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IS THE STREET VENDORS ABSTAIN FROM MARKETING PROBLEMS?- A STUDY OF COCHIN CITY IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT

Several researchers have done researches to find out various obstacles in front of the street vendors/hawkers to become good entrepreneurs in India. But most of these studies where made not in urban Kerala perspective. In recent times, in Kerala, vendors/hawkers face a lot of problems, especially from the marketing perspective. This paper identifies and analyses the main marketing problems in front of vendors/hawkers and their socio-economic profile.

KEYWORDS: *Itinerant Retailers, Street Vendors*

INTRODUCTION

An entrepreneur is an individual or group of persons who try to create something new who organizes production and undertakes risk involved in the establishment and operation of a business enterprise. In this sense street vendors are entrepreneurs. But at the same time, the core issue that they face to be a good entrepreneur in tomorrow is related to the methods of marketing, creating demand, selection of target group, pricing strategy in bargaining situation/offseasons, customer satisfaction, profitability, etc. this study focuses mainly on the marketing problems faced by the street vendors in Cochin City, Kerala

Street Vendors: The Itinerant Retailers

Retail formats in India first emerged when the barter system was in vogue with the primitive format of the “shanty”, where the produce was brought to the market for convenient access by consumers. Keeping the consumers in mind, small mobile retailers brought these products to villages in carts, bicycles, etc. Later retailers opened small shops, stocking them with such produce. As towns and cities grew these retail stores began stocking a mix of convenience merchandise, enabling the formation of high street bazaars that became the hub of retail activity in every city. Thus the gradual development of the market place led to the emergence of new formats. Among the number of retailers, itinerant retailers are a type of small scale retailers; they move around and sell a variety of items directly to the consumers. They do not have a fixed place or shop where they can sell. These retailers include vendors, street hawkers, peddlers, cheap jacks, festival vendors, food vendors, etc.

According to Bhowmick (2005), “a vendor is broadly defined as a person who offers goods for the sale to the public without having permanent building up structure from which to sell.”

For the purpose of the study street vendor/hawker has the same meaning and they are often interchanged. Street vendors may be stationary in the sense that they occupy space on the pavements or the public/private spaces or, they may mobile in the sense they move from place to place by carrying their wares on push carts or in the baskets on their heads.

Vendors/hawkers are at the bottom of the retail pyramid, on the streets, readily available and handy for customers. They are the feature of all urban spaces globally. They are in many ways represent as an interacting commune within the Cochin City, with all its successes, and in all its cruelty. The urban vendor, many of whom are women, reach goods and services to all classes of people symbolizing the interdependence of the rich, the middle classes and the poor. They represent the linkage between the slums and the flats, the residences and commercial centers, and between the rural and urban areas. They represent the multiple uses of public spaces and the public and open nature of urban interactions.

Street vending in the Cochin City is the most lucrative of all activities and the most available of all employments open to the poor, one which could lead the way out of poverty. It is also the cruelest in its competition for expensive urban space, marked by the vendors facing the wrath of the police and the city governments. Perhaps like no other citizen, the street vendor becomes the focus of interaction of almost all the pressure groups in Cochin – the corporation, police, politician, consumer, real estate agent, shop owners, vehicle owners. The number of vendors/hawkers in Cochin City has increased tremendously but unfortunately, we do not have reliable figures of statistics about vendors in Cochin urban area. However, according to the latest statement made by the Minister of Education & culture, Kerala about 5000 people engaged in street vending business in urban cities of Kerala. Based on this and from the experience of different authorities and vendors/hawkers, nearly 1000 vendors engage in street vending business in Cochin City.

It is difficult to describe a 'typical' street vendor in Cochin City. The street vendor may be a woman sitting at the street corner selling green masala, house utensil, or he may be a mustached man selling electronic items, leather goods and food items in the heart of the metro city. He may be a small farmer selling his vegetables in the urban bazaars (market) or fisherman sitting at the market area selling fish or she may be a tender coconut vendor helps to quench the thirst of rushing man and tourists. Whatever their specificity, all street vendors are part of this vast urban city and depend on this uncertain form of entrepreneurship; they struggle to earn a living.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To sketch the socio-economic profile of street vendors in Cochin City, and
- To identify the problems faced by them from a marketing perspective.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive was carried out for having a clear picture of the research topic by interacting with street vendors in order to sketch the socio-economic profile and to identify their marketing problems. But due to the vast number of vendors in Cochin City, Kerala, it was decided that the survey will be done on a sample basis and the sample size is limited to 200 street vendors. Judgment sampling method has been applied to select the 200 respondents covered under the study.

