

Street vending in urban ‘informal’ markets: Reflections from case-studies of street vendors in Delhi (India) and Phnom Penh City (Cambodia)

Richa Sekhani^{a,*}, Deepanshu Mohan^b, Sanjana Medipally^c

^a Researcher at Indian Council for International Economic Relations (ICRIER), New Delhi, India

^b Assistant Professor at Center for New Economic Studies at the Jindal School of International Affairs, India

^c Student at CNES, Jindal School of International Affairs, India

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ABSTRACT

The increasing dependence on street vending as a source of livelihood for people across urban spaces in countries like Cambodia and India continues to promote exciting areas of research in social sciences. Our study captures the narratives of street vendors (seen as the ‘invisible’ entrepreneurs), working in markets across Delhi (India) and Phnom Penh (Cambodia) and analyzes the inventory logistics of products sold by them, thereby, reflecting the complex nature of an inter-twined, existential relationship between what’s classified as ‘informal’ and ‘formal’ in urban economies. The mutual interdependence seen in the governing dynamics of economic exchange (for example, in selling commodities and services across identified markets in Phnom Penh and Delhi), argues for a need to inclusively study urban ecosystems while addressing the needs of street vendors. This paper does so by incorporating ethnographic methods with a specific reference to street vending (as a commercial urban activity). Further, we emphasize on an epistemic need to cross-fertilize thought(s) and method(s) across social science disciplines to produce more of such urban narratives, exploring the inter-twined relationship between the ‘informal’ and ‘formal’ aspects of urban ecosystems.

1. Introduction

The growing relevance of studying broader conceptualisations of urban ‘formality’ and ‘informality’ in developing countries of the global south continues to invoke interesting academic discourses across social sciences. The discourses take multiple perspectives on how we can understand parts of the ‘formal’ economy along with those working as part of ‘informal’ economic sectors (i.e. in an urban context).

Few scholars (Davies & Polese, 2015; Morris & Polese, 2015a,b) perceive urban ‘informality’ as unlawful practices undermining the function of states, and operationally view both - urban formality and informality in isolation (Giddens, 1984; Hart, 1973; Jenkins, 2001; Santos, 1979). This exclusionary view on understanding the dynamics of urban informality can be ascribed as a *dualist* interpretation particularly in the context of who and what can be identified as part of the formal (or regulated) and informal (or unregulated) in urbanizing landscapes. Such an interpretation presents a need to take our observations beyond the legality, illegality of economic sectors and those working within them.

Empirical findings from scholars (Portes, 1983; Bhowmik, 2005; Roy, 2005; Daniels, 2004) studying different socioeconomic arrangements in developing countries like India and parts of Latin America argue for a

more *inclusive* understanding of urban informality (i.e. as part of the formal, regulated space) in an urban city’s ecosystem which includes those working as part of what can be seen as the informal/unregulated space. In fact, on closely observing the businesses of those categorized as ‘informal workers’ one can see an inter-twined, more complex relationship between the ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ aspects of commercial exchanges taking place (Martínez, Rennie, & Estrada, 2017).

Our analysis focuses on the governing dynamics of urban ecosystems in two cities of Delhi and Phnom Penh of India and Cambodia, incorporating the *second* view on urban informality (Bhowmik, 2005; Roy, 2005), and thereby, bringing a more *inclusive* approach to the operational dynamics of street vending (in local markets across both cities). The study documents the profile and narratives of street vendors-termed as the *invisible entrepreneurs*¹-working as part of the urban landscapes and closely analyze the activity of their street businesses while providing a detailed insight into the life cycle of products sold by interviewed vendors.

By incorporating an exclusive focus on the supply-chain aspects of street businesses, managed by street vendors, it is interesting to see the nature of economic linkages that exist as the street vendors purchase goods from the formal economy (blending the *informal* with the *formal*).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: richasekhani@gmail.com (R. Sekhani).

¹ Sekhani, R. and Mohan, D. 2018, “The invisible entrepreneurs of Phnom Penh”, East Asia Forum.

Martínez et al. (2017) in a study on street vendors in Cali (Colombia) undertook a similar effort to understand how goods and services as well as knowledge are shared and transmitted across the formal/informal division in urban economies, where such 'division' seems more "liminal and fluid". Our effort here is to explore this 'liminal and fluid' nature of informal/formal divisions by expanding the purview of analysis (on street vending) to urban spaces within large informalized economies like India and Cambodia.

The objective of using a supply chain technique to study product life cycles is to introduce a discussion on the complex dimensions of urban supply chains-particularly in countries like India and Cambodia-where inventory logistics of market products reflect greater assembling (via different spatial sources). The increasing complexities (visible from the details highlighted here of identified products) thus, enforce us to inevitably take a more *inclusive* view in understanding and studying street vending as part of India and Cambodia.

Why specifically study Street Vending? Street vending, in parts of developing urban landscapes is observed as a significant source of livelihood and employment opportunity for low-skilled and lower-income class of workers-migrating to or living within Delhi and Phnom Penh. We analyze the business of street vending in three identified urban market locations (within each city) by:

- a) Capturing samples of oral account(s) from vendors commercially operating in the identified local market; and
- b) Documenting the inventory logistics (as part of the supply chain) of products sold by street vendors in identified market locations.

In studying *b*), the inventory and supply chain management of two products from markets in Delhi and Phnom Penh are identified in addressing the following questions:

- a) How are goods sourced and procured within the market area?
- b) How are the goods being distributed?
- c) How do street vendors sell the final goods in the market?

In terms of research methods incorporated, both aspects (point *a*) and *b*)) are examined using an ethnographic approach with extensive oral interviews of vendors-collecting primary data on their business activities and involving a participant-observatory methodological approach.² An extensive use of questionnaire-based interviews³ allowed us to interview a minimum of 15–20 vendors across six markets (three markets each in Cambodia and Delhi - Annexure 1). Table 1 below some details about this.

