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Patterns and Profits: An occupational characteristics study of women vegetable retailers from Raipur city

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Abstract

This research article sheds light on the occupational characteristics of women vegetable sellers in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. By surveying 120 women across 12 markets, the study paints a vivid picture of their work routines and earnings. Most of these women dedicate themselves fully to vegetable retailing, typically working 3-6 hours a day. They carry vegetables in auto-rickshaws, usually purchased from wholesalers, to their customers. These women usually offer 6-10 different types of vegetables, managing up to 100 kg of produce daily. However, their work is not without hurdles. Many struggle with inadequate storage facilities, generating a wastage of less than 10 kg per day and a lack of basic amenities in the markets. Despite these challenges, a significant number of these women manage to earn between ₹400 and ₹800 per day while spending less than ₹200 on marketing, which showcases their resilience and business skills. The study also delves into the profit margins for various vegetables, revealing an average margin of 28.42% across 31 different types. This information not only highlights the economic viability of their trade but also underscores the important role these women play in urban India's informal economy.

Keywords: Vegetables, marketing, women, profit

Introduction

In India, an overwhelming majority of nearly 94 per cent of the working women are employed in the informal sector, with nearly 20 per cent of them working in urban areas (Goel *et al*., 2011). It is quite obvious that many women opt for self-employment ventures and engage in informal trade which have low barriers to entry, given their lower skills, limited access to resources, and lack of education and training. In India, marketing of vegetables is a significant segment of the agricultural marketing trade. Raipur, the capital city of Chhattisgarh, is growing fast, with a higher demand for fresh vegetables. Most of this need is met by informal vegetable sellers, many of whom are women. These sellers exhibit different patterns, like selling on the streets, in small market stalls, or as hawkers. This paper focuses on how vegetables are sold in markets, the marketing practices followed and the profit gained by women vegetable retailers.

Materials and Methods

The research was carried out in Raipur, the capital city of Chhattisgarh, and its nearby areas due to the presence of numerous vegetable markets. Among the 24 vegetable markets functioning in and around the city, 12 markets were selected through simple random sampling. The 12 markets thus selected consisted of 6 regular markets and 6 weekly markets. 10 women vegetable retailers were chosen randomly from each market, resulting in 60 respondents from regular markets and 60 respondents from weekly markets, contributing to a total of 120 respondents. Data were collected personally from February 2025 to April 2025, through a pre-tested structured interview schedule from the respondents. The data thus collected were analysed through SPSS software version 30 and Microsoft Excel.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 depicts various marketing variables used in the study, which show the marketing pattern and also determine the profit of women vegetable retailers. In terms of the nature of engagement in the vegetable marketing activity, most (86.67%) of the respondents were found to be working on a full-time basis, with only a few of them working either part-time (10%) or seasonally (3.3%). About the source of procuring vegetables, the majority of respondents were dependent on wholesalers (86.67%), followed by using both wholesalers and their own home grown produce (10%) for selling. Very few sold produce either obtained only from their home (0.83%) or purchased from farmers (2.5%). Almost half (48%) of the respondents worked for 3-6 hours each day, followed by 22 per cent working 6-9 hours, again

22 per cent working 9 hours and above and only 8 per cent working for less than 3 hours a day. The mode of transportation analysis showed that 71.7 per cent of the respondents used autos and 28.3 per cent used motorcycles. Autos used were both publicly and privately owned, while motorcycles used were owned by the respondents. Regarding the number of buyers encountered by the respondents on a daily basis, 30-40 was the most common range (39.17%), followed by 40-50 (29.16%), 20-30 (16.67%), 50-60 (8.33%) and above 60 (6.67%). Most (62.5%) sold 6-10 different vegetables, followed by 17.5 per cent selling up to 5 types of vegetables, 14.2 per cent selling 11-15 distinct type and only 5.8 per cent sold more than 15 types of vegetables. Many of the respondents (44.17%) reported selling vegetables up to 100 kg in a day, 39.16 per cent reported selling between 101 and 200 kg, 6.67 per cent sold between 201 and 300 kg, 2.5 per cent sold between 301 and 400 kg, and only 7.5 per cent sold more than 400 kg of vegetables a day. Under post-sale management aspects, the storage place used by the respondents for keeping unsold vegetables was identified. The majority (54.2%) used house storage, followed by market storage (25%) and other places (20.8%). Under daily vegetable wastage estimates, the majority (78.34%) reported less than 10 kg of wastage, 8.33 per cent discarded between 10 and 20 kg per day, and 7.5 per cent discarded between 20 and 30 kg. Only a handful (5.83%) of them lost more than 30 kg per day. Respondents used different waste disposal methods. The majority (55%) of them fed spoiled vegetables to animals, followed by 23.3 per cent using the municipal garbage truck, followed by 8.3 per cent, 7.5 per cent and 5.83 per cent using a dustbin, any other

