

Street Food Vendors: The Case Of Nekemte Town 03 Kebele Jitu Area

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Abstract

The study sought to examine Street vendor's activities of 03 kebele of Nekemte town. The study conducted in 03Kebele of Nekemte town,03Kebele was purposeful selected, since because the researcher is familiar to the area and also currently lived in the kebele which helped him to observe the daily activities of the street vendors. Data were collected from street vendors, Kebele administrator's, customers through interviews and participant observations so as to triangulate the evidence.From the findings of the study it revealed that street food vending is highly practiced in the Kebele and street food vendor' has great contribution to the customers, in providing fresh vegetables, fruits and fast foods.Though, it significantly helped to reduce unemployment, increased incomes of vendors and provided urban residents with inexpensive and varied indigenous meals. The study also revealed that there are basic challenges entangled food vendors, one is, and they don't pay taxes for the government, the place of vending is also not designed for such activity and the other is hygienic.

Key word: street food vendors;

Introduction

Street vendor is “a person who offered goods for sale to the public without having a permanent built –up structure from which to sell. They occupy space on the public, private spaces or they may be mobile in the sense they move from place by coming their wares on pushcartsor in basket on their hands ...”(Bhowmilk, 2005; 256).

The street foods play an important socioeconomic role in meeting food and nutritional requirements of city consumers at affordable prices to the lower and middle income groups

and are appreciated for their unique flavors and convenience (Ackah, 2011: 191-197). Street foods are described as wide range of ready-to-eat foods and beverages or prepared at home and consumed on the streets without further preparation (Rane, 2011:106-107). These food items are usually sold by vendors and hawkers in the streets or other similar public places.

Studies in developing countries have shown that 20 to 25 percent of household food expenditure is incurred outside the home, and some segments of the population depend entirely on street foods (Robert, 2000). Besides, millions of single workers without families and a large floating population who move in and out of main rural and urban centers for work, largely depend upon street foods for their daily sustenance (Bhowmik, 2005:2256 and Timalsina, 2010 a: 78).

Street food vendors can be found near offices, factories, schools, markets, construction sites, beaches, lorry and bus stations, commercial centers and along almost every street in the city. Because, setting up a street food activity needs little investment and requires no special training other than the domestic experience in preparing food (Tomlins & Johnson, 2010). According to the study of Zewde(2002: 4-6) and Haregewoin and Emebet (2002: 5), women entrepreneurs engaged in the informal sector encounter a variety of problems. The International Expert Consultation on Street Foods, held in Jogjakarta in 1988 assessed the positive and negative aspects of street food and concluded that, in general, the socio-economic significance of street foods had been ignored. Before any regulation can be established for street vendors, the local authorities need to recognize the importance of street foods. The ability of vendors to produce cheap and nutritious, traditional meals must be safeguarded, encouraged and assisted (ILO 2002: 52)

Positive as well as negative trends of social status of street foods can be identified. Suspicion and reluctance towards eating street foods are strong but increasing recognition of fast food as modern and attractive meals also exist. Hence, findings indicate that, perceptions of eating and purchasing street foods are influenced by social values and function to positioning oneself in social reference groups as defined by Prigent-Simonin et al. (2005).

In contrast to these potential benefits, it is also recognized that street food vendors are often poor, uneducated, and lack knowledge in safe food handling, environment sanitation and hygiene, mode of food display, food service and hand washing, sources of raw materials, and use of potable water. Consequently, street foods are perceived to be a major public health risk (Bhowmik, 2010).

Personal assessment in print and electronic media in Ethiopia, there is no remarkable work done on street food vendors and related topics. Even the government of Ethiopia had no recorded data on the number of street food vendors and their contributions to the formal market of the economy. However, some African countries give good insights for the street food vendors and they are registered and known by the local district to pay tax to their government and it is remarkably identified for their contributions to their country development. For example, Street vendors may be legal or illegal but a pavement seller in Abidjan pays a daily tax (Tinker 1997)

The city of Nairobi, where there are over 100,000 street and roadside traders, the authorities licensed more than 10,000 traders to give training and charging tax (Charmes, 1999).