Below, we highlight some key methodological as well as logistical challenges faced during the primary interviews undertaken in and across the busy urban neighborhoods of Delhi (India) and Phnom Penh (Cambodia) (Table 2).

The structure of the paper is as follows: Section 2 provides a brief background to the street vending activities as seen across the globe (in context of the existing literature on urban informality) while explaining the rationale for choosing Phnom Penh and Delhi as our case references; Section 3 presents the details of our analysis drawn from the identified market locations (explained in Annexure 2); Section 4, explains the inventory management aspects with examples of two products from markets in Delhi and Phnom Penh; and Section 5 briefly highlights

²By understanding the relationship among and between people, contexts, ideas, norms behaviors and the activities they do, this approach, helped in better understanding the physical, social, cultural and economic context of the participants.

³The interviewee had the freedom to choose the scope, depth, pace, and length of the response using interpret-personal oral conversation, on the other hand, using semi-structured interviews, the researchers guided the informants back to the scope of the study when they deviated from it and also, in situations where the details provided were considered completely irrelevant to the study.

Table 1
Number of interviews and product baskets captured in Delhi and Phnom Penh.^a

Market	Number of interviews conducted	Number of product baskets covered
Delhi (India)		
Dilli Haat (South Delhi)	12	1. Pashmina shawls, 2. Paintings, 3. Traditional toys
Wednesday Bazaar (Pandav Nagar, East Delhi)	7	1. Bedsheets, 2. Children apparel, 3. Utensils
Old Delhi (North Delhi - Chawri Bazaar, Chandni Chowk and Meena Bazaar Markets)	26	1. Brassware 2. Imitation jewelry 3. Book market 4. Apparel 5. Tools & motors
Phnom Penh		
Doeurm Kor Market	12	1. Vegetable 2. Fruits 3. Cooking spices
Orussey Market	15	1. Cooking spices 2. Curtain stores 3. Hair accessories
Psa Toul Tom Poug or Russian Market	15	1. Souvenirs (handicrafts, scarfs, and T-shirts) 2. Motorcycle machine parts (seat, wheel, disc brake) 3. Clothing/apparel

^a The researchers regularly used field notes and memos to keep track of the emerging theoretical insights. The literature review including any historiography of the targeted informal markets is based on the secondary resources available.

some limitations followed by a discussion on tracking further areas of research possible from the scope of our analysis.

2. Street vending: a background

Street vendors have always remained an integral part of several economies around the world. According to McGee and Yeung (1977), street vendors offer goods or services for sale in public places primarily streets and pavements, playing a significant role in shaping unregulated/informal aspects of developing economies. As an employment opportunity, street vending is viewed as part of the *informal* sector because (EIC, 2006)

- Street vendors have limited access to formal/regulated market spaces, can't receive state-level support for formal training and education, including help from credit institutions etc.
- Street vendors are unregistered and unrecorded in the data collection activities including census or other official statistics thereby, giving them an unrecognized status by the government (hence the term invisible entrepreneurs).
- Street vendors are compelled to operate outside the legal framework and beyond the pale of social protection, labor legislation or protective measures, even if they had registered and respect certain aspects of the law
- Street vendors receive limited legal protection from labor rights, often facing poor working conditions.

The estimates suggest that roughly there are more than a billion street merchants selling goods and services across the globe (Poon, 2015) and accounts for a significant proportion of informal non-agriculture employment in cities of Asia, Africa and Latin America (WEIGO). In countries within Asia alone, over the last two decades, there has been a substantial rise in the number of street vendors across

Table 2
Limitation of the study.

Methodological challenges	Logistical challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unresponsiveness, wariness, and reluctance on behalf of respondents make it extremely difficult sometimes for conducting field interviews of street vendors • In studying the life cycle of a given product, it is important to understand each stage of production and exchange involved in the product's lifespan. For most interviews (as part of this study) we relied on respondents narratives on explaining the process of procuring, producing and distributing final goods (in both - Phnom Penh and Delhi). For validation, it a larger sample of interviews (of those selling the same product in the market) helps in ensuring the consistency of analytical findings. • Sensitivity to the concerns shared by respondents requires field interviewers to remain ethically responsible, ensuring confidentiality while respecting the views of respondents. In the results cited here, we have only included aspects of our conversation which are aligned with the main scope (and argument) of the paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A crucial part of the interview involves the researcher's disclosing their identity and research objectives at an early stage. While this technique was effective in drastically reducing the resistance and overcoming trust vacuums, it also brought into play a set of challenges, known as the 'reactive effect', say: • A rejection to answer any questions involving the word or role of the "state" or "government" in assisting street vendors with basic amenities (essential to their business). As a consequence, none of the questions framed to understand the role of the local government in providing infrastructural support to vendors could evoke any response (from the respondents). This was particularly seen in case of all interviews undertaken in Phnom Penh.

urban cities in countries like India, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, China etc.

India and Cambodia perhaps see the largest presence of street vendors across the region. According to the National Policy for Urban Street Vendors, street vendors in India constituted almost 2% of the entire population of a metropolis a decade ago (Bhowmik, 2005). It is interesting to observe how most women have been involved in working as street vendors in part of South East Asia and Africa. Cambodia accounts for 8.3% of people involved in street businesses (NIS, 2013) with the majority of street-side businesses handled by women there. In countries within Africa too, many women work as street-vendors - 88% in Ghana, 68% in South Africa and 63% in Kenya (Roever, 2014a).

Nationally, as per the estimates provided by Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WEIGO), India has around 10 million street vendors, constituting for about 2% of the population of Metropolis. While Mumbai has roughly 250,000 vendors, Kolkata nearly has 200,000 street vendors. Delhi has about 3 lakh street vendors, even though the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) official figure of "legal" vendors is roughly around 125,000 (SEWA, Delhi). Similarly, data by the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) (2013) shows that there is a total of 505,134 establishments in Cambodia, out of which 41,771 belong to street businesses.