Data Sources and Collection

The study is the primary database. The data were collected from 200 street vendors in the Cochin City of Kerala through an interview schedule specifically developed for the study.

Data Classification and Tabulation

Collected data is classified based on the variables such as age, type of business, educational qualification, marital status, monthly income, place of residence, nature goods trading, ownership, source of procurement of goods, location of business–wise, etc. Based on the variables identified the data is tabulated as table 1, table 2 and so on.

Analytical Tools

The classified and tabulated data are analyzed by using percentages and weighted average mean.

Findings

Socio-Economic Profile

The data were collected from 200 vendors/hawkers doing the street vending business in Cochin City. Out of the 200 hundred respondents, 179 vendors/hawkers were male and 21 were female. The following tables depicting the classification vendors/hawkers on the basis of their age, educational qualification, marital status, size of family, income from the business, nature of goods and place of residence.

Age

Vendors/hawkers of Cochin City are drawn from all castes and communities although a majority tends to belong to backward castes or the Muslim community. Their literacy level is usually low since they start going out on the streets at a young age. Majority among them learn their trade from family members. Children start at an early age since the entire family is involved in vending. The vendors/hawkers coming under this study were classified into five categories based on their age to which they belong. The age group which they belong to below 20, 20-30, 30-40, 40-50 and above 50.The Table 1 shows the age wise classification of the respondents.

Table 1: Age of the Respondents

Age	Number	Percent
Below 20	8	4
20-30	42	21
30-40	54	27
40-50	61	30.5
Above 50	35	17.5
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: *Field Survey*

The table 1 depicts that out of the 200 vendors, 8 vendors belong to the group below 20. Just like 42 vendors belong to 20-30 age group, and in the third age group 30-40 there are 54 vendors. At the same time, 40-50 age group comprises 61 vendors and in the last age group there come 35 vendors.

Educational Qualification

For the urban poor, street vending is one of the means of earning a livelihood, as it need not require high educational qualifications. Hence, on the basis of the educational background, respondents are classified into 5 groups. The groups they belong are Illiterate, Primary, Upper Primary, High School, and Plus Two & Above. Table 2 depicts the same.

Table 2: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Educational Qualification	Number	Percent
Illiterate	25	12.5
Primary	46	23
Upper Primary	37	18.5
High School	83	41.5
+2 and Above	9	4.5
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: *Field Survey*

The table 2 indicates that 25 vendors/hawkers are illiterate, 46 vendors/hawkers had completed primary level education. 37 vendors/hawkers had completed upper primary education. But 83 vendors/hawkers had finished High School level education. Only 9 vendors/hawkers had +2 & above level education.

It was observed that the majority of the vendors/hawkers under the study belong to high school level education and 2 and above qualified vendors/hawkers are very less in number. In total, 191 out of 200 respondents have up to High school level education which indicates that they lack the required levelof education for the better-paid jobs in the formal sector attracted a large number of people to this field of business for work and livelihood.

Marital Status

Marital status of the vendors is given in table 3. This table reveals that 54 interviewed vendors are single and the rest 146 vendors are married and from this analysis and by keen observation, it is certain that majority of the respondents doing street vending business by the support/help from their family members.

Table 3: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Number	Percent
Single	54	27
Married	146	73
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: *Field Survey*

Monthly Income

The vendors/hawkers covered under the study were classified into five categories on the basis of their monthly income from the business, they belong to below Rs. 3000, Rs.3000-5000, Rs 5000-7000, Rs. above 7000. Table 4 shows the income wise classification.

Table 4: Monthly Income of Respondents

Income	Number	Percent
Below 3000	20	10
3000-5000	98	49
5000-7000	67	33.5
Above 7000	15	7.5
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: *Field Survey*

There are 20 vendors/hawkers belonging to the below Rs 3000 category. In the next category, i.e., Rs 3000-5000, it can be seen that the maximum representation of the male vendors/hawkers i.e.98. While there are 67 vendors/hawkers represented in Rs 5000-7000 category. And only 15 came under the last category, i.e., income above Rs 7000.

