



A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EMA KEITHEL MARKET OF MANIPUR: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

Dr. Rajkumari Nonibala Devi¹, Prof. M.P Sachdeva²

¹Post-Doctoral fellow, UGC women Scientist, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Delhi

²Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Delhi

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra11156>

DOI No: 10.36713/epra11156

ABSTRACT

The Ema (Ima) keithel is one of the indigenous markets in the world. Women are the sole owners and traders of this market. The objective of the research was to study the Ema market through a gendered perspective and economic anthropological analysis, and its importance in society. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected for the study. The qualitative data were collected through a case study and open-ended interview technique while the quantitative data were collected with the help of a questionnaire. The comparative analysis of the Ema keithel markets in Manipur is based on a variable like income earned in a day and the type of products based on the different markets of Ema keithel shows significant relationships among the income and types of products.

KEYWORDS: Ema keithel, Women vendors, Income per day, Type of Products, Manipur, India

INTRODUCTION

The *Ema (Ima) keithel* (*Ema* refer to as a mother, *Keithel* refer as to display), also known as the *Khwaiband Bazaar* by the people of Manipur, is one of the indigenous markets in the world. The uniqueness of the market is that women are the sole owners and traders of this market. It is the second largest women's market in Asia. Women of all age groups, mostly middle-aged women, used to come to sell their goods. But, with the need for financial support, many young women are also seen in the market doing their business. These women trade and deal with different types of products, ranging from daily wear needs to the basic and essential commodities of society. Manipur is located in the northeast part of India with an area of 22,327 sq. km. According to the census 2011 report, Manipur has a total population of 28,55,794 with a sex ratio of females of 49.63% to 50.37 % for every male. The state has a population of 42.79 percent in the hills and 57.2 percent in the valley. The literacy rate of females is 70.26%, as compared to 83.58% for males. There are a number of ethnic communities inhabiting the state, the majority of which are the *Meitei* communities, occupying the valley region, and the tribal communities, which belong to different ethnic groups. In fact, all types of religious beliefs are found in the state. But the majority of them follow Hinduism, Christianity, and *Sanamahism*. Before the annexation of Manipur under the Indian Union, it was once an independent princely state with its own history. Since India's independence, the state and the rest of the northeastern states have been ignored by mainstream development efforts. Against this backdrop, the women in Manipur, especially the *Ema* of *Ema Keithel*, have been the backbone of the Manipur economy. The majority of these female vendors are the primary breadwinners in their families. The primary objective

of this study is to explore the different sections of the markets and types of products found in *Ema*, with its vast potential for an entrepreneur.

Economic anthropologists have examined how resources are distributed, goods are allocated, and political regimes are supported. They also focused on the ties between material life and power, ranging from gender control of food in households to financial control of monopolies in markets. The market as a place creates social capital not only for the communities staying in and around the market but also generates a source of income for the migrants who are in search of economic opportunities. An anthropologist like Dan Rose (2002) has shown an interest in the study of women's roles in the traditional and new markets and the conflicts associated with such transactions. This kind of study attempts to address the unique features of the marketplace and the daily activities performed by women. The market as a place for daily business transactions solely performed by women not only provides an exchange of information but also social and cultural values among different ethnic groups. It creates a sense of belonging amid the different cultural groups that depend on the markets for daily survival by providing food and labor. There is a strong bond that binds people in the markets, such that a malfunction in one part of the market often leads to the collapse of society at large. In a traditional market, the exchange of goods and commodities is community-specific and region-allocated. With the advent of modern technologies, societies today have become handicapped by their local communities' increasing dependence on each other. It is problematic to say that a community or any society can exist without the help of markets. This study of markets on communities has found that "if markets depend upon communities, economies of



livelihood also leave space for individual acquisition, unobligated manoeuvre, and self-interested transaction (Barnard, 2002).”

The *Emā Keithel* market area is solely owned and controlled by women. It would be unfair to consider these women only as "entrepreneurs" because their role goes beyond the marketplace, such that they play a major role in the political arena in terms of agitation against unlawful activities, conflicts, social evils, and violence in the state.

