

UNDERSTANDING PERSPECTIVE OF FISHERS ON E-COMMERCE OF FISH AND FISH PRODUCTS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF FISHING COMMUNITY (WITH REFERENCE TO BLUE ECONOMY)

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ABSTRACT

Fisheries is one of the core, important and indigenous activity of our economy employing millions of people in the country. India being blessed with 8000 km of Coastline comprising over 2.02 million square kilometre exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and extensive area of fresh water. These natural dynamics support in fisheries and aquaculture providing sustainable livelihoods to numerous people. Marine and inland fisheries add to food security of the country and employment to over 2 million fishing communities as well as other dependent occupational and professional activities. With the development of Technology, Infrastructure, Logistics and E-commerce the Agro based activities have improved resulting on similar line Fisheries also have a huge potential. This paper tried to understand the views of fishing community on prospects of E-Commerce, E-Trade, E-marketing etc. of Fish and Fish products which may generate employment, grow income, organise the unorganised fishery activities, and reach out to the consumers.

Key Word: Fish, Fishing Community, E-Commerce, Income, Economic Development

1. Introduction

In India Fisheries and Aquaculture sector have been the important sector for thousands of years dating recorded before 300 B.C. Fish and Fish product sector plays and vital role in the socio-economic development of the Fish farmers in the Country. The sector has been powerful in contributing towards income and employment generation as it encourages growth of a number of allied activities and subsidiary industries. It is also a source of economical and viable nutritious food helping in food security of the country.

India is the second largest Fish Producing Nation in the world i.e. approx.11 million tonnes with total contribution of 6.3 percent of Global Fish Production. It contributes towards 1.1 percent of GDP and 5.15 percent of agricultural GDP. The total

Foreign Exchange revenue from Fisheries is approx. 45,000 Crores which is 10 percent of total exports and nearly 20 percent of Total Agriculture Exports.

Government of India has taken an initiative under its Policy making Think Tank - National Institution of Transforming India Commission (NITI Aayog) with its aim to achieve Sustainable Development Goals through Ocean based Blue Economy. Blue Economy will help in sustainable use of Ocean Resources for growth and improvement of livelihoods of people while preserving health of ocean ecosystem. Sagarmala Project is one of them which will have a big and small ports all across coastline properly connected to Roads and Railways resulting in good network and connectivity. It will provide more employment opportunities as well as pace and agility in supply chain and distribution of Perishable

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commodities like Fisheries. This will further help having sustainable infra-projects near coastline for fishing activities i.e. Cold Storage, Ports, Docks, Vessel Machineries etc. It will have scientific study and exploration of ocean ecosystem. Hence it will help if good Fish Breeding, Sea Bed Farming, Aquaculture Processing and exploration etc.

Globalisation have brought new ideas and Technical Know-How to India and the country has adopted to it very well. The initiatives in growth of Information Technology have shown a paradigm shift from conventional supply chain to modern techniques in value chain to reach-out to consumers in every nooks and corners of the world.

With due thanks to experts, engineers, innovators worldwide through whom mankind got technology and connectivity helping out perishable commodities like freshly farmed Agriculture produce and Fisheries are able to reach consumers with pace and agility based activities through modern and Innovative measures.

The research herewith mainly focuses on these aspects relating to upliftment and development of the coastal fishing communities exploring and leveraging the technology and innovative measures.

2. Literature Review

Jitendra Kumar (College of Fisheries, Mangalore, 2010) highlighted and analysed the potential of Fisheries and also mention briefly history of fisheries and aquaculture. He analysed the constant growth in Fishery Catch through various schemes launched by Government of India for Fishery Development

Manoharmayum Shaya Devi, V.V. Singh, K.A. Martin Xavier, Latha Shenoy (Fishery Technology, ICAR – Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, 2019) stated the enormous pressure on Fishing activity due to demand and supply gap and growth in engine, horse power, kind of new nets, new technology, increased number of fish Vessels etc. It

also focused on the changing trends of trawl fisheries in terms of catch, catch composition, increasing intensity, per voyage duration and fishing capacity. The increase in number of fishing days is a clear indication of high intensity and high fishing pressure.