Table 1: Marketing pattern and profit of women vegetable retailers

Sl. No.	Marketing variables	Frequency	Percentage
1.	**Employment context**		
	Full-time	104	86.70
	Part-time	12	10.00
	Seasonal	04	3.30
2.	**Source of procurement of vegetables**		
	Wholesaler	104	86.67
	Own field	01	0.83
	Wholesaler + Own field	12	10.00
	Directly from farmers	03	2.50
3.	**Working hours**		
	Less than 3 hours	10	8.33
	3-6 hours	58	48.33
	6-9 hours	26	21.67
	9 hours and above	26	21.67
4.	**Mode of transportation**		
	Motorcycle	34	28.30
	Auto	86	71.70
5.	**Buyers turnout (No./day)**		
	20-30	20	16.67
	30-40	47	39.17
	40-50	35	29.16
	50-60	10	8.33
	Above 60	08	6.67
6.	**Number of vegetables sold**		
	Up to 5	21	17.50
	6-10	75	62.50
	11-15	17	14.20
	Above 15	07	5.80
7.	**Quantity of vegetables sold**		
	Up to 100 kg/day	53	44.17
	101-200 kg/day	47	39.16
	201-300 kg/day	08	6.67
	301-400 kg/day	03	2.50
	Above 401 kg/day	09	7.50
8.	**Storage place for unsold vegetables**		
	House storage	65	54.20
	Market storage	30	25.00
	Any other	25	20.80
9.	**Vegetable wastage estimates**		
	Less than 10 kg/day	94	78.34
	10-20 kg/day	10	8.33
	20-30 kg/day	09	7.50
	30-40 kg/day	04	3.33
	Above 40 kg/day	03	2.50

10.	**Waste disposal method**		
	Roadside	07	5.83
	Dustbin	10	8.30
	Garbage truck	28	23.30
	Feed animals	66	55.00
	Any other	09	7.50
11.	**Marketing expenses (₹/day)**		
	₹100 to ₹200	72	60.00
	₹200 to ₹300	36	30.00
	₹300 to ₹400	03	2.50
	₹400 to ₹500	05	4.20
	₹500 and above	04	3.30
12.	**Profit (₹/day)**		
	Up to ₹400	26	21.70
	₹400 to ₹800	52	43.30
	₹800 to ₹1200	23	19.20
	₹1200 to ₹1600	08	6.70
	Above ₹1600	11	9.20
13.	**Amenities***		
	Drinking water	40	33.33
	Toilet	30	25.00
	Shed	30	25.00
	Electricity	20	16.67

*Data based on multiple responses

method and dumping on the roadside, respectively. For calculating the net profit, daily marketing expenditure borne by the respondents was recorded. Sixty per cent spent under ₹200, and ninety per cent spent under ₹300. Very few respondents spent between ₹300 and ₹400 (2.5%), between ₹400 and ₹500 (4.2%) and ₹500 and above (3.3%). Profit was taken as a variable to know the net economic gain incurred by the respondents in a day after deducting the market expenses, purchase value of vegetables, wastage value and own consumption value from the total sales revenue for the day. Most (43.3%) fell under the daily profit bracket of ₹400-₹800, followed by up to ₹400 (21.7%), ₹800-₹1200 (19.2%), more than ₹1600 (9.2%) and ₹1200-₹1600 (6.7%). Regarding the civic amenities available in the markets, only 25 per cent of the women reported having access to toilets, and only 33 per cent reported having drinking water facilities. Availability of electricity and sheds was reported by only 25 per cent and 16.7 per cent of women, respectively. This sheds light on the fact that the majority of the women vegetable retailers lacked essential facilities in the markets.