Place of Residence

On the basis of the place of residence, vendors/hawkers are grouped into three: rural, semi-urban and urban. It is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Place of Residence of Respondents

Place of Residence	Number	Percent
Rural	18	9
Semi urban	44	22
Urban	138	69
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: *Field Survey*

From the given table it is clear that 18 vendors/hawkers belong to the rural area. Then, 44 vendors/hawkers belong to the semi-urban area, and the majority, i.e., 138 vendors/hawkers belong to the urban area. Thus it is clear that most of the vendors/hawkers are from the urban area.

Nature of Goods Trading

The nature of goods wise classification of vendors/hawkers is given in table 6. In this, the goods dealing with the vendors/hawkers are categorized into perishable and non-perishable goods.

Table 6: Nature of Goods Wise Classification of Vendors/Hawkers

Nature of Goods	Number	Percent
Perishable	91	45.5
Non Perishable	109	54.5
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: *Field Survey*

The analysis of the table 6 reveals that 91 vendors/hawkers (45.5%) are dealing with the perishable goods and 109 vendors/hawkers (54.5%) are dealing with non-perishable goods. Thus, it is seen from the table that nearly half of the respondents are facing the problems related with selling out their perishable goods and the rest are facing problems regarding their non-perishable goods.

Ownership

The table 7 shows that 188(94%) of the respondents are doing own business and the balance 12(6%) of them are doing their business on agreement basis, working as a partnership and working on mutual understanding. From this figure, itis observed that since very little investment is needed for starting this street vending business, most of the respondents were started this on their own.

Table 7: Ownership Wise Classification of Respondents

Ownership of the Business	Number	Percent
Owned	188	94
Not owned	12	6
Total	200	100

Source: *Field Survey*

Source of Procurement of Goods

The street vendors are purchasing their goods from different sources. It is from inside Kerala and outside Kerala. As mentioned earlier, whether it is from inside or outside Kerala, it is clear that the available sources for obtaining goods are; small scale units, self-help groups, several shop keepers, distributors, wholesalers, artisans, and carpenters. Above all, there is another category of vendors/hawkers, who are not purchasing goods for sale rather than producing the same from the family/self-made.

Table 8: Classification based on the Source of Goods-Inside and Outside Kerala

Source	Number	Percent
Produced in family/self made	21	10.5
Wholesalers	56	28
Artisans/carpenters	6	3
More than one source	117	58.5
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: *Field Survey*

The above table shows that out of 200 vendors/hawkers 56(28%) are buyinggoods from the wholesalers. 21(10.5%) vendors/hawkers are not purchasing the goods for sale rather than producing it from the family/self-made and 6 (3%)were depending on another category; i.e., artisans and carpenters. But it is noted that the majority of the vendors/hawkers i.e., 117(58.5%) are depending on more than one source.

Location of Business

As for most of the businesses, location is the be- all and end- all of street vending. While location will vary with the products sold and services rendered, certain patterns repeat themselves across cultures. As far as the present study is concerned, the attracting concentrations of venders /hawkers are as follows:

In front of business complexes, in front of the educational institutions, railway stations/bus stands, main road side, minor roadside, a house with specific outfits, a house without specific outfits, street vending zones, tourist locations and other locations such as market area, etc.

Table 9: Location of Business Wise Classification of Respondents

Locality	Number	Percent
In front of business complexes	17	8.5
In front of educational institutions	4	2
Railway stations/bus stands	10	5
Main road side	53	26.5
Minor road side	16	8
House with specific outfits	3	1.5
House without specific outfits	2	1
Street vending zones	8	4
Tourist locations	37	18.5
Table 9: Contd.,		
Market area	21	10.5
More than one location	29	14.5
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: *Field Survey*

It is noted from the table 9 that 26.5percent of the vendors/hawkers are doing their business in main road area, 18.5 percent in tourist locations, followed by 14.5 percent in more than one location, 10.5 percent in the market area, 8.5 percent in front of the business complexes. Next 8 percent comes in the minor road side, 5 percent in the minor roadside, 4 percent in street vending zones and 2 percent, 1.5 percent, 1percent are in front of the educational institutions, a house with specific outfits, and house without specific outfits respectively.