Alin Kadfak – The Journal of Development Studies, 2019 stated in his paper More than Just Fishing: The Formation of Livelihood Strategies in an Urban Fishing Community the plight of Indian Fisher communities from Male sea voyagers to youth and Women for survival are engaged in non-fishing activities and those in informal and unorganised fishing business activity and the problems they are facing due to societal and economic conditions.

3. Objectives of Research

Understand role of Fisheries in Economic Development

Understand perspective of Fishers community on E-Commerce of Fisheries

Understand perspectives on upliftment and development of Fisher Community through Blue Economy

4. Research Methodology

The research paper is purely exploratory and descriptive based on primary data collected by interviewing fish farmers (focus group) member representatives of Fishery Co-operative Societies in various coastal places of Mumbai Metropolitan Region and Secondary sources from Government and Semi-Government agencies websites, reports, circulars etc. such as NITI Aayog, National Fisheries Development Board, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Observer Research Foundation, and Fishery Co-operative Federation.

5. Data Analysis

The Data is duly collected by interviewing and discussing with the member representatives of Fisher Community.

Fishers Perspectives on Business, Technology and Globalisation.

India is mainly seen as Agrarian Society and hence the society is divided into Vegetarian and Non-Vegetarian. Since, majoritarian vegetarian society dominate Socio-politico dynamics of the nation Fishers community is mainly seen to be backward and marginalised. However Fishing is one of the occupational activity, the fishing communities are disdain in societal outlook. This also hampers the receptiveness and acknowledgement of the Fishing Business as a core or important activity in the Country such that since Independence till date the Fishing is still part of Agriculture Ministry. These factors have yet kept overall Fishery sector in unorganised and without any political withstand in the country. The only way the Fishery sector is found to be organised is by Co-operative Societies formed at Village level duly co-ordinated, controlled and Owned by Fishing Community People without any external intervention. Co-operative Sector which is seen as social and sustainable by Political thinkers and community people have brought some good transformation in Fisheries as it is governed by the Co-operatives Act and hence have a Separate ministry at State as well as Central Government Level giving Fishermen legal and viable stand to represent.

Majority Fishermen in India still execute Artisanal or Traditional mechanisms for Fishing. After introduction of New Economic Policy – Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation (LPG Model) and advancement in mainstream technology, Mechanisation and Quality Accessories have been introduced into Fishing activity helping in quality fish catch as well as good harvest.

Technology and Mechanisation have proven to be a respite as well as boon to Fishers as it has helped Fishers get quality accessories with economical price like net (woven / non – woven), rod, ropes, needles, attractants, anchors, hooks, pulley, reels,

tackles, spools etc. Also durable quality Boat Engines, Refrigeration materials, Ice Boxes, Boat International Polish, Engine Oils, Fibre and Industrial Metal boat body, Safety Gears etc. This has reduced overall input cost, efficient and effective fishing sail, and less losses compared to previous decades when technology or machines were not available. The Fishermen can go into deep seas, and stay for longer period with new vessels with storage materials available.

Globalisation have been a very boon to people with resource sharing and technical Know-how give and take with different economies of the world. This have helped in further reducing input cost and higher outputs achieving good economies of Scale with higher margins in the long run. The Fishermen have various options in quality of nets, boat material, Engines, accessories with the global competitiveness and quality material with economical choices.

Globalisation have also changed the outlook of the mankind's thought process which paved way for new dimensions and traits. The Indian Political thinkers and Legal framework based on constitution framed by freedom fighters have construed the way society has changed the way it used to think some decades back. Wherein Fisheries and Fishers are no longer considered and looked as unhygienic, backward and outcastes but as a mainstream economic activity contributing to the country's GDP and national Income. The new policies framed by many economies worldwide give Fisheries a major say when it comes to Global Hunger and Food Security and also a way forward for Sustainable Livelihoods for traditional Fishing Communities.

Fishers perspectives on E-Commerce.

The dynamics of the Business fraternity changed when revolution called as Information Technology arrived in India. The upcoming and developing economy called India was not far behind to accept

the challenge of digitisation and Information Technology revolution.

Fishery sector is mainly unorganised due to socio-cultural, socio-political, and socio-economic factors. Though the new initiatives as mentioned above have started to see a new horizons wherein E-commerce have gradually entered the Fishery activity as well. The economic strategies of demand condition and supply condition with pricing dynamics are same for Agriculture crops and Fisheries but Unlike Agriculture crops Fishery catch is more unstable and more risky due to perils at Sea.