Increasing migration of low-skilled workers from rural areas⁴ to cities and decreasing employment opportunities for such workers within regulated (formal) sectors of the urban economy are recognized as vital factors in increasing levels of street vending particularly in Asian countries of Thailand (Bangkok), Bangladesh (Dhaka), Cambodia (Phnom Penh & Siem Reap), Hanoi, India (Delhi, Kolkata etc.), Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Seoul, Singapore and Sri Lanka. Results from Bhowmik (2005) show that after the monetary crisis of 1998, there has been a rapid rise in the number of street vendors in Malaysia, Singapore, Korea and the Philippines.

Thailand presents a useful example to understand the importance of informal markets in supporting employment. Warunsiri (2011) argues that as a result of Thailand's development policy and the limitation of the formal (regulated) sector in absorbing the excess of labor supply, the informal (unregulated) sector has played a distinct role in supporting the Thai labor market. The government has taken an inclusive view on urban informality by offering necessary support (in terms of land, basic amenities etc.) to street vendors. In particular, after the economic crisis of 1997, there has been a high degree of labor mobility into the (unregulated) informal sector. Several studies on street vending and informal markets across the metropolises of Delhi, Bombay, and

⁴ Majority of the vendors operating in urban informal market spaces are migrant's laborers. With unemployment rising in rural areas due to diminishing agricultural activities, people are driven out of their villages in search of employment to the cities. Because they lack the necessary skill set and education required to find a secure job in the formal sector, they end up working informally.

Calcutta (Roy, 2003; Bhowmik, 2005; Bose & Mishra, 2013; Bromley, 2000) explain the causal factors responsible for the expansion of informal market segments in these cities, often seen in the proliferation of slums and unregulated land use.

Similarly, statistics from a study in Botswana (Joseph, 2011) shows that due to the lack of employment security in the private sector and other factors like underpayment, retrenchment and a quest to be self-employed has made these formerly employed to quit and undertake urban street vending activities. The study showed that 49.4% of Botswana's working population was employed in street vending activities (wage employed) followed by 43.1% who were working in the private sector and 26.3% were unemployed. A study conducted in six towns in Ghana also revealed that choosing street vending as the profession requires fewer skills and capital and hence, can be opted as a medium of livelihood for people who are not very literate, have less capital to invest and have a limited skill to showcase (Boakye, 2009).

Some of the recent literature also depicts street vending as a "practice that is spread on a spectrum between the legal, the extra-legal and illegal" (Morris & Polese, 2015a); some of which can cause direct harm to the citizen or undermine the state as an institution. For instance, the fact that street vendors operate in public spaces raises issues of legality and illegality.⁵ Considering the nature of informal work and the activities conducted, the street vending activities has also been banned in some of the African countries like Nigeria, since 2016 and is considered as a criminal offense (Nyemb, 2017). However, their contribution to the country's economy is significant, with street vendors also playing an important role by providing employment and livelihood to people in many developed and developing countries.

In context of India alone, there are more than 10 million street vendors, contributing to 50% of the country's savings and 63% towards

⁵ Street vending, however, by many is seen as an underground activity that undermines the healthy function of the formal economy because it is unaccounted and unrecognized in national economic statistics, as also argued by some of the scholars that support Dualistic view. This has resulted in conflicts with urban authorities over licensing, taxation, site of operation, sanitation and working condition (Mitullah, 2003). These conflicts arise due to the negligence of local authorities to maintain records of the revenue collected from this sector and the contribution to the urban economy is gone unrecorded. In case of providing services like water and sanitation to the street vendors, the local authorities claim that these street vendors are not licensed and justify their action in not providing services. Various studies also reflect that the street vendors lack adequate physical, policy and social protection environment. Besides, inadequacies in infrastructure such as running water, toilets and solid waste removal system, the vendors' merchandise are also confiscated or are forced to remove them from the street by the local government authorities as was also observed in some of the markets that were visited for the purpose of our study. Similarly, only a small percentage get access to the state-sponsored social protection regime (Roever, 2014b). India, Philippines, and Malaysia are examples of some of the Asian countries that have some policies in place which protect the street vendors.

Gross Domestic Product (WEIGO, 2015). Similarly, Cambodia has 41,771 establishments being categorized as a street business⁶ (NIS, 2013). Therefore, few scholars (Polese, 2014, 2015) regard it as non-harmful with positive implication on the state's function. The vision of these scholars has the advantage of moving the direction of debate away from the overly-economistic focus to the one which views informality as “‘positive’, normative even, in a state optic” (Morris, 2016) as they can contribute to the local and national economy by providing cheap and affordable services and products to the society without depending on government subsidies or any other sources⁷ as also observed in the case studies reported in this paper. This calls for exploring a more supply chain logistical dynamics of products procured and sold by street vendors (see Martínez et al., 2017).

Coined in 1982 by Keith Oliver - a renowned consultant from a strategic firm called “Booz Allen Hamilton” - Supply chain management is a set of approaches utilized to efficiently integrate suppliers, manufacturers, warehouses, and stores, so that merchandise (i.e. goods) are produced and distributed at the right quantities to the right locations and at the right time in order to minimize system-wide costs while satisfying service level requirements. Also referred to as the logistics network (see Fig. 1), it consists of suppliers, manufacturing centers, warehouses, distribution centers, and retail outlets, as well as raw materials, work-in-process inventory, and finished products that flow between the facilities (Levy, 2008).