It is very difficult in times of globalization for the survival of a traditional market like the present market under study, which bears unique features of its own. Considering the work of Black R. (2012) in his study of the Italian traditional market, he mentioned that the “traditional market today not only bears economic importance but also has a clear social and urban significance.” Often, they are the mirror of the local context in which they are absorbed. " So, the need and almost requirement of conducting thorough research on such an indigenous market will reflect the importance of its value and be a way of preserving its identity and uniqueness.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- 1) To explore the relationships between types of products and income earned by the women in the market
- 2) To study the impact of income earned and types of markets in the market

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Site: The study will be carried out in the *Emā* market and other such markets which are of significance to the *Emā* market.

Study population: The objective of the research was to study the *Emā* market through a gendered perspective and economic anthropological, and its importance in the society for subsistence. The study will include the 600 female traders in the market.

Study design: The study design will be holistic in nature and with a perspective of feminist orientation. The present study will use the resources, skills, and privileges available to the researcher to make it accessible to penetrate the borders and break through the confines of voices and experiences of subjects whose stories are otherwise restrained and out of reach. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected for the study. The qualitative data were collected through a case study and open-ended interview technique while the quantitative data were collected with the help of a questionnaire. For analyzing the quantitative data SPSS version 21 was used for calculating the relevant statistical analyses such as frequency, percentage, and mean was computed. Some of the statistical tests done were tests of significance, and one-way ANOVA to compare the mean of the dependent and independent variables and check for any significance, and to conclude the association of studied variables. Before, the research was conducted prior information was given through informed consent. All ethical clearance was taken before the research was conducted.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Yumlembam Linthoi Chanu (2020) study purpose was to understand the marketing problems and activities of

women enterprises in Manipur; and consequently, to examine their impact on sales growth. The study was felt due to the need for the hour to introspect into the reasons for the slow pace of industrial growth and entrepreneurship development in Manipur, of which an assumption is the marketing reasons. The study also shows that marketing was a problem for women entrepreneurs in Manipur. However, the results show that marketing restrictions do not have a significant impact on sales growth. The study also shows that marketing activities of women's companies include branding, packaging, labeling, provision of product-related services, standardization of products, special pricing, use of middlemen as a sales channel, counter selling, personal selling, and advertising conventional and modern, as well as trade promotion. The study concludes that though women enterprises face hardship and obstacles in marketing the products, does not remain a drawback and contributes significantly to sales growth.

Meetei U. Hirom (2015), according to the study, the influx of many goods and products from neighboring countries such as Myanmar and Bangladesh has led to the authenticity of the markets deteriorating day by day. The majority of the products available here reflect the true spirit of the local people and are well crafted by the society's indigenous communities. Due to their poor education and impoverished family situation, many microcredit providers charge unfair interest on loans to these women traders.

Thingbaijam Laxmi and Das, K.K (2015), the current research is being conducted in Manipur, a state in India's northeast. The research is based on secondary data gathered from Census reports. The role of Manipuri women in socioeconomic and cultural life is significant. They also handle all of the market's buying and selling. Rural and urban markets are dominated by women. They are heavily involved in agriculture and related activities. There is also an increase in the number of female entrepreneurs and self-help groups for women. The number of working women in various industries is increasing. As a result, women must be recognized for their contributions (to the Nation, to the family). Land records should be kept in the names of women to ensure equal access to farm family resources. Women must be protected from discrimination by their male counterparts. The status of women is a critical factor in determining progress in any society.

Praian et. al (2014) The current paper discusses and attempts in-depth research on the constituents of the *Khwaiband* market as well as the problems faced by women traders in the market. Unstructured interviews, discussion, and observation methods were used. The importance of observation in understanding the operation of middlemen and private banks in the market was emphasized. For two months, a case study was carried out. The market area was once developed in the form of a socioeconomic recreational center, where even the Royal Princess used to come and conduct her daily transactions. Women weavers are rarely involved in product marketing and sales.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

- 1) The research will also have policy implications, as the findings will indicate measures to safeguard the socio-cultural values of the market in the global era.