Research Methodology

The study had focused in 03 kebele of Nekemte town. The reason for selecting this kebele was due to high number of street food vendors and their customers were also enormous. The data for research has been collected from two sources- primary and secondary sources. Primary data are collected from primary sources. The primary data are collected through observation and in depth interview by direct communication with the respondent. The secondary sources of data are collected through the internet. The research study conducted is of descriptive type. Descriptive research includes survey and facts findings of different kinds. The major purpose of such research is description of the research as it exists at present. The primary data collected is original in nature.

For the purpose of this study, non-probability method of sampling is used in which samples are obtained with the help of convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is based on all the convenience of the research (Garg & Kothari, 2016). However, convenience does not refer personal convenience of the researcher. It is easy to use as there is no scientific rule to be applied. Specifically for this study Twenty street vendors and five kebele workers of the town were purposively selected .Before starting of the data collection regular visits were made to the selected vendors to ask for their willingness to cooperate. The study was conducted through administration of observation and in-depth interview to obtain adequate information.

Analysis And Interpretation Of Data

The ethnographic studies have conducted between April – May 2021.From my observation it was possible to say that street vending highly practiced at Jitu area. Street Food vendors trade in a number of commodities in different locations of 03 Kebele and provide a variety of goods and services.

The marketer needs to understand the role played by buyers' culture, subculture, and social class.Most items of trade sold in the street of Jitu market were also reflecting the way of life existence in the people around the area. Most of the items were produced by the farmers. It sells many different types (items) of trade vended in the market are connected with cultural of the people. As I have observed onion, tomato, Corn(Maize), potato chips,egg, butter, different kinds offriedbread were among the major items of trade sold. There were also Enjera, different kinds of bread (Assanbussa, biscuit, furnoetc.forcustomers.

There are two different groups that were highly engaged in the street vending. The first groups are those who had comes from rural parts, travelled long journey and vend what they have brought in the street of Jitu. They bring agricultural products either from their home or they may also have bought from other famers of the area and vend it in Jitu. They trade fresh agricultural products such as Avocado, banana, egg, milk products, and cabbages, etc. As my informants stated that most Vender shad come from rural areas of such as Sibu Sire area, and are travel at least up to two hours. And for their security the marketers travel in a group.

From my observation as well as my respondent's states that the vending activity most of the time began at morning around 10: 00. A. M and ends around 10: 00PM. The vending activity began around 4: 00 because the first group of traders (those who had come from the rural

parts) does not reach the area before that time. Thesecond groups are specifically began to engaged in the street vending after 4: 00 P.M this is because as my informants states that some of them engaged in government works (even if it was low level) , or they engaged in house work , or their husband is not in home , they keep home , or their children are at school . As most of my informant's and from my observation this group (urbanfemale) mostly engaged in street vending after 10: PM even if it was not at the same time.

Street venders of Jitu even, including from other Kebeles of Nekemte began to engaged in street vending dominantly after 4 and 5 o'clock P.M and stay up to 9 to 10 P.M. In a day time women are responsible for activities at home or government work. According to my informants some of women at day went to some rural areas and bought items of trade as whole sale and vend it at Jitu. They even go to the Woredas of Nekemte Zone such as Sibu Sire, Uke, GabaSanbata

There are different reasons to engage in street vending. Most of the informants engaged in street vending activity due to the poverty of their family and other problems related to their family life situations. For some others unemployment is the main factor which has forced them to engage in street vending activity. Another reason for some of venders to engage in this activity is to diversify their source of income. They are neither government work or engaged in other private work (low income work). This is the most important reason for some people to engage in street vending. Low wage employees in the government or private sector prefer to be engaged in street vending in order to supplement their primary low income.