This allows for the systematic flow of material, goods and related information among suppliers, companies, retailers, and consumers. While the process is similar for both manufacturing and services, it is the complexities of the chain that varies from industry to industry, firm to firm and market to market. The same goes true for informal and formal markets. While formal markets follow organised structure, with string information flow and feedback system, the informal market doesn't follow a standardized model because of the chaotic structure of inventory management (Mohan & Sekhani, 2017). On the other hand, Inventory Management is the “Graveyard of the business” that concerns with the optimal level of investment for each component of the inventory such that component is efficiently used, and review mechanism is effectively controlled.⁸

Most supply chain studies tend to focus largely on the life cycle of products manufactured (and delivered) in a regulated, organised production activity. Our effort here is to look at the inventory management logistics (as part of the supply chain operations) for products sold in markets across Delhi and Phnom Penh, which help explicate the complexities of commercial exchanges taken place within urban landscapes and thereby allow us to include street businesses and the *invisible* entrepreneurs (street vendors) as part of the urban commercial ecosystem.

In validating a “post-dualist lens” (informality in conjunction with formality) for studying urban ecosystems, sections below capture oral account(s) from some of the *invisible entrepreneurs* from identified local

⁶ Street business according to the economic census of Cambodia is defined as establishments such as a stall, a booth etc. that runs at a fixed location on the sidewalk or the roadside, or 16 around but outside a market.

⁷ In fact some of the recent studies also show that by paying different kinds of taxes, fees and levies, they can contribute to the local and national government revenue as well (Roever & Skinner, 2016). For instance, almost 75% of the vendors in Khumusi, Ghana pay fees on daily or monthly basis while on another note some 59% face eviction and 41% are free from evictions (Aye Solomon, King, & Decardi-Nelson, 2011) as also depicted in the case studies in this paper.

⁸ With the increase in complexities and uncertainties, companies are implementing various programs to strengthen the inventory management. This has resulted in vendor inventory management (VMI) to gauge the attention of various academicians and practitioners. VMI refers to a process wherein vendor creates an order for their customers based on demand information that they receive from customers. The application of VMI not only helps in improving supply chain performances but also reduces inventories and eliminates stock-out situations. However, unlike formal regulated markets, informal/unregulated markets lack structure.

markets⁹ and analyze the supply chain dynamics of the goods and services exchanged there.

3. Vendor profiling

- > The age of the interviewed street vendors across identified markets in both Delhi and Phnom Penh ranged from 20 years to 60 years old.
- > At least 10% of the interviewed street vendors were observed to have attained a college degree education, while 90% of the others were either dropout from school or didn't receive any formal education.

In Delhi, the proportion of male vendors was relatively larger than that of the female. For instance, out of the 300 registered shops and many other unregistered shops in Old Delhi, we could only identify one female street vendor who owned a shop. On the other hand, in Phnom Penh, female vendors were predominantly working as street vendors, particularly in Doeurm Kor Market (identified as one of the market case studies).

Some street vendors in Delhi had set up their shops in the 1970s (case of the Mayur-Vihar market) when they initially migrated from their hometowns (rural areas). Most vendors had set up their businesses though in the last two years or so (with increasing migration levels from rural parts of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan to Delhi). Dilli Haat is a permanent weekly market located in the commercial centers of South Delhi. It stands as a distinct case because; vendors are allocated the stall for a 15-day period. Some vendors in Old Delhi markets have migrated and worked as ‘helpers’ in these markets.

However, street vendors in markets across Phnom Penh were mostly natives from near the city of Phnom Penh itself and have been carrying out their businesses for a period of last 3 years to 10 years. In the Orussey market, most vendors were observed to be migrants from different provinces of Cambodia while staying in the city on rent and would often travel back to their hometowns during national festivals in April and November.

3.1. Street business conditions in markets of Delhi and Phnom Penh

With almost 166 stalls in Dilli Haat, each of them is assigned to a vendor on the basis of a ballot system and the vendors are charged a rent of Rs. 10,350/- (approximately \$162.184) for a period of 15 days only. The vendors are in return provided space, security and electricity by the administration. Exhibiting and selling their products (which are manufactured and popular in their state), the vendors open their stalls at 10 am and close at 10 pm for all days of the week. Dilli Haat – the chamber of handicrafts – is a well – known tourist attraction in the capital of India.

On similar lines, the Psa Toul Tom Pong or the Russian market also receives foreigners (along with local people) where they can buy a wide range of products from souvenirs to motorcycle parts. A key feature is that the market operates from 6 am to 5 pm and again from 5 pm until midnight. With more than 1000 stalls, the vendors in the Russian market have to register at the office of the market and pay security fee, environment fee, sales licenses and an annual payment to the state. On an average, a vendor set up in the Russian markets pays \$350 for monthly rent, \$3.75 to the market officer, \$15 every 15 days for electricity and \$14.25 an annual payment to the state (monetary distribution).

While the Wednesday bazaar in Pandav Nagar operates from 3.30 pm to 9.00 pm every Wednesday, the vendors are not charged any rent/fee as they use the public space for selling their products. Though they are not provided with any facilities by the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC), the vendors have to pay Rs. 20 (\$0.313 approximately) to the official representative when they set up the stall. The vendors mostly sell perishable goods like fruits and vegetables along with other non-perishable goods as well.

Similarly, the Doeurm Kor market in Cambodia is also known for

⁹ See Annexure 2 for information on natural market design and occupied spaces of markets in Delhi and Phnom Penh.

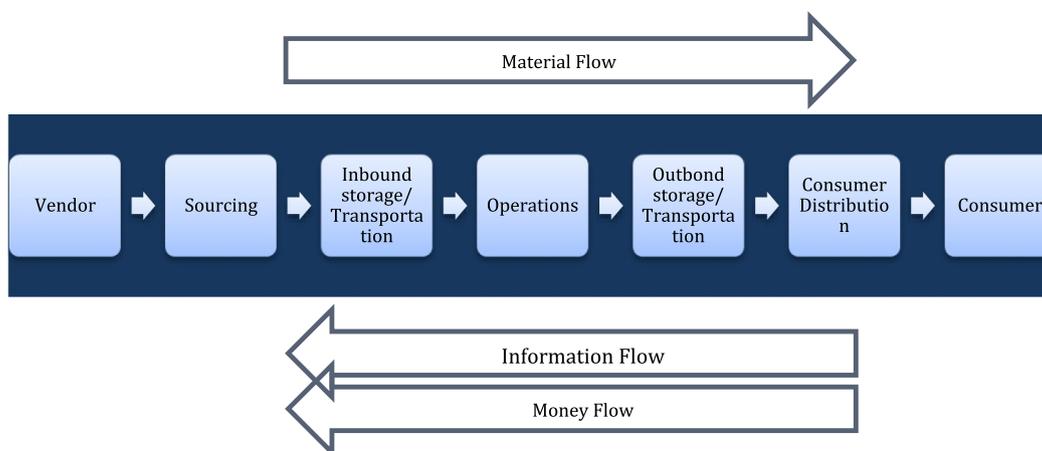


Fig. 1. Supply chain management process.