Marketing Problems

The core issue that every business enterprises face is related to the methods of marketing, creating demand, selection of target group, the pricing strategy in bargaining situation /off-season,customers satisfaction, profitability, etc. Besides, how to manage these situations is based on their managerial ability. More or less, the same applies to the vendors/hawkers; they also run the business by going through these issues like target group, pricing strategy, quality of the products, competition from same units, difficulties in acquiring working capital, managing off-season and all. The following tables discuss these marketing issues of vendors/hawkers and it is analyzed as follows;

Vendors Target Group

Even though almost all the street vendors belong to poor family background, their target group may not come under a particular income group. For the purpose of the study, the target group of the vendors is classified into four categories which include Lower-income group, Middle-income group, lower and middle-income group and Lower, Middle and Upper-income group. The opinion of the vendors/hawkers regarding the target group is as given below;

From the table 10, it is seen that out of the 200 vendors, the majority (50.5%) responded that their target group is lower, middle and upper-income group. Then 37.5% of vendors opined lower income group is their main target group and followed by 22(11%) focused on lower and middle-income group. But only one percentage answered the middle income group as their target group. Totally, the majority of the vendors focused on lower, middle and upper-income group.

Table 10: Opinion of Vendors/Hawkers Regarding Target Group

Target Group	Number	Percent
Lower income group	75	37.5
Middle income group	2	1.0
Lower & middle income group	22	11.0
Lower, Middle& Upper income group	101	50.5
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: *Field Survey*

Services for Lower Income Group

Vendor's opinion based on the services they render for the lower income group is because of the following factors. The nature of such services includes providing high-quality products, goods at cheap price, high quality with cheap price, moderate quality with moderate price, variety, convenience and fresh/taste of the products. The perception of street vending and street vending goods among the customers varies from the vendor's experience as mentioned in the table given below;

Table 11: Opinion of Vendors Regarding the Services they Render for Lower Income Group

Nature of Services	Mean	Rank
High quality	6.058	3
Cheap price	6.020	4
High quality with cheap price	6.217	1
Moderate quality with moderate price	5.929	5
Variety	5.024	7
Convenience	5.921	6
Fresh/taste	6.132	2

Source: *Field Survey*

The table 11 reveals that high quality with cheap price (6.217) is the prime service which is rendered by the vendors to the lower income group. Next to this is fresh/taste (6.132), then high quality (6.058). The fourth rank for a cheap price (6.020). Moderate quality with moderate price, convenience and variety got the fifth, sixth and seventh rank respectively. To conclude, the services of vendors are beneficial to the lower income group mainly because of high quality with cheap price.

Regular Customers

Customers are the backbone of every business. Customers refer to the people or organizations that seek satisfaction of their needs and wants. Customers certainly make up one important element of the street vending system. Nevertheless, every street vendor wishes to have regular customers. Then only they could run the business without any interruption. The tables given below show how many vendors/hawkers have regular customers and how many not.

Table 12: Regular Customers- Type of Products Wise

Type of Products	Responses				Total	
	Yes		No			
Handicrafts	5	(25)	15	(75)	20	(100)
Leather goods	3	(15)	17	(85)	20	(100)
Fancy items	5	(25)	15	(75)	20	(100)
Food	14	(70)	6	(30)	20	(100)
Fruits and vegetables	15	(75)	5	(25)	20	(100)
Clothes	14	(70)	6	(30)	20	(100)
House utensils	12	(60)	8	(40)	20	(100)
Tender coconut	16	(80)	4	(20)	20	(100)
Fish	20	(100)	-	(-)	20	(100)
Others	14	(70)	6	(30)	20	(100)
Total	**118**	**(59)**	**82**	**(41)**	**`200**	**(100)**

Source: *Field Survey*

Figures in brackets denote percentage to the total

The above table 12 gives that 17 vendors have no regular customers. Then followed by 15 handicrafts and fancy items vendors, eight house utensil vendors, six vendors who sell food items, clothes, vendors belongs to other group and five fruits/vegetable vendors have no regular customers. In total (41%) vendors have no regular customers and that makes them struggle hard to carry on their business.

