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## Editor's Note

Tourism is a global economic powerhouse, contributing significantly to the GDP of many countries and providing employment to millions. However, the environmental and social costs associated with traditional tourism practices have raised concerns about its long-term sustainability. Green and sustainable tourism investments offer a promising solution to this dilemma by fostering economic growth while protecting the planet and benefiting local communities.

Green and sustainable tourism investments encompass a wide range of strategies and practices aimed at minimizing the negative impacts of tourism on the environment and society while maximizing economic benefits. These investments focus on responsible resource management, community engagement, and the preservation of cultural and natural heritage. Investing in renewable energy sources such as solar panels and wind turbines can power hotels, resorts, and transportation services, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions. Sustainable tourism investments prioritize efficient waste management systems. Recycling, composting, and reducing single-use plastics are essential steps towards minimizing pollution.

Investing in the protection and maintenance of natural reserves and national parks ensures the long-term viability of tourism destinations while preserving biodiversity. Implementing water-saving technologies, promoting responsible water use, and protecting local water sources help conserve this precious resource.

Green and sustainable tourism investments prioritize hiring locally, empowering communities economically, and reducing income inequality. Supporting cultural heritage through investments in local arts, crafts, and traditions helps preserve the unique identities of tourist destinations. Sustainable tourism investments diversify the local economy, reducing dependence on a single industry and increasing overall resilience.

Green and sustainable tourism investments are not just an ethical choice; they are a smart economic strategy. By balancing economic growth with environmental preservation and social well-being, these investments create a win-win scenario for tourists, host communities, and future generations. As responsible stewards of our planet, it is our duty to support and encourage these investments, ensuring that tourism continues to thrive while safeguarding the natural and cultural treasures that make our world so beautiful.

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**Prof. S.P. Bansal**

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# Promotion and Impact of Local Business Perspective in Tourism and Hospitality Industry by Three IMA Keithel (Mother's Market) in Manipur

Sharda Meinam & Mary Thomas Chithung

## Abstract

*It is a commercial Centre and a popular tourist attraction in the state of Manipur This market is situated in the heart of Imphal city in the Indian State of Manipur. It is the only market in the world run entirely by women. It was established in the 16 century and hosts around 5000-6000 women vendors who sell a variety of products. This market is managed by a union of all the vendors of the market. The union also runs a credit system for leading to women traders. Further, vendors of the markets are given support and funded by Government and private banks of the state.*

*From this three Ima Markets, local business are growing in fast rate and given a tremendous economic growth in the state. This three Ima Markets help in promoting the local business perspective in Tourism sector in the state.*

*This is one of the unique legendary Ima Market in the state of Manipur. A great example of "Nari Shakti" (Women's power) powering economic growth. This Ima Markets play a vital role in shaping the political position in the state. In fact, a big political discussion Centre of women*

*Ima Keithel or Mother's Market is an all women market, said to be the largest shopping complex in the whole Asia. This Ima market is a centuries-old and well originated with the ancient historical facts. Some of the factors of attracting tourists of this Ima market is that stall are placed in vibrant ways and also welcome the tourists with warm hospitality vibes. Therefore, this three Ima Keithel (Mother's Market) play a key role in promoting the economic growth in the state of Manipur.*

**Keywords:** IMA Keithel, Economic Growth, Women Empowerment, Women Vendors, Tourism Industr

## Introduction

The Ima Keithel (Mother's market), also known as the Khwairamband Bazaar or Nupi Keithel by the people of Manipur, is one of the indigenous women 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. In this Ima Keithel, mostly middle age women are doing business and dealing trade with different types of products, ranging from daily wear needs to the basic and essential commodities of society. Manipur is located in the north east 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 female 49.63 % to 50.37% of male. The state has a population of 42.79% in hills and 57.2% in the valley. The literacy rate of females is 70.26% as compared to 83.58% for males. These are number of

ethnic communities inhabiting the state, the majority of which are the Meitei communities occupying the valley region and the tribal communities settle in hills. These three Ima Keithel is located at the heart of Imphal city, Imphal West District of Manipur (Valley). 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 north eastern 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 women vendors are the primary breadwinners in their families. The primary objective of this study is to explore the three Ima Keithel and types of products found in the markets, with its vast potential for entrepreneur. This three Ima Keithel are:-