2) The findings will have academic utilities, especially

for those who are interested in the indigenous market.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Socio-economic status of the respondents

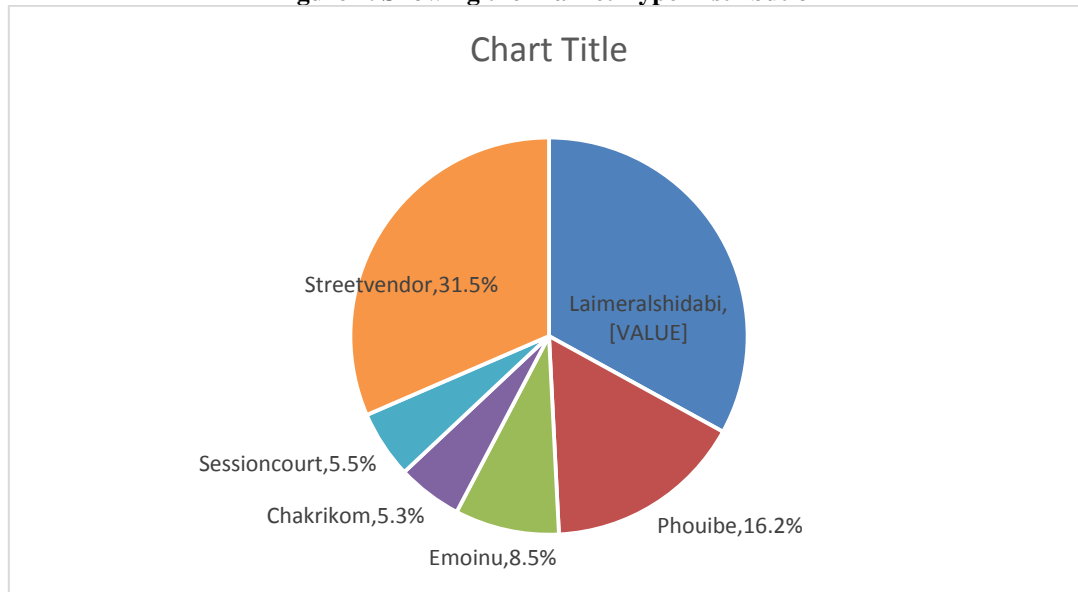
Variables		
Age Category	Frequencies(n=600)	Percentages (mean)
25-35	7	1.2
36-45	98	16.3
46-55	161	26.8
56-65	242	40.3
66-75	88	14.7
75 above	4	.7
Marital status		
Unmarried	35	5.8
Single	7	1.2
Married	438	73
Widow	100	16.3
Divorce/ Separated	20	3.3
Education		
Illiterate	11	1.8
Primary	63	10.5
Middle	74	12.3
High school	199	33.2
Secondary	79	13.2
Graduate/P. G	179	29.0
Religion		
Christian	55	9.2
Hindu	404	67.3
Islam	55	9.2
Meitei	86	14.3
Locality		
Rural	158	26.3
Urban	442	73.7

From above table 1, it can be summarized that the market is occupied by women in the age range of (55-65) with 40.03 % which is the maximum category of women who are already in their middle-aged and almost unoccupied with the rearing of children and household responsibilities. The least age was found among the women with age 75 and above. In marital status, married women occupied the highest number with 73% with cases of single women traders found at 1.2 % in the market. The highest educational level found among these women was a high school education score of 33.2 % while a few women illiterate 1.8% were also doing business. The *keithel* is occupied by multi-ethnic religious communities with 9.2% Muslim and tribal each and Hindu followers being the highest with 67.3% and the indigenous *Sanamahi* believers with 14.3% were distributed in the data collected. The

distribution of women vendors based on their residence show that most of the women traders are from urban area occupying the three main *Emakethel* with 73.7% from urban and 26.3 women vendors who are mostly street vendors from the rural area.

The profit earned by an individual woman was found to be Rupees 300 to 500 per day on an average normal day which is during the off-season. While the minimum margined earned per day by these women was found to be rupees 100 to 300 daily. 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 analysing the interrelationship among various types of products and income earned needs further inquiry which will be followed in the following chart.

