.05 confirms the correlation between the pairs of variables explained by other variables are also adequate. Thus factor analysis is considered to be appropriate in this model and the rotate factor matrix is loaded for the following variables relating techniques used in the distribution of sea foods in the study area by the respondents.

5.2. ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX

Statements	Factors			
	1	2	3	Communalities
I have chosen to deliver the fish at any time	0.889	0.012	0.202	.831
I will have a switch over in fishes and dry fishes for a week.	0.808	0.111	0.184	.699
I will store it up to 2 days and sell it	0.766	0.093	0.448	.796
I cut the fish and give	0.704	0.111	0.129	.525
I have some loyal customers	0.639	0.200	0.248	.509
Due to the nature of the good, I give it out for lower price and try to f sale earlier.	0.629	0.164	0.078	.428

I take auction only the pre demanded fish.	0.617	0.111	0.014	.393
I sell only small fishes	0.545	0.228	0.223	.398
I go to each house every day to sell fishes	0.064	0.739	0.050	.552
I have to sit in one place and sell fishes	0.081	0.727	0.266	.606
I use my vehicle to sell the fishes to far off places	0.121	0.686	0.509	.744
I go to different places each day for improving my sales	0.341	0.682	0.076	.588
I get to connect with the house hold females and sell fish	0.387	0.639	0.017	.559
Since I am a wholesaler, I give it out to retailing outlets	0.141	0.143	0.839	.744
I take a heavy lot occasionally	0.007	0.404	0.594	.516
I concentrate only on week end sale	0.045	0.132	0.525	.295
I have a own preference group for fishes	0.113	0.342	0.488	.368
I have chosen free home delivery in order to boost my sales	0.184	0.135	0.483	.285
I have a tie-up with retailers who are serving for online sales	0.074	0.180	0.463	.252

Source: Primary Data

Analysing the Relationship between Variables under the Factor New Techniques for Boosting Sales

The variables loaded more in the first matrix are related to the new techniques for boosting sales. Thus the women engaged in fish distribution feels that new techniques for boosting the sales are very essential in the marketing of fishes. The table presents the statements which are loaded more in the first matrix and constitute the first factor.

Statements	Factor Loadings	Communality
I have chosen to deliver the fish at any time	0.889	0.831
I will have a switch over in fishes and dry fishes for a week.	0.808	0.699
I will store it up to 2 days and sell it	0.766	0.796
I cut the fish and give	0.704	0.525
I have some loyal customers	0.639	0.509
Due to the nature of the good, I give it out for lower price and try to finish the sale earlier.	0.629	0.428
I take auction only the pre demanded fish.	0.617	0.393
I sell only small fishes	0.545	0.398

Source: Primary Data

Among the statements influence the techniques of the women retail fish distributors, 'I have chosen to deliver the fish at any time' (Factor Loadings 0.889 and Communality 0.831), 'I will have a switch over in fishes and dry fishes for a week' (Factor Loadings 0.808 and Communality 0.699), 'I will store it up to 2 days and sell it' (Factor Loadings 0.766 and Communality 0.796), 'I cut the fish and give' (Factor Loadings 0.704 and Communality 0.525), 'I have some loyal customers' (Factor Loadings 0.639 and Communality 0.509), 'Due to the nature of the good, I give it out for lower price and try to finish the sale earlier' (Factor Loadings 0.629 and Communality 0.428), 'I take auction only the pre demanded fish' (Factor Loadings 0.617 and Communality 0.393) and 'I sell only small fishes' (Factor Loadings 0.545 and Communality 0.398) are the statements loaded more in the first matrix and constituted the first factor. These statements

are related to the new techniques for boosting the sales. Since the communality of these aspects are moderate, the aspects within the factor one have moderate association among them.

6. FINDINGS

The study titled "Women Fish Vendors in Thoothukudi: A Study of Their Marketing and Distribution Approaches" presents detailed findings on how women in the seafood industry navigate their business strategies, highlighting both successes and challenges. Below are the key findings:

1) Marketing and Distribution Approaches:

- **Product Quality and Freshness:** Women fish vendors prioritize product quality, recognizing it as essential for customer retention. They focus on maintaining the freshness of their products, whether they are freshly caught or processed, as it serves as the foundation of their marketing efforts.
- **Diverse Product Offering:** To cater to varying customer preferences, the vendors offer a wide range of products including fresh fish, dried fish, and value-added seafood like marinated fish or pre-prepared meals. This product diversity helps them maintain competitiveness in the market.
- **Customer Relationships:** Building strong, personal relationships with customers is crucial for repeat business. Vendors emphasize customer service, which involves individualized attention and responsiveness to client needs.
- **Traditional vs. Modern Marketing Methods:** The study suggests that women vendors blend traditional practices (like direct selling at markets) with modern strategies such as targeted pricing and diversified product lines. However, their access to formal market structures and digital tools remains limited.