Table 3
Rents and Taxes vendors pay in different markets in Phnom Penh.

	Rent/taxes	Electricity/water	“P’sy” price and cleansing price
Doeum Kor Market			
Vegetable	No information		
Fruits	150,000r (\$37.5) or up to 300,000r (\$75) per month rent		
Cooking spices	\$300 per month rent	5000r per cubic meter	
Orussey Market			
Cooking spices		1500 khr per kilowatt for the use of electricity	300khr and 200khr “P’sy” price and cleansing price respectively every day and 20,000khr for market security services monthly.
Curtains		1500 khr per kilowatt for the use of electricity	200khr and 100khr daily for the “P’sy” price and cleansing price to the market respectively and pay 20,000 khr monthly for security services.
Hair accessories	\$700 per month for the rental fee.	1500 khr per kilowatt for the use of electricity	200 khr daily for the “P’sy” price and 100khr for the cleaning fee and pay 20,000 khr monthly for security services
Russian Market			
Souvenir	Renting fee \$300 to \$600 monthly but the majority pays \$350 as the stall fee. Pay 57,000 riels annually to the state	Average electricity fee ranges between 40,000 riels to 60,000 riels	
Clothing: clothing from Thailand and clothing from factory	Renting fee range from \$350 to \$700 monthly, 15,000 riels to the officers in the market	Average electricity fee ranges between 40,000 riels to 60,000 riels	
Motorcycle machine parts: seat, wheel and disc brake	15,000 riels to the officer in the markets	Average electricity fee ranges between 40,000 riels to 60,000 riels	

selling fruits and vegetables and is open for 24 h, but vendors choose their own working hours, some operate for 24 h, while others operate from 3 am to 6 am and so on. Though the specifications for the amount of taxes/fees paid in this market were not given, some of the vendors mentioned that they cumulatively pay around \$37.5 or \$75 per month (Table 3).

Markets in Old Delhi are operational on all days of the week and are regulated by MCD and Pradhan's. Some shops pay taxes, and some do not. As the shops are owned by the MCD in case of Meena Bazaar, the vendors pay a yearly rent which ranges from Rs.500 to Rs.2000 per year along with a 5% tax. In the case of Old Delhi, vendors pay a ‘household tax’ ranging from Rs. 800–1000 per year. On the other hand, vendors in the Orussey market in Cambodia pay around 200khr as the “P’sy” price¹⁰ and cleansing price along with 20,000khr per month for security services.

The shops are usually open from around 8.30 am to until 4.45 pm with vendors selling a wide range of products. In both the markets, the customers are usually the local people.

¹⁰ There is lack of clarity on what P’sy price is. According to some vendors, it is the price charged for selling in the market.

3.2. Running street business - costs vs. profits earned

In an attempt to secure a minimum profit margin from trade, all the vendors interviewed in Delhi take into consideration factors like cost of raw materials, labor costs, and transportation costs, costs of rent/storage, the cost of setting up the stalls to determine the final price of the product. The final price of their product is decided after all these ‘cost’ considerations have been taken into account and adding a profit markup to it. Though, the profit margin differed between the markets, with Dilli Haat vendors' mark-up standing at 20–25% (but for foreign customers, the markup reaching as high as 50%). Mayur Vihar vendors having a 15% profit margin and Old Delhi ranging from 5 to 20% markup. Similarly, the vendors in Phnom Penh earn differential amounts of profits, depending on the product category being sold (Table 4).

It was observed how critical a role does bargaining (between the customer and seller) play in shaping each vendor's profit margins and costs, the concept of bargaining comes to play. Bargaining is an important factor determining the selling price in the identified markets. However, as observed in both cities, the bargaining power of seller was often affected by the number of market players for a product basket in a

Table 4
Profit margin quoted by vendors in Phnom Penh markets.

Market	Product	Profit margin
Doeum Kor	Vegetables	200 riel (r) to 400 riel (r) (0.05\$ to 0.1\$) per kilogram of goods sold
	Fruits	20,000r to 30,000r (\$5 to \$7.5) per day
	Cooking spices	200r to 300r (\$0.05 to \$0.075) per kilogram
Orussey Market	Spices	An average profit of 25%–35% on the overall cost incurred
	Curtains	An average profit of 25%–35% and usually offers 10% discount on the final price
	Hair accessories	Earn an average profit of 25%–30% and offer 10% discount on the final price
Psa Toul Tom Pong or Russian Market	Souvenirs	–
	Clothing: clothing from Thailand and clothing from factory	–
	Motorcycle machine parts: seat, wheel and disc brake	Profit amounts to 30–40% of their income

Table 5
Product categories vendors interviewed.

Market	Product categories vendors interviewed
Orussey Market	Cooking spices, curtain stores, hair accessories
Old Delhi (North Delhi - Chawri Bazaar, Chandni Chowk and Meena Bazaar Markets)	Brassware, imitation jewelry, second-hand book market, apparel, tools & motors

market; the geospatial positioning of the shop in the market; and the number of years of sales experience.