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- ✪ IMA KEITHEL 1 (LEIMAREL SIDABI)
- ✪ IMA KEITHEL 2 (EMOINU)
- ✪ IMA KEITHEL 3 (PHOUOIBI)

This is the only market in the world run entirely by women, which stand as a very good example of women entrepreneurial status in the society, skill, knowledge and adaptability in business are the main reasons for women to emerge in business ventures. A unique feature of Ima Keithel (mother's market) is that goods and commodities are mostly locally produced. These three Ima Keithel opens from morning till night. The present study was conducted in three Ima Keithel, which is the main important places for business in Manipur which contribute to the economy as well as this it helps in promoting the local business perspective in Tourism sector in the state.

### History of EMA Keithel (Mother's Market)

The Ima Keithel is a centuries-old market system and has its origins in "Lallup Kaba" an ancient bonded labour system. It is found to mention the Ima Keithel in the 15<sup>th</sup> century during King Kiyamba (1467-1508) and in the 16<sup>th</sup> century during King Challamba (1545-1562). In early period, the goods items were sold in exchanging system. Thus, the Meitei women control all the market activities of the socio-economic affairs since the medieval historical period of Manipur.

Manipur tribe men had to compulsorily serve some time working in the military and other civil projects, keeping them away from home.

The women were left to manage on their own, and they developed a market system which is today known as "Ima Keithel"

### Role of Women in IMA Keithel.

Literal meaning of Ima is mother in Manipuri language. This three Ima Keithel (markets) is one of the biggest women market in the world which is situated at the Imphal West district of Manipur. The entire stalls are run and managed by women alone. Majority of the women entrepreneurs are involved in trading due to economic obligation to support their families. Women tend to dominate in this three Ima Keithel (markets) as sellers of food items, textiles and traditional clothing. Mostly the middle age women (30-60yrs) of age are running this market as traders. In this three Ima Keithel, all business activities are being done by women themselves whether its harvesting, manufacturing, packing or selling, women are managing well in every field of the marketing process. It's a unique example of empowered women and self sufficient social economic life in the state. women come in this market every day not just to sale the goods but to come and share their views on social economic turmoil under political affairs. They gather together and discuss how they can bring change in their strategies of selling to improve marketing and also to cope up with the adverse

political atmosphere at some point in time. From time to time, they come to streets to protest & fight for their rights and to protect their market stability when the situation of economic slow down gets worst, they give suggestion and help the movement to bring the constructive result that is good for the social economic development of the state. These three Ima Keithel represented the empowerment of women and might of mothers of Manipur state. This women vendors have also help protests on various social issues in the state. Ima Keithel still remains continuous its grip on the traditional culture of Manipur. Through Ima Keithel, women in Manipur have carried the economic responsibility of trade and commerce for centuries, endured political and military upheavals, maintained the indigenous way of life, and remained economic pillars of their families and community. This undying spirit of powerful local women holds them together in solidarity for a broader vision and upliftment of the society.

1<sup>st</sup> Nupi Lan - (The women's war in Manipur) outbreak of Nupi Lan took place from Ima Keithel (Mother's market or Khwairamband Bazaar) in the year 1904 against the force labour "Lalup Kaba" in Manipur on Manipuri men against British rule. 2<sup>nd</sup> Nupi Lan outbreak in the year 1939 from Ima Keithel to evolve into a movement for Constitutional and administrative reform in Manipur.

Therefore, the status of a Manipuri Women's participation in playing important role in reforming the economic and political independence in the State.