Regarding the income earn from vending their variation of income depending on the items of trade (quality and quantity). As informants stated that some venders even get more income than shop keepers. And there are also venders who vend for the sake of survival. According to my informants there are also venders that migrated from other Woredas of Nekemte Zone such as Diga, Arjo, Gute areas who vend to survive and who think for their future life. As informants stated a better vender is those who has contact with shop keepers of the area and who had large customers. So, the income level of the street venders varies depending on the level of social capital they have. But majority of the venders are vending just to survival though are working though they hope to expand in the future.

Social Benefits Of Street Food Vending

The street vending has many advantages for the people of the area. Most of the street venders agreed with supplying foods with minimum cash. And of the venders asserted that they had accessed food to their customers (accessibility). Low income individuals are the major beneficiaries of the street vending at Jitu. In line to this Muzaffar et al., (2009) street foods provide a source of affordable nutrients to the majority of the people especially the low-income group in the developing countries.

The time of the market was also conducivefor urban women, because after finishing their home activities and preparing items of trade and at night they vend at Jitu. For customers (university and College students, residents etc.) the time also favorable to buy what they need. For women whose life is totally based on vending the time as well the area has its own advantage, because in a day time they go to Board and sold what they have and in the night

additionally involved in the JituStreetvending. In the area there is large concentrations of the people.

According to Bhowilk(2005 ; 13) and Timalisina (2007 :6) , despite the illegal name labeled on the street vendors , they are popular in urban centers , and they provide urban population with much needed service that neither the municipalities nor the larger retailing shops can fulfill . Since they meet the needs of the majorities of the urban dwellers cheaply, this fact is also true in Jitu. If we compare the price of the items of trade sold in JituStreet vending with nearby markets such as Board and Kedenmiret it has relatively cost reduction.

Generally, it was possible to conclude that, the Jitu Street vending was a market where the interests of different groups were fulfilled. Even the students of the university after they eat their dinner they came out and were bought what they needed (coffee, Asnbusa, Avocado, Mango, sugar cane etc.).

The Social And Economic Impacts Of Street Vendors Of Jitu

Even if, the street vending was fulfilled the interests of different sections of the society, such as venders, workers, College and University students, and daily workers, it was not without economic and social impacts. To begin from its economic impacts, the sellers of the market did not pay tax (revenue) for the governments. A government imposes many types of taxes in most developing countries individuals pay income taxes when they earn money, consumption taxes when they spend it, property taxes when they own a home or a land.

The administrator of the kebele recounted me that “street venders do not pay taxes for the government”. The problem was that first, venders do not well known about their total expenditure and income. It was to subsidize their daily life that retailers involved in street vending. As one of my informants informed me that, if they retail today they may not probably come tomorrow. There were only few women whose lives were totally based on the vending. Most of them were used the market as additional means of income. The problem was that the venders does not even know their daily, weekly, monthly or yearly income that they obtained from the vending. So, how they pay taxes. The other major problem is that, the specific time when the vending conducted was not favorable to collect tax. The market began after 11 o’clock, the time when worker of the government was leave out of their office (out regular works), the time when the market conducted and the time that government officials avail themselves on work was not coincided each other. The third problem was related with the facilities that must be fulfilled from the government was no – existent. As I have observed, facilities such as street light was not fulfilled for the venders. Vending by itself was illegal do not legitimized by the government. The place of the market was not designed for such purposes; it was on the road that the vending was conducted. The support venders got from the Kebele is very discouraging.

Not paying tax by street vendors resulted in loosing of the income that the government should get from the market. There is also animosity that was created between the venders and the shop owners of the area. Since venders does not pay taxes they sold items of trade with a low cost. For example, as I have observed pieces of Enjerais sold by 6 birr in shop and 5 by steer

venders with almost the same quality, this is to state one example there also a lot. So the buyer was more attracted to the venders especially low income customers, because it was relatively low cost. The owners of the shop were the victims of the street vending.