If there are large numbers of vendors selling the same product, the vendors resorting to competitive pricing would accept bargaining as a practice more often and would settle at a low price, especially in case of Dilli Haat (where 10% of vendors follow competitive pricing) and Mayur Vihar. As observed in the case of Dilli Haat, some sellers were placed towards the extreme end of the market and comparatively had lesser bargaining power. In case of Old Delhi, there are sellers operating for more than 50 years who quote fixed prices and there is only a 10% chances for the scope of bargaining and Wednesday Bazaar's former Pradhan has stated that he sells his products for a fixed price with no scope of bargaining.

However, in the case of Doeum Kor market, the bargaining capacity of customers is extremely low due to the already prevailing low prices of the vegetables. In some cases, loyal customers do not bargain unless they feel that the products are sold at very unusual market prices. At times, customers do not bargain as the vendors sell at the minimum profit margin as in the case of cooking spice vendors in Doeum Kor market. It is also to be stated that all the vendors in the markets bargain with their suppliers. As stated by one of the vendors with 22 years of experience, that *she can sometimes bargain with wholesalers to reduce the price to 3500r from 5000r*. At times, the vendors also bargain at the depots for the transportation of their goods in case if the price quoted seems high. While the role of bargaining in these market spaces is imperative and is limited, it affects the pricing of the product bought and sold in these markets. The section to follow will explain the supply chain dynamics of the consumer baskets available in these markets.

4. On supply chain dynamics of products

This section documents the supply chain structure of the commercial exchange taking place between street vendors and buyers (also wholesalers and street vendors) while explicating the inter-twined economic linkages between the informal and formal aspects of trade, undertaken by street vendors in and across local markets of Phnom Penh and Delhi.

4.1. Reflections from Orussey (Phnom Penh) and Old Delhi (Delhi) markets

There are reports that have studied supply chain management for all the markets in Delhi and Phnom Penh (Mohan & Sekhani, 2017; Mohan, Sekhani, & Kaushik, 2018; Mohan, Sekhani, & Medipally, 2018), the present study focuses on analyzing the supply chain management of

products sold in Orussey market (Phnom Penh) and Old Delhi (Delhi) markets. Both markets sell a wide range of products, the similar one being imitation jewelry, accessories, electronic devices, and clothes. In both markets, vendors have been operating for years, with vendors in Old Delhi has bought shops during independence and Orussey market vendors has inherited the shops and has been operating for as long as 30 years. The only key difference lies in the structure of their market space. Old Delhi has shops and stalls established within the market space of Chandni Chowk, Chawri Bazar and Meena Bazar, Orussey market vendors have their shops in a large rectangle shape building described above (Table 5).

The raw material for the products sold in the old Delhi markets is procured both within and outside Delhi. For instance, a tool vendor procures the raw material not only from nearby automobile factories but also from various other states including Bangalore, Gandhinagar, and countries including Germany and USA. Brassware and imitation jewelry vendor also procure goods from Agra (Uttar Pradesh). Similarly, spices selling vendors of Orussey market acquire the products from Vietnam, Thailand, and China and sell it to local consumers. However, unlike Old Delhi market where vendors can store products in their shops or at the top of their shops, the vendors in the Orussey market store the inventories in their own houses.

Section 4.2 below explains in detail the inventory management processes of the curtain selling vendor(s) of Orussey market and the tools selling vendors of Old Delhi Market.

4.2. Supply chain and inventory management of 'curtain clothes' in Orussey market

Because of the informal set up in these markets, the process of supply chain management is not structured and well-organised and differs across the products baskets that we have covered. Most Curtain shops in Orussey Market are owned by women and most of them have been living in Phnom Penh for almost 12 years now. Most of the curtains and the curtain clothes are bought from various Chinese companies. Acquiring materials from different companies make the diversification of products feasible (Fig. 2).

The final price to be charged to the customer is set collectively. However, the price is also dependent on the competition prevalent in the market. The seller of curtains can earn a daily income of \$50–\$100 and \$1000 during peak season.

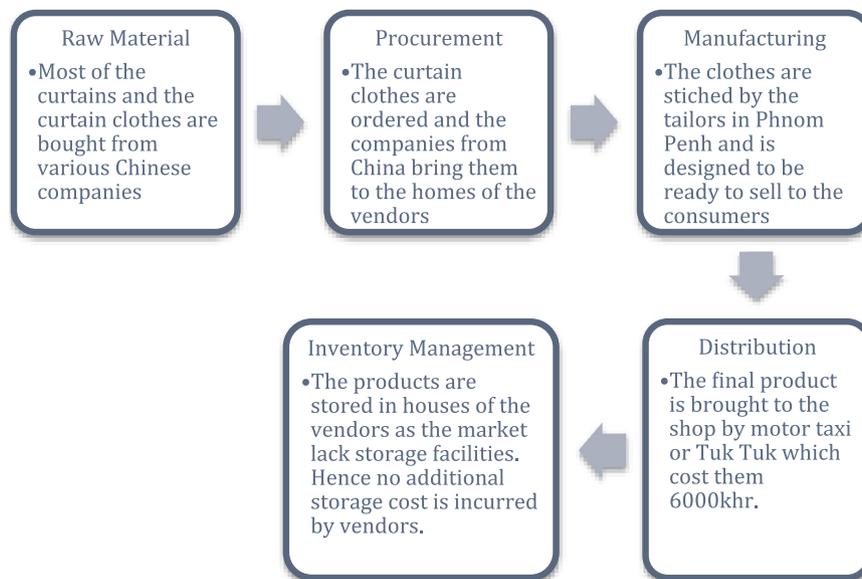


Fig. 2. Supply chain and inventory management process of ‘curtain clothes’.