The Fisher members have started using E-commerce portals as the Fishing materials are available on digital platforms and through co-operative societies the members are given information about how to use digital platforms. The recent past news after demonetisation have shown fishing community adopting new ways to transact wherein Fisher women was carrying card swipe-machine. Many small Fishery women Self Help Group or Union have shared that many Fish sellers accept payment through PayTM, Phone Pe, and Google Pay etc. Many Fisher women have started sending or posting WhatsApp or Facebook or Instagram messages to their customers for their available Fish and Fish Products. As it is not necessary that Fish Farmer and Fish Seller is same as the Fish commodity also passes from different hands.

Fisheries Co-operative Societies office bearers perspectives on Economic Development

The Fish farmer i.e. Fishermen and Fish Seller are two different business entities involved in fishing business and both belong to Fishing Communities traditionally. The number of Fishing Vessels have increased as the demand of fish consumption is high, the people have started understanding the need of nutrition and essential minerals which can't be getting from vegetables alone. There are variety of fishes with different taste and nutritional values

which caters to different segments and economic strata of the society and hence market conditions have pushed the soar in prize. This upshots the income the fishers get. Though the Fish Catching and selling both are traditionally done by community people but gradually the conflicts have arisen due to Full Cash Payment and Credit based purchases wherein seller prefers to close transaction deal early by Cash. Viewing at lucrative business potential non Fishermen or people from other communities are also entering Fish Business esp. Selling Part wherein they manage to get cash from some sources. Furthermore many of the E-Commerce Websites or Applications are started by the capital intensive non-Fisher people creating further rift in business activity.

The Fishers Union body was called for Summit on Blue Economy and explained the Potential and Income Generation or overall economic development of Fishers through projects like Sagarmala and Blue Economy. Also alternate business like Fish Tourism, Beach Shacks, Hotel and Resort Business etc. on the grounds of western countries. This has created two factions in community one with traditional sustainable business ideologies and other supporting the modern methods.

The Fishers also fear the Fish docks and ports will be used for non-Fishing activities if there is no regulation and legal guideline in place. The Fishers are awaiting for concrete plan from Government with support for Investments and subsidies on the line of Agriculture activities such as, Exclusive Fishing Village status irrespective of urban or non-urban areas all across coasts when it comes to land rights. Exclusive Fish drying zones, Modern equipments in Fish processing and drying. Marketing support for Fish Products like Pickles, Sauces, Pulp, cubes, sticks etc. in International Markets. More Support and access in Marine Products Export Development Authority to Fishers.

Safeguarding the breeding zone and strict implementation of Coastal Regulation Zones (with no further dilution in the law). Fishery Police on grounds of Industrial Police.

6. Findings and Conclusion of the study

The Fisheries though lucrative and prospective business activity have been neglected due to socio-cultural and socio-political dynamics since ages

The Fishers are yet marginalised, economically and socially backward and hence more initiatives need to be taken to make Fishing an important economic activity

Fisheries have to be looked separate from agriculture and separate budgetary provisions should be made looking at the maritime boundary and waterbodies of the nation.

The initiatives taken by government are not reaching to the end individual person associated directly or allied activity into Fisheries

The Co-operative sector has been a successful model for dairy, agriculture and other commodities and based on similar lines more inputs and handholding to be given to fishers to improve their economic conditions

E-commerce in fisheries will be successful only when logistical infrastructure is in place to reach in every nook and corner and require support from all the stakeholders.

The lack of education, and unorganised fishery sector with no known leadership as they are scattered and politically unsound makes it difficult for government to have definite plans for the community.

Being Agrarian society Coast is used more for foreign trade and less for other economic activities resulting in negligence towards fishery sector

IT enabled systems on the lines of Chinese or

Japanese Fish traders should be provided to Indian Fishers as well to compete in the Digital era.

7. Limitations of the Research

The samples for research are geographically limited to the Mumbai Metropolitan region; hence the sample may not be an ideal representation of the issue.

The information is purely based on knowledge and understanding of the random sample chosen for the research due to time and mobility constraints.

Since most of the data collected is primary, similar data might not be available from any other source for cross-checking.

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