Reasons for the Lack of Regular Customers

As it is mentioned earlier, customers are the backbone of every business. In street vending business, it has its own regular customers. But, from the table 13, it is seen that 82 vendors lack regular customers. The reason for it may be, due to the frequent shift of the location of the business, pricing policy of the vendors, how to deal with customers, quality of goods or fresh and taste of products and hygienity. The following table depicts the opinion of the vendors/hawkers regarding the reason for the lack of regular customers.

Table 13: Reasons for the Lack of Regular Customers

Statement	Responses										Total	
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree			
Frequent Shift	3	(3.7)	28	(34.2)	29	(35.3)	14	(17)	8	(9.8)	82	(100)
Pricing Policy	-	(-)	1	(1.2)	18	(22)	27	32.9)	36	(43.9)	82	(100)
Customers Dealings	-	(-)	-	(-)	14	(17.1)	17	(20.7)	51	(62.2)	82	(100)
Quality of Goods	-	(-)	16	(19.5)	26	(31.7)	14	(17)	26	(31.8)	82	(100)
Fresh/taste	-	(-)	-	(-)	57	(70)	5	(6)	20	(24)	82	(100)
Hygeinity	-	(-)	-	(-)	62	(75.7)	15	(18.2)	5	(6.1)	82	(100)

Source: *Field Survey*

Figures in brackets denote percentage to the total

The table 13 gives that 31 out of 82 have agreed that they lack regular customers due to the frequent shift of the location of the business. Followed by 29 having a neutral opinion and 22 were disagreeing towards this statement. 62 out of 82 vendors said it is not because of pricing policy they lack regular customers. 68 vendors strongly denied the customer dealings. 40 vendors told they lack regular customers but it is notbecause of the quality of products. 57 and 62 vendors have a neutral attitude towards the fresh/taste and hygienity respectively.

From this table we can conclude that vendors/hawkers are least bothered about why they do not get regular customer: It reflects the lack of managerial skill of vendors.

Table 14: Place of Business Wise Classification of Regular Customers

Place of Business	Responses				Total	
	Yes		No			
In front of business complexes	5	(4.2)	12	(14.6)	17	(8.5)
In front of educational institutions	4	(3.4)	-	(-)	4	(2)
Railway stations/bus stands	5	(4.2)	5	(6.1)	10	(5)
Main road side	32	(27.1)	21	(25.6)	53	(26.5)
Minor road side	12	(10.2)	4	(4.9)	16	(8)
House with specific outfits	3	(2.5)	-	(-)	3	(1.5)
House without specific outfits	2	(1.7)	-	(-)	2	(1)
Street vending zones	2	(1.7)	6	(7.3)	8	(4)
Tourist locations	21	(17.8)	16	(19.5)	37	(18.5)
Market area	18	(15.3)	3	(3.7)	21	(10.5)
More than one location	14	(11.9)	15	18.3)	29	(14.5)
Total	**118**	**(100)**	**`82**	**(100)**	**200**	**(100)**

Source: *Field Survey*

Figures in brackets denote percentage to the total

Table 14 reveals whether there is any relation between the place of business and regular customers. Among the 82 vendors not having regular customers, majority, i.e., 25.6 percent does business in main road side. 19.5 percent from tourist locations followed by 18.3 percent whose place of business is more than one location. 14.6 percent seeking the customers in front of the business complexes, 7.3 percent from street vending zones, and 6.1 percent, 4.9 percent and 3.7 percent are from bus stands and railway stations, minor roadside and any other location (i.e., market area) respectively. It is concluded that the vendors doing business in main roads, tourist locations, in front of business complexes and market area lack regular customers.

Bargaining by Customers

One of the important problems as far as the vendors are concerned is that very often they face bargaining from customers. Table 15 reveals the probability of any relation between types of products and bargaining from the customers. All handicrafts, leather, clothes, and house utensil vendors i.e., 20 each in number are facing bargaining from the customers. Followed by 18(90%) of fancy items and fish vendors, 13(65%) fruits/vegetable vendors, 12(60%) tender coconut vendors, 8(40%) other vendors. In total, 156(78%) out of 200 vendors were facing bargaining from the customers. It is observed that there lies a significant relation between types of products and customers bargaining.