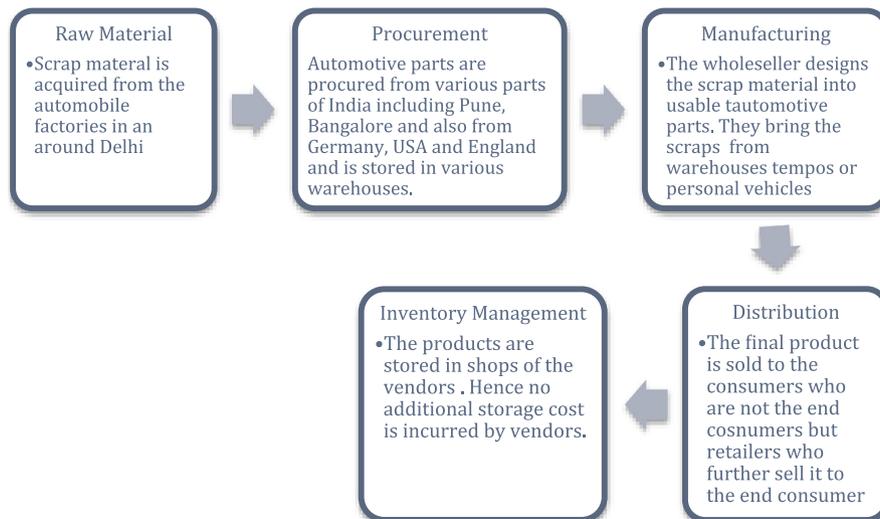


Fig. 3. Supply chain and inventory management process of automotive parts.

4.3. Supply chain and inventory management of automotive parts in Old Delhi market

The automotive parts are sold in Meena Bazar of old Delhi market. The scrap materials are acquired from the automobile factories in and around Delhi to convert them into usable tools. The new designed automotive parts are procured from various parts of India including Pune, Bangalore and also from Germany, USA, and England, it is sent through courier and is stored in various warehouses in Delhi (Fig. 3).

The vendors buying scraps from the automobile factories have to bid for the highest price to buy the products. While vendors who buy new tools have to pay in cheque. The vendors selling old tools earn a margin of 5–15%. The imperishable nature of these products makes the storage easier. The same is not true for vendors selling fruits, vegetables, pickles etc. These vendors because of the lack of warehouses and storage have to either clear up the stock or sell it at a lower price because of the perishable nature of the product. Hence their profit margin is also low as compared to vendors of other products.

5. Epistemic lessons from analysis

Our research on the profiles and dynamics of commercial exchange in some of the local markets across Phnom Penh and Delhi yield important insights on these urban economies. Some of these are compatible with other recent studies undertaken (see Martínez et al., 2017; Bhowmik, 2012; Bromley, 2000; Cross, 2000). What is important (and common) is the critical role of street vending in the commercial urban ecosystems of cities, given that it is the main source of employment and revenue for millions of low-skilled, small and medium scale traders.

Street vending in itself also acts as an elastic link in supply chains while providing affordable goods to many urban residents. Taking this forward, it would be interesting to further study and analyze how in other South East Asian countries, say, Thailand, Malaysia, China, Vietnam etc. the current practices of street vending affect their own urban landscapes.

Further, understanding the social, political and legal aspects of street businesses in each country (as a representative of the developing Global South) using anthropological research methods, offers an exciting track of research. Relying on ethnocentric methods via inter-personal

conversations, participatory-observation (as done in our research) offers a humanist perspective in understanding the lives and narratives of street vendors and the conditions in which they conduct their day to day operations with limited protection received from the state.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to elucidate on these aspects in greater details for the work undertaken in Delhi (India) and Phnom Penh (Cambodia), it is vital for urban researchers to look at these aspects in constructing an *inclusive* (post-dualist) view on urban ‘informality’ (beyond the binaries of what is ‘formal’ or ‘informal’). It may also be interesting to study and explore the influential role of *price bargaining* (as an independent variable) in shaping the sales and profitability of products bought and sold by the ‘invisible entrepreneurs’ (street vendors).

6. Conclusion

This study captures personalized, micro-narratives of street vendors (seen as invisible entrepreneurs) working in markets across Delhi (India) and Phnom Penh (Cambodia) while analyzing the supply chain processes of the products sold by them, reflecting an inter-twined, existential relationship between what’s observed to be seen as ‘informal’ and ‘formal’ in urban economies.

The mutual interdependence seen in the governing dynamics of economic exchange through a supply-chain approach (for example, in selling commodities and services across markets of Doeum Kor in Phnom Penh and Mayur Vihar in Delhi), argues for a need to *inclusively* study urban ecosystems in developing nations while addressing the needs of street vendors. We do so by using ethnographic methods, allowing a more in-depth understanding of street vending.

As epistemic lessons drawn from accommodating an *inclusive* view to street vending in a rapidly urbanizing Global South, we emphasize on the need to develop a cross-fertilized focus of thought(s) and method(s) among social science researchers to produce more of such narratives in exploring the meeting of ‘informal’ with the ‘formal’ (and those working as part of it) in dynamically evolving urban ecosystems.

Annexure 1. Tentative list of questions¹¹

I. Vendor profiling

A. Profile and background

1. Vendor details (name, age, and gender)
2. What is your background? (say, education, work experience)

B. Motivation to work in the market

3. How long have you been involved in this business practice?
4. What did you do before this? Why did you leave the earlier trade?
5. How many family members do you have? How many of them are engaged in your line of business?
6. What factors motivated you to choose this business practice?