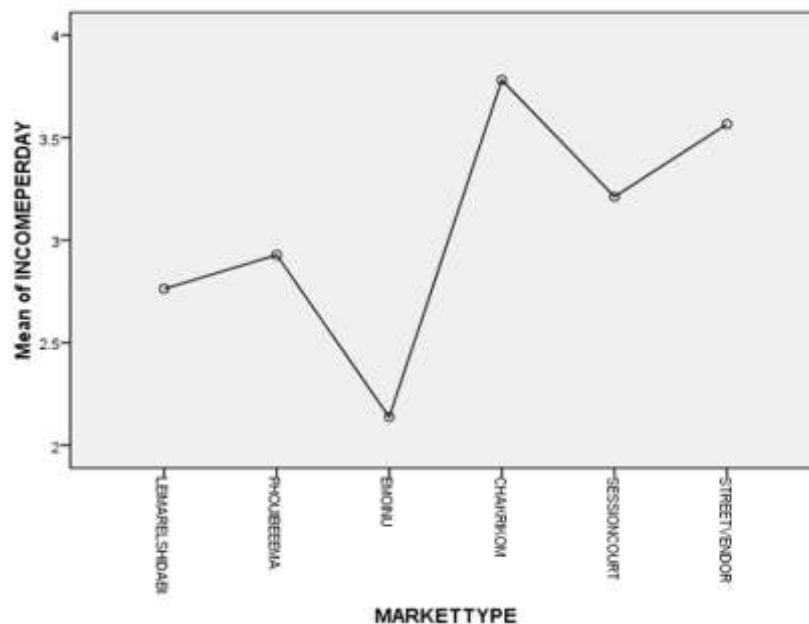
Figure 2. Showing the Market Type Distribution



In figure 2, it shows the distribution of the respondents based on the type of market they are engaged in. The *Leimarelshidabi keithel* illustrates the highest variety of women respondents 198 (33%) being one of the largest among the *Ema keithel* market, followed by the street vendor with 189 (31.5%) women respondents. In fact, some of the products in these two markets like fruits, vegetables, fish, fermented bamboo shoots, local indigenous products, smoked fish, etc. are quite in competition between the women vendors. So, a few of the women vendors from *Leimarelshidabi* were complaining that their business is not going profitable, as most of the customers and passers-by would get the street vendor's products which are at the roadsides. The remaining clothes

market is the *Phouibe keithel* with women vendors of 97 (16.2%) respondents selling all kinds of traditional and modern needs of women's garments and the second largest among the market, and *Emoinu keithel* engaged with religious and rituals ceremony clothing needs with 51 (8.5%) women respondents. The last market meant for local sweets, salts, and fruits is found in *Chakrikom keithel* being the smallest among all with 32 (5.3%) women respondents. While the other two markets Session court and street vendors comprise fish, local vegetables, flowers, dairy products, and local eatable products, along with ready-made garments, imported shoes, and slippers which are mostly Moreh products, etc.

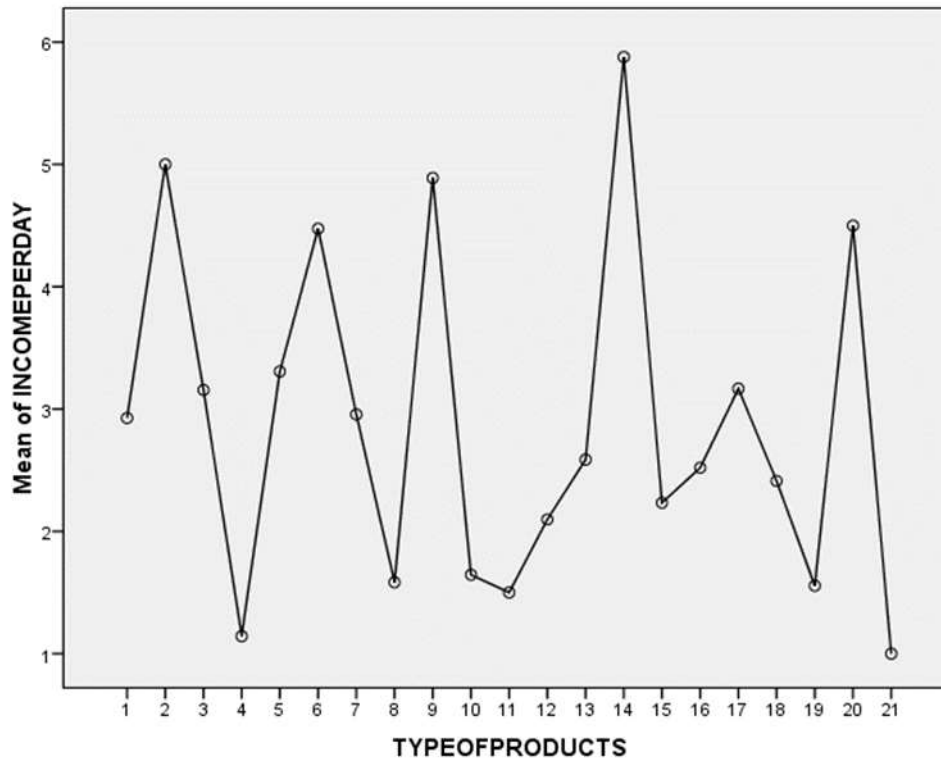
Figure 3. Shows comparative mean income and market type