Table 15: Customers Bargaining- Type of Products Wise

Type of Products	Response				Total	
	Yes		No			
Handicrafts	20	(100)	-	(-)	20	(100)
Leather goods	20	(100)	-	(-)	20	(100)
Fancy items	18	(90)	2	(10)	20	(100)
Food	7	(35)	13	(65)	20	(100)
Fruits and vegetables	13	(65)	7	(35)	20	(100)
Clothes	20	(100)	-	(-)	20	(100)
House utensils	20	(100)	-	(-)	20	(100)
Tender coconut	12	(60)	8	(40)	20	(100)
Fish	18	(90)	2	(10)	20	(100)
Others	8	(40)	12	(20)	20	(100)
Total	**156**	**(78)**	**44**	**(22)**	**200**	**(100)**

Source: *Field Survey*

Figures in brackets denote percentage to the total

Price Strategy at Bargaining Situation

One of the main challenges that the street vendors face is about managing the bargaining situation. From the pilot study, it is noted that street vendors can manage this bargaining situation only through pricing strategy which are upper bound pricing strategy, fixed pricing strategy and breaks even pricing strategy. But all are followed on the basis of the attitude of customers.

Table 16: Year of Experience and Price Strategy at Bargaining Situation

Number of Years in Business	Price Strategy						Total	
	Upper Bound		Fixed		Break Even			
Below 5 years	21	(65.6)	11	(34.4)	-	(-)	32	(100)
5-10	24	(55.8)	16	(37.2)	3	(7)	43	(100)
10-15	9	(32.1)	19	(67.9)	-	(-)	28	(100)
15-20	-	(-)	10	(100)	-	(-)	10	(100)
20-25	11	(61.1)	7	(38.9)	-	(-)	18	(100)
Above 25 years	10	(40)	15	(60)	-	(-)	25	(100)
Total	**75**	**(48.1)**	**78**	**(50)**	**3**	**(1.9)**	**156**	**(100)**

Source: *Field Survey*

Figures in brackets denote percentage to the total

The table 16 shows that out of the 32 vendors who are in business below 5years, 65.6 percent follows upper bound pricing strategy and the balance i.e., 34.4 percent follows fixed pricing method. Out of the 43 vendors who belong to 5-10 years of experience, 55.8 percent, 37.2 percent, and 7 percent follows upper bound, fixed and break even pricing strategy respectively in the bargaining situation. Among the 28 vendors who belong to 10-15 category, 32.1, 69.9 percent follows upper bound and fixed pricing strategy respectively. Then 15-20 categories include 10 vendors and they follow only fixed price even in the bargaining situation. Out of the 18 vendors who belong to 20-25 category, 61.1 percent tackle the bargaining through upper bound pricing strategy and the balance 38.9 percent fixed price. And from the 25 vendors among the above 25 years in business, 40 percent tackle the bargaining through upper bound pricing and the balance 60 percent resorts to the vendor's fixed pricing strategy. It is concluded that from the total of 156 vendors who face bargaining, 48 percent tackle it by fixing upper bound price, 50 percent follows fixed price and only 1.9 percent follows breakeven pricing.

Pricing Strategy for Off-Season

Pricing strategy to be followed in off-season is yet another managerial issue faced by vendors. For the purpose of the study, it is identified that vendors usually follows four types of pricing strategy; they are lower bound price, fixed price, loss leading price and highly loss leading price.

Table 17: Year of Experience and Pricing Strategy for Off-Season

Year of Experience	Pricing Strategy								Total	
	Lower Bound		Fixed		Loss Leading		Highly Loss Leading			
Below 5 years	5	(13.2)	19	(50)	14	(36.8)	-	(-)	38	(100)
5-10	9	(15)	33	(55)	12	(20)	6	(10)	60	(100)
10-15	-	(-)	30	(85.7)	4	(11.4)	1	(2.9)	35	(100)
15-20	-	(-)	10	(83.3)	2	(16.7)	-	(-)	12	(100)
20-25	-	(-)	5	(23.8)	14	(66.7)	2	(9.5)	21	(100)
Above 25 years	2	(5.9)	24	(70.6)	8	(23.5)	-	(-)	34	(100)
Total	**16**	**(8)**	**121**	**(60.5)**	**54**	**(27)**	**9**	**(4.5)**	**200**	**(100)**

Source: *Field Survey*

Figures in brackets denote percentage to the total

Table 17 shows that out of the 38 vendors who are in business below 5years, 13.2 percent follows lower bound pricing strategy, 50 percent follows fixed pricing method and 36.8 percent follows loss leading price and nobody follows highly loss leading price. Out of the 60 vendors belonging to 5-10 years of experience, 15 percent, 55 percent, 20 percent, and 10 percent follows lower bound, fixed, loss leading and highly loss-leading pricing strategy respectively in the off-season. Among the 35 vendors belonging to 10-15 category, 85.7 percent, 11.4 percent, and 2.9 percent follows fixed, loss leading and highly loss-leading pricing strategy respectively and nobody comes under lower bound pricing strategy.