The other major impacts of the street vending in the Kebele was problem related with environment (environmental sanitation). In Jitu streets there is a huge accumulation all types of garbage in places where street vendors dwell. The garbage of the items of trade was not wasted properly. Street vendors leave a huge amount of garbage after they finish their vending activities in the evening. The owners of the shop in the market area were also affected by this problem. MR X who owned a shop in the market area informed me that the shop owners of the market area were affected by the issues related to with tax system and sanitation problem. In addition to that, he informed me that no street vendor of the Jitu street cares about, the sanitation of the area. The owners of the shop in the market area were in morning busy in cleaning (in wasting the garbage of corn) and other products. For example, during observation street food venders in the research site were found to be in sewage, contaminated water. Moreover, some of the customers during an in interview confirmed that, food sometimes becomes contaminated it may be on the process of preparation when washed in dirty water or during preparation handled with dirty hands, or made using dirty utensils. Ways of waste removal methods of the majority of the street food venders observed during field visit is deplorable than keep working area clean and safe, they used streets, major roads and gutters as their waste disposal points. Street vendors also occupying the street sides and created traffic problem of the area.

Conclusion

The purpose of this ethnographic research was to analyses the daily activities of steer food venders at Jitu area of Nekmte town, its opportunity and challenges. From the data collected and analyzed the following conclusion have been drawn.

Considering the major findings of this study, majority of the street food venders were women. Moreover, the majority of the food venders were between 25-40years of age. The street vending was highly practiced between 10 A.M to 3 P.M. and there are two different groups that engaged in the street vending from rural and urban areas. Averagely to supply food they worked from 3 to 5days a week and for more than 4 hours per day. This is because for most of the street food venders, customers were in the night time in the area rather than other hours of a day.

Street venders have different reasons to engage in street vending, poverty it needs little investment, and no special training, the time also favorable and poverty, to diversify income.

In relation to their contribution, the majority of the street food venders asserted that, they had a role by minimizing unemployment and play an important socio economic role in diversifying the food nutritional of the people. The findings indicated that, street venders obtain many benefits. It creates employment opportunity for most low earning society. In addition to the benefits of the street venders, they provide different benefits to the residents of the area especially to the poorer segment of the society by providing different type of foods at affordable price (low price). Concerning to their contribution to the people (social-benefits),

most of the street food vendors agreed with supplying foods with minimum cash or as “a food supplier”.

However, Street foods are eaten by larger number of people and these foods must be suitable for human consumption. Street food vending create enabling environment to the participants to help their family and to improve their livelihoods. Moreover, it plays higher role in the society as well as in the economy by providing foods at affordable price to the poorer segment of the society.

Street vendors need to fully understand the importance of hygiene and their role and responsibilities in keeping the population healthy. Adequate quality means having the correct flavor, color and texture of a food, but it doesn't mean that foods that are not contaminated by micro-organisms (bacteria, parasites, and viruses) and foods that are free from contaminants. These can be biological (microbes, parasites, insects), and physical (dust, grit, hair etc.). Food hygiene requires cleanliness at every stage of the food chain.

From my observation I was able to conclude that Jitu Street vending is served and continued to serving the people of the area. However, there are problems related with security (animosity with shop owners) and tax system. Even, the place of the market was not designed for such purposes.

Street food vendors faced different constraints socially, economically, and environmentally during operation of their activity. There are also major challenges seen entangled the work habit of street food vendors, majority of food vendors were insecure from carried out their daily activities. Lack of appropriate skill, waste disposal, packaging and storage were the basic problems for street food vendors in their daily business activities. Moreover, they faced lack of freedom, lack of credit and lack of social security during operation of their business activities. In addition to this, Street food vending creates traffic congestion, jeopardized free movement of the people, and pollute the environment. Moreover, this study found that, street food vendors didn't have the awareness of law regarding to sanitation and safety.

According to the study, the activities of street food vendors create traffic congestion and jeopardizes the free movement of pedestrians especially children, the elderly and people with disabilities. In addition to this, it creates favorable environment for crimes.

Generally, from the findings one can conclude that, the absence of training, sufficient solid waste disposal containers, and low perception of street vendors about the environmental pollution, create some environmental problems.

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