In above figure 3, it shows the mean income per day earned by the women vendors depending on the type of market they are engaged in. It is found that *Emoinu Keithel* seems to have been less profitable with a mean income of 2.14 in the remaining market. While *Chakrikom keithel* seems to be

profitable with a mean value income of 3.78 as the highest. The results should be considered as standard error due to their minimum size representable as the market is the smallest of all. The second profitable market seems to be the street vendor with an income per day of 3.57 mean.

Figure 4. Shows comparison of mean income per day and types of products



In above figure 4, where the number in the horizontal column shows the type of products represented by (1- fresh fish, 2-fermented fish, 3-smoked fish, 4- Egg, 5- livestock, 6- Fruits, 7- Vegetables, 8- Pottery, 9- Rice, 10 – Handicrafts, 11- Bamboo and cane, 12- Cotton Cloths, 13- Woollen clothing, 14- Silk products, 15- Life cycle rituals clothing, 16- Traditional religious cloths, 17- salts, 18- local sweets, 19- Flowers, 20- Iron items, 21- Miscellaneous). It can be concluded that the highest income earned by women vendors depends on the type of product which is shown with silk products being one of the highest income-generating sources for women in the market. While the least income-generating source products were found to be under the category of miscellaneous products like note exchange stall which is around 3 in number and are not at all profitable. The reason was that nowadays new notes for old notes can be converted without any charge in any bank easily. Moreover, the demands for coins are very less among the public.

CONCLUSION

The above data of comparative analysis of the *Emo keithel* markets in Manipur based on a variable like income earned in a day and type of products based on the different markets of *Emo Keithel* shows that there is a significant

relationship between the type of products and the income a women vendor can earn in a day for her family. From, the findings especially for academic research scientists and scholars who are interested in the *Emo Keithel* would be an immense help for future data reference as the study is unique and one of its kind to rule out significant results comparison was not possible. So, it would be wise to consider for further research in the field.

REFERENCES

- 1) Barnard A. and Spencer J. eds (2002) *Economic Anthropology in Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural anthropology*, 270-271, ISBN-0-203-25684-0.
- 2) Black, Rachel. (2012) "Porta Palazzo": *The anthropology of an Italian market*, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- 3) *Economic Survey Report (2020- 2021) Manipur*: Retrieved from: desmanipur.gov.in
- 4) Kungwansupaphan C. and Leihouthabam K. Jibon (2016) *Capital factors and rural women entrepreneurship development: A perspective of Manipur state, India*, *Gender in Management*, 31(3), DOI 10.1108/GM-04-2015-0031
- 5) Prasaim, G.P., Kürii Onand Monsang, Sholim Haokip (2014): *Women Traders in Manipur- A case study of Khwairamband market*. *International Journal of Advancement in Engineering Technology, Management & Applied Science*, vol 1(6), online ISSN 2349-3224.



- 6) *Yumlembam Linthoi Chanu (2020) DOES MARKETING REMAIN AS A DRAWBACK OR RESPONSES TO THE GROWTH OF WOMEN ENTERPRISES OF MANIPUR? International Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship Research, 2(5), 291-303, DOI-10.51594*
- 7) *Weber, Max (1978): Economy and Society An outline of interpretive Sociology, University of California Press.*
- 8) *Accessed on 22/8/2022
<https://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/manipur>*