

Fresh to home: Opportunities and challenges of market digitalisation for coastal women fish vendors

The research aims to capture the opportunities and challenges faced by coastal women fish vendors due to the digitalisation of market. Fish sale is a traditional occupation of the coastal women and sea is their major resource. The men in the coast catch fish from the sea and the women are the one who sell it in the market. Women play a major role in the coastal economy but still men are considered the breadwinners to the households and women's livelihood engagement as subsidiary. There were always challenges in women's participation in fish sale in the past especially when the liberalized economic policies lead to higher participation of sellers from outside the coastal community. History is repeating. Today digital platforms and other technological advancements like epayments and other apps for customer interaction are bringing new competitors. Majority of these women are illiterate, a major obstacle in entering the digital arena, but at the same time these advancements could also facilitate the fish sale and women could take advantage of the opportunities. Therefore study will be exploring how women's market engagement is boosted as well as negatively affected due to the technological intervention. As methodology has indepth interviews and FGD, the data collection process itself could help the women to critically engage in understanding their livelihood vulnerabilities as well as take a collective effort in addressing the issue.

The study will use qualitative approach as it could bring subjective experiences of women engaging in fish trade. Indepth interviews and Focus Group Discussion will be done with women fish vendors from the coastal communities and experts from the field of livelihood.

Research Questions

1. What are the kind of digital advancements that are involved in local fish sale?
2. What are the factors that contributed to the digitalization* of markets specifically fish sale?
3. What are the opportunities women fish vendors received because of digitalisation?
4. What are the challenges women fish vendors face due to the entry of digital advances in their livelihood?
5. How these challenges affect women's livelihood participation?
6. What are the limitations women have in accessing the technology and way forward for developing women inclusive digital market?

*Digitalisation includes epayments, mobile applications for customer interaction, ecommerce platforms, mobile apps for payment and other features which facilitate sale

Objectives

1. To identify the online market competitors and digital advancements in marketing fish

2. To understand the opportunities and challenges faced by coastal women fish vendors due to the digitalisation of market
3. To understand the changes in women livelihood engagement due to intervention of digitalisation.
4. To develop women inclusive framework for fish sale

Sampling frame

According to the Kerala Marine Census (2015), majority of women fish vendors in Kerala are from the coastal communities in the district of Kollam (5018), Kasargod (2293) and Thiruvananthapuram (1308) engaged in sale of fish either in the market or door to door. The coastal community from each of these districts has been selected based on the location of the coast i.e. its proximity to the city and higher number of women engaged in fish sale. Those women who are engaged in selling fish in the city area will only be considered for the study as rural areas have lesser access to online markets and epayments.

Field site	Number of women engaged in fish vending	Indepth interviews*	Focus group discussion
Thiruvananthapuram-Poonthura	752	10 minimum	4
Kollam- Neendakara coast	208	10 minimum	2
Kasaragod- Kasba coast	750	10 minimum	4