2) Challenges Faced

- **Distribution and Logistics:** The women vendors face significant logistical challenges, particularly in transporting their goods. Most rely on local transportation methods like head loads, bicycles, or auto-rickshaws. Access to formal market structures is limited, making it difficult for them to compete with larger commercial entities.
- **Market Competition:** The vendors face stiff competition from larger businesses that have more resources and better access to formalized market frameworks.
- **Socio-Economic Constraints:** Many of these vendors come from lower socio economic backgrounds, which impacts their ability to invest in better distribution channels, refrigeration, or advanced marketing techniques.

3) New Techniques for Boosting Sales:

- Through factor analysis, several modern approaches have been identified as critical to improving sales:
- **Flexible Delivery:** Many vendors have adopted flexible delivery schedules, selling fish at any time to meet customer demands. This strategy was identified as the most significant factor in boosting sales.
- **Switching Between Fresh and Dried Fish:** Vendors often alternate between selling fresh and dried fish, which allows them to respond to market demand fluctuations.
- **Stock Management:** Some vendors store fish for up to two days before selling, allowing them to better manage their inventory and avoid waste.
- **Customized Cutting Services:** Providing customized fish cutting services has also proven to be a valuable marketing tool.

Data Validation:

• **KMO and Bartlett's Test Results:** The study used the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to assess the adequacy of the sample for factor analysis. The KMO value of 0.701 suggests that the data was suitable for this analytical technique. Bartlett's test confirmed that the variables had significant correlations, justifying the factor analysis approach.

The women fish vendors in Thoothukudi utilize a mix of traditional and innovative strategies to succeed in a competitive market. Despite facing logistical and socio-economic challenges, their adaptive strategies, like flexible delivery and product diversification, help them maintain their livelihoods. However, there is a need for formal support systems to enhance their economic empowerment.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Improving Access to Formal Market Structures: It is essential to provide women fish vendors with better access to formal market frameworks. This could be achieved through government or NGO-led initiatives that create designated spaces for their sales, reducing the impact of middlemen and allowing them to negotiate better prices.

2) Enhanced Transportation and Logistics Support: Transportation is a key challenge for these vendors. Establishing better transportation facilities or providing subsidies for transportation can help reduce costs and enable them to reach wider markets. Creating shared logistics networks could also improve efficiency.

3) Training and Capacity Building: Offering training programs on modern marketing techniques, digital literacy, and financial management would empower these women to expand their businesses. Such programs could include workshops on using digital platforms for marketing, pricing strategies, and inventory management.

4) Financial Assistance and Microfinance: Access to microfinance or small business loans at reasonable rates could help these vendors invest in better equipment, such as refrigeration units or vehicles, enabling them to maintain the quality of their products and reach broader markets.

5) Support for Product Diversification: Encouraging product diversification—like value-added seafood (marinated or pre-prepared meals)—could open new revenue streams. Providing training and resources to develop these products can increase their market appeal and profitability.

6) Formal Recognition and Unionization: Organizing these women into cooperatives or unions can provide them with collective bargaining power, helping them negotiate better prices and access resources. This formal recognition can also lead to better social security benefits and government support.

7) Infrastructure Development in Fish Markets: Improving infrastructure in local fish markets, such as clean spaces for selling and better storage facilities, would enhance the overall business environment for these vendors. It would also help them maintain the freshness and quality of their products, a key factor in their success.

8) Encouraging Online Sales and Delivery Platforms: Introducing these vendors to online marketplaces and encouraging collaboration with local delivery services could help them reach a larger customer base, especially in urban areas where demand for fresh and quality seafood is high.

9) Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers: Tailored social welfare programs focusing on health, education, and financial inclusion for women fish vendors could greatly improve their overall socio economic status, enabling them to better balance work and personal responsibilities.

8. CONCLUSION

The study on Women Fish Vendors in Thoothukudi reveals that these women play a crucial role in the local seafood market, contributing significantly to the economy while managing their businesses with limited resources. Despite the challenges they face—such as competition from larger entities, logistical issues, and restricted access to formal markets—these vendors have demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability. They rely on traditional methods of selling, such as direct interaction with customers and maintaining strong personal relationships, but they also embrace modern marketing techniques like product diversification and flexible sales strategies. The findings highlight the importance of product quality and freshness in retaining customers, as well as the crucial role that customer service plays in building long term relationships. The vendors' willingness to adjust their offerings (such as alternating between fresh and dried fish) and explore innovative methods like flexible delivery schedules have allowed them to sustain their businesses. However, it is clear that these women face significant socio-economic constraints that limit their ability to fully capitalize on market opportunities. Their efforts are often hampered by lack of infrastructure, limited access to transportation, and competition from better-resourced businesses.

9. FINAL THOUGHTS

Women fish vendors in Thoothukudi demonstrate immense entrepreneurial spirit despite the obstacles they face. With the right support in terms of infrastructure, training, financial aid, and policy interventions, these vendors can overcome many of the challenges in their path. Empowering them would not only uplift their socio-economic status but also contribute significantly to the overall development of the local economy. By addressing their unique needs and offering targeted support, these women can continue to thrive in the fish marketing and distribution sector.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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