Some of the factors of attracting tourists of this Ima Keithel (markets) is that stall are placed in vibrant ways and also welcome the tourists with warm hospitality. Due to this reason, it gains a great help in promoting the economic growth in the state of Manipur. In short, Ima Keithel stands tall as one of the biggest tourism destinations of Manipur.

### Management of Family and Business by Women of Three Ima Keithel

The women entrepreneurs of Ima Keithel (mother's market) are equally found to be active in the social economic role of the state. In the family, they manage their household activities and do their house chores. The women traders assist in establishing moral values and behaviors among family members and render financial support in the maintenance of their families. They possess the sense of discipline, regularity and systematic management of their domestic affairs as well as trade and business in the market. As a unique feature of the women of these three Ima Keithel play a central role in business of the whole marketing process.

The women of Ima Keithel maintain enough responsibility in various aspect of life as mother, house wife and as a women entrepreneur. They produce human capital and shape the personality and character of their children and family. This is a big contribution in the society than

money. The Manipuri women are well known for their laborious works and industrious activities.

### Details of IMA Keithel 1 (Leimarel Sidabi)

At the main entrance of this Ima Keithel 1, there is Meitei God shrine of Leimarel Sidabi. The women traders start their day by worshipping the Goddess by offering candle, incense and flowers for smooth start of their business. In this Ima Keithel 1, it sells a varieties of goods products like food items, vegetables, fruits, fresh fish, dry fish, milk products, traditional sweets made from kabok(Rice puffer), Handicraft products, dolls, artificial jewellery items, garland, local packing snacks, knife, tools, bamboo crafts products are also traded in this Ima Keithel 1 (Leimarel Sidabi).

### IMA Keithel 2 (Emoinu)

In this women's market that specializes principally in the vending of bedding items and mosquito nets. The bedding items include mattresses, pillow covers, bedsheets and bedcovers, Phibong (warm cloth) are sell in this market. Besides bedding sets, it also sells handloom clothing, metal utensils and handloom ritual cloths for various ritual ceremonies that commemorate wedding, births & deaths are sold in this market. Large scale availability of indigenous Manipuri handloom crafts products are also sold here. Many women tailoring stall are functioning and earned their livelihood in this Ima Keithel 2 (Emoinu)

### IMA Keithel 3 (Phouoibi)

In this market, mostly traditional outlet for the handloom textiles and hand-crafted items that are produced in large volumes. Traditional silk fabric products of natural dye are also available in large scale. Manipuri phanek (women's loin dress, wrappers) & Pheijom (men's loin dress), varieties of Silks shawls, Khudei (Men's wear), Turban, hand woven textile items, Leirum (ceremonial cloth), varieties of land weaving wollen shawls for different tribes of Manipur are sold in this market. This Ima Keithel 3 (Phouoibi) is the source for handloom cloths used in traditional Manipuri dance Laiharaoba costumes as well as the varieties of Mayek Naiba handloom phaneks and other miscellaneous weaving produced are also available in this market.

Women traders or vendors in Ima Keithel 1 (Leimarel Sidabi), Ima Keithel 2 (Emoinu) and Ima Keithel 3 (Phouoibi) are required to follow pre-set rules laid by the Imphal Municipal Corporation (IMC) under these rules, only specific commodities can be traded in each of these specialized market sections.

Ima Keithel is now regulated by the Imphal Municipal Council (IMC), under whose central women traders enjoy secure legal status. Regulation of trade and licensing service, shop rental value, civic conservancy charges. Women traders pay a monthly fee of Rs. 95 as vending tax, while another Rs. 15 is realized by IMC for disposal

of solid waste. Paying Rs 10 per vendor for managing storage facilities. The women of Ima Keithel held regular membership cards that declare them to be permanent vendors. Permanent vendors have to obey the IMC vending rules and regulations.

**Table 1 Vendor Respondent Selection at Ima Keithel vending sites.**

| Vendor Market Site              | Vending