C. Nature of business practice

7. What is the nature of the business practice?
 - Street business/home business/business in traditional market/others; sole proprietor/unpaid family worker/regular employees/voluntary engaged persons
8. What are the most favorable months in the sale of the product? (Testing for seasonality)
9. What is the location of the business? Is it centrally located in the market or is at the periphery?
10. What are the days and operational hours of business?
11. Morning operation/afternoon operation/night operation/24 h operation/others
12. What is your average daily income?
13. Additional details on average daily sales/expenses/profit and loss

14. How much are the operating costs involved in the business like setting up stalls, electricity, rent etc.?
15. Do you pay any taxes or fee to any local development officer?
16. What is the average life of goods (perishable/non-perishable) as per the nature of products sold?
17. Are the prices of the goods fixed or its negotiable?
18. What factors affect the bargaining on the price of the product with the customer?
19. Do you use any alternative modes of payment for transactions or while buying products from the wholesalers? (Credit or debit card/cheque/paytm)

II. Inventory management

20. Where are the goods originally sourced/procured from?
21. If sourced from outside Phnom Penh/Siem Reap, where do you collect it from in Phnom Penh/Siem Reap? Is there a centralized hub for distribution?
22. Do you maintain a storage facility for your goods? How is the retail inventory managed?
23. What are the costs associated with storage of goods?
24. What are the means of transportation used for goods? Cost of transport?
25. Do you determine the prices individually or collectively in a group? How much does competitive pricing matter to you in your market?
26. Do you think that center/state/local government can do anything else to facilitate your trade in any manner? What kind of support do you currently receive from the government?

Annexure 2. Details on natural market design and occupied spaces in Delhi and Phnom Penh markets

I. Dilli Haat – New Delhi, India.

Spread over an area of 6.27 acres this 22-year old Dilli Haat is a “regulated informal market” chosen for our study to understand the governing dynamics of informal markets in New Delhi. It is a joint venture initiated in 1994 between Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development (DTTDC), Development Commissioner (D.C) Handicrafts, New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), D.C (Handlooms) and the Ministry of Tourism and Textile, Government of India.

The market depicts the characteristics of both the formal and informal markets. The setting of the market, especially the architecture, selling of goods in the stalls or pathways gives it the informal perspective. The market is strategically located and is well connected to the Southern markets, also accessible via the metro with the underground INA metro station at a walking distance. The products sold in Dilli Haat are unique in nature and portray the distinctive style in making and promoting different cultures of each Indian state. Dilli Haat also has around 45–50 vendors selling outside its gate selling perishable and non-perishable goods, however, these vendors do not have any facilities provided like that of the ones operating ‘inside’ Dilli Haat.

II. Old Delhi markets: Meena Bazaar, Chandni Chowk Market, and Chawri Bazaar – in New Delhi, India.

The markets located between Chandni Chowk and Chawri bazaar are all operational throughout the week and are geographically spaced according to the product basket sold. For example, the auto market is located near Jama Masjid, consumer durables are sold around Chandni Chowk market while imitation jewelry and brassware are sold near the Turkman gate area. In Meena Bazaar, products are sold next to each other – a noticeable feature of this market is that sellers ‘inside’ Meena Bazaar mostly sell in retail, while the sellers ‘outside’ Meena Bazaar are exclusively wholesale.

These market spaces are regulated by MCD and Pradhan’s, but their interference is only limited to the extent of rent collection. The closest

¹¹ These constitute an indicative list of broader questions to be asked during the interviews conducted on the field.

point of access via public transport to Turkman Gate is Chawri Bazaar Metro Station. The streets are narrow and crowded and it makes it time-consuming to ride in a rickshaw from the metro station.

III. Wednesday Bazaar in Pandav Nagar, New Delhi, India.

The weekly bazaar is held every Wednesday near D-Park and is one of the many weekly bazaars held in East Delhi. As old as 30 years, most of the vendors in this market set up approximated 8–10 years ago. This market caters to people (generally belong to different strata of the society) living in and around Wednesday Bazaar. The market holds approximately 130–150 vendors and is categorized as an 'informal setup' because the vendors do not obey any set of State regulations. The market is governed by a Pradhan (a local area head) and is recognized by the Municipal Corporation of East Delhi.

The vendors set up their stalls next to and in front of each other in the public space (i.e. on roads, footpaths or pavements) using the minimal infrastructure available. The Bazaar is operational for around 4–5 h on Wednesday evenings and offers a wide range of perishable and non-perishable goods. Those vendors selling perishable goods like fruits and vegetables set up their stalls around the D-part and those selling foot mats, kids' apparel, utensils etc. are found in the main lane and side lanes. All the products sold by these vendors do not have any maximum retail price.

The market only operates once a week i.e. Wednesdays, but the vendors also sell their goods in different weekly markets in other parts of Delhi.

IV. Doeum Kor Market, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Vendors in this market occupy all the surrounding small streets and make it inaccessible for public transport. The market infrastructure is around 110 m × 90 m and is divided into two main parts – the regulated, central market area and the unregulated street market area which lies outside the central space. Located very close to the Phsar Pleaecher market and Neak Meas market has led to the development of Doeum Kor Market into a niche which allows its vendors to sell their stocks of vegetables, fruits and cooking spices very easily to consumers.

V. Orussey Market in Prampir Meakkakra district, Phnom Penh Cambodia.

The market was built around 1980 and is one of the biggest traditional markets in Phnom Penh facing the South and located in the commercial area of the city. This crowded market has large proportions of people from consumers to Tuk Tuk drivers. Consumers visit this market to buy retail or wholesale goods.

The market is in rectangle-shape and consists of 3 main floors and has good lightening by electrical light. The market does not receive any foreign customers and therefore is the natives form the largest proportion of its customers. The business operations start as early as 5 am and are closed by 5 pm.

VI. Psa Toul Tom Poug or Russian Market, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Psa Toul Tom Poug (meaning market on a big hill) also called as Russian market is a popular local market which receives the most visitors including foreigners and local people. Located in the south of Phnom Penh city, the area around the market is not crowded like the other market. This market is most popular among tourists as one can find hand-carved statues, handmade silk scarves, colorful lanterns, printed T-shirts, and DVDs.

The markets have 16 entrances, 4 motorbike parking spaces, and one parking area. The market is very narrow and has more than 1000

stalls Vendors sell different products for retail and wholesale ranging from antique furniture, exotic food, traditional carvings, handicrafts, gems, shoes etc. The market operates based on 'hours' and is divided into daytime group (operated from 6 am to 5 pm) and evening operation group.

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