Table 2: Profit margin obtained by respondents from different vegetables

Sl. No.	Vegetable*	% of retailers	Average purchase price (₹/kg)	Average selling price (₹/kg)	Profit margin (%)
1	Okra	59.17	21.03	26.47	20.55
2	Pointed gourd	14.17	30.94	36.59	15.44
3	Carrot	21.67	27.50	39.23	29.90
4	Tomato	50.83	9.00	14.33	37.19
5	Cauliflower	45.00	31.13	36.05	13.65
6	Cabbage	42.50	8.08	16.61	51.35
7	Ginger	40.00	55.83	86.77	35.66
8	Pea	5.83	52.46	65.96	20.46
9	Cowpea	16.67	14.00	22.50	37.78
10	Cluster beans	32.50	35.64	40.23	11.41
11	Ivy gourd	35.00	45.95	56.87	19.20
12	Capsicum	15.00	24.44	29.06	15.90
13	Banana	25.83	10.65	16.06	33.69
14	Chilli	40.83	57.14	71.43	20.01
15	Jackfruit	5.00	40.00	50.42	20.67
16	Colocasia	9.17	46.36	54.09	14.29
17	Brinjal	58.33	16.66	32.96	49.45
18	Palak	45.00	14.35	26.16	45.15
19	Amaranthus spp.	45.00	7.04	16.33	56.89
20	Fenugreek leaves	17.50	14.76	23.19	36.35
21	Coriander leaves	48.33	60.86	96.66	37.04
22	Potato	16.67	19.15	22.00	12.95
23	Onion	17.50	23.33	27.20	14.23
24	Cucumber	12.50	37.33	43.00	13.19
25	Bitter gourd	34.17	37.76	50.83	25.71

26	Garlic	15.83	86.32	207.37	58.37
27	Radish	8.33	26.00	29.80	12.75
28	Bottle gourd	21.67	15.00	22.56	33.51
29	Beetroot	4.17	40.00	55.50	27.93
30	Drumstick	14.17	31.76	39.06	18.69
31	Lemon (per unit)	20.83	3.74	6.40	41.56
Average profit margin (%) = 28.42					

*Data based on multiple responses

Table 2 depicts the average purchase price, average selling price and average profit margin of 31 vegetables listed during the survey. Average purchase price (₹/kg) was highest for garlic (₹86.32), followed by coriander leaves (₹60.86) and chilli (₹57.14). It was low for Amaranthus spp. (₹7.04), cabbage (₹8.08) and tomato (₹9). Lemon costed ₹3.74 per unit on average. Average selling price (₹/kg) was highest for garlic (₹207.37), followed by ginger (₹86.77) and chilli (₹71.43). It was low for tomato (₹14.33), banana (₹16.06) and Amaranthus spp. (₹16.33). Lemon costed ₹6.4 per unit on average. About the average profit margins obtained per vegetable, cluster beans (11.41%), radish (12.75%) and potato (12.95%) had very narrow margins, while items like garlic (58.37%), Amaranthus (56.89%) and cabbage (51.35%) were very profitable. Averaged over all the vegetables, the profit margin was 28.42 per cent. In other words, the retailers typically sold at 20-30 per cent above their purchase price, which is a normal range for small retail.

Conclusion

The paper explored the occupational characteristics of women vegetable retailers, highlighting the marketing pattern they followed and the profits they earned. Most respondents were engaged full-time in vegetable marketing, earning a daily profit ranging from ₹400 to ₹800. The study also examined the conditions under which they operated, such as the lack of storage facilities and basic amenities at the marketplace, indicating areas for improvement.

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