Then 15-20 categories include 12 vendors, out of which 83.3 percent follows fixed price and16.7 percent follows loss leading pricing and nobody follows lower bound and highly loss-leading pricing strategy in the off-season. Out of the 21 vendors who belong to 20-25 category, 66.7 percent follows loss-leading price, 23.8 percent fixed and only 9.5 percent follows highly loss-leading pricing in off season. And from the 34 vendors among the above 25 years in business, 70.6 percent, 23.5 percent and5.9 percent follows fixed, loss leading and lower bound pricing strategy in off season respectively. It is concluded that from the total 200 vendors' majority, i.e., 60.5 percent follows fixed price and 27 percent follows loss leading price in the off-season.

Seasonality

No doubt, seasonality is an important problem for street vendors/hawkers from the marketing perspective. It may vary from vendor to vendor who sells different types of goods. From the table 18, its seen that out of 20 vendors from each type of vendors, majority, i.e., 15 fish vendors have always affected the seasonality. Followed by 10 from clothes vendors, 10 from other vendors, 7 leather vendors,7 house utensil vendors, and 7 tender coconut vendors. As like, 14 handicrafts vendors are often suffering from seasonality. Followed by,12 food vendors, 11 fancy items vendors, 10 house utensil vendors, 8 leather items vendors. So it can be concluded that majority of the street vendors (78%) who are dealing with different types of products are very often suffering from seasonality.

Table 18: Problem of Vendors Regarding Seasonality

Type of Products	Seasonality						Total	
	Always		Often		Rarely			
Handicrafts	3	(15)	14	(70)	3	(15)	20	(100)
Leather goods	7	(35)	8	(40)	5	(25)	20	(100)
Fancy items	2	(10)	11	(55)	7	(35)	20	(100)
Food	10	(50)	4	(20)	6	(30)	20	(100)
Fruits and vegetables	3	(15)	12	(60)	5	(25)	20	(100)
Clothes	10	(50)	4	(20)	6	(30)	20	(100)
Home utensils	7	(35)	10	(50)	3	(15)	20	(100)
Tender coconut	7	(35)	7	(35)	6	(30)	20	(100)
Fish	15	(75)	5	(25)	-	(-)	20	(100)
Others	1	(50)	7	(35)	3	(15)	20	(100)
Total	**74**	**(37)**	**82**	**(41)**	**44**	**(22)**	**200**	**(100)**

Source: *Field Survey*

Figures in brackets denote percentage to total

Table 19: Attitude of Vendors/Hawkers to Change the Product Mix

Attitude to Change the Product Mix	Number	Percent
Always	9	4.5
Often	35	17.5
Some times	10	5
Rarely	14	7
Never	132	66
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: *Field Survey*

The table 19 pinpoints the fact about the attitude of vendors/hawkers to change the product mix.132 out of 200 vendors i.e., 66 percent never like to change their product mix. But 35(17.5%) are often interested to change the product mix and 14(7%) have a rare attitude to change the product mix. And only 9(4.5%) are always interested to change the product mix. In total, the majority of the vendors are not interested in changing the product mix even though seasonality severely affects their business, which in turn reflects the lack of the managerial skill of the vendors/hawkers.

Findings

Socio-Economic Profile

- 188 (i.e., 94%) of the respondents are doing own business and the balance 12(6%) of them are doing their business on agreement basis, working as a partnership and working on mutual understanding. Most of the vendors are from the urban area. And nearly half of the vendors deal with perishable goods like food, fish, fruits/vegetables, etc. and the rest of them deal with non-perishable goods. Thus, they were facing the problems related with selling out the perishable and non-perishable goods.

- Of the total vendors surveyed under the study, 56(28%) buy goods from the wholesalers. 21(10.5%) vendors/hawkers are not purchasing the goods for sale rather than producing it from the family/self-made and 6 (3%) depends on artisans and carpenters. But it is noted that the majority of the vendors/hawkers i.e. 117(58.5%) are depending on more than one source. From this analysis, it is inferred that most of the vendors are agree with the credit problems confronted with assembling goods from different sources.

- Out of the 41 vendors who purchase goods from outside Kerala, 27 (i.e., 65.7%) faces problems related to boarder/check post, transportation and availability of goods on credit, etc.
- Majority of the vendors (26.5%) are doing their business in main road side, 18.5 percent in tourist locations, followed by 14.5 percent in more than one location, 10.5 percent in the market area, 8.5 percent in front of the business complexes and 8percent in minor roadside.
- The result of the study shows that the majority of the vendors (81%) have shifted their location of business frequently because of eviction, lack of facilities like shelter, storage, etc. Transportation is the next important reason, followed by the problems of lack of customers and lack of demand.

Marketing Problems

- Even though cent percent vendors/hawkers said that their services are beneficial to the lower income group, the target group of majority (50.5%) of the vendors/hawkers is lower, middle and upper-income group. The vendor's believe that the high-quality products with cheap price and fresh/taste of the products are the factors attracting more customers towards them.
- A majority (41%) of the vendors are doing their business in the main road side, tourist locations, in front of business complexes and market areas. They lack regular customers because of the reason that the frequent shift of the location of the business and not because of the pricing policy, customer dealings, fresh and taste, etc.
- From the 200 vendors surveyed, 156 vendors i.e., majority, 78 percent face bargaining from customers out of which 101 (i.e., 92.7%) are dealing with non-perishable goods and 55 (i.e., 60.4%) are selling perishable goods. It is concluded that only 48 percent vendors tackle the bargaining by fixing upper bound price, 50 percent follows fixed price and only 1.9 percent follows breakeven pricing. It is observed that they do not have that much ability to market the goods by tackling the bargaining situation.
- With regard to the pricing strategy for the off-season, the majority of the vendors i.e., 60.5 percent follows fixed price strategy, 27 percent loss leading price and 4.5 percent highly loss leading price. Thus, it is inferred that they were not competent to fix the pricing strategy for the off-season.
- With regard to the seasonality, the majority of the vendors i.e., 44 percent often and 37 percent always are affected with the changes in seasonality. Hence it is observed that seasonality is one of the major problems of the vendors from the marketing perspective.
- Majority of the vendors (66%) are not interested to change the product mix even though the seasonality severely affects their business, which reflects the lack of the managerial competence of the vendors/hawkers.

SUGGESTIONS

It is found from the study that the downtrodden group-street vendors face a lot of problems. Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions were made that would help to solve the problems of street vendors in Cochin City, Kerala; Due to the frequent shift of the location of the business, the vendors lack regular customers. Since they are the weaker section among the other businessmen and many times they could not able to meet the two ends of the life with the little they earn. They are not established like other businessmen to tackle the different situation like seasonality, bargaining, losses, etc. In this situation, they deserve special attention and steps to rehabilitate the evicted vendors so as to improve their living conditions. Since the vendors are not managerially competent, politically strong, legally literate, financially sound, etc, they belongs to the weaker group who work hard to meet the two ends of life. So it is the duty of the government and other authorities to serve all sorts of help and care for this community at any level. The government can conduct legal awareness camps, training programme, managerial competency training, implement social security measures, etc. for this downtrodden community.

In general, the majority of the vendors could not able to meet the day to day expenses; still, they are stuck on to the same business by expecting a fruitfull future. So it is the responsibility of the government and concerned department to arrange a fixed venue for street vendors and to have patience to perceive with the ears the grievances and based on this they should take necessary steps to redress the grievances for uplift the downtrodden business community and by that fulfill their dreams as to be an entrepreneur tomorrow.

For most of the vendors, street vending serves as a main source of livelihood and at the same time, they couldn't abstain from the financial, law-related and marketing issues confronted with. Even though there exists a policy for the urban vendors, it has not yet been implemented in Cochin City even on an experimental basis. In a nut-shell, instead of branding street vendors as 'Encroaching Communes' in the public place and roads, the government should open their eyes to see the services and issues of the socially contributing and economically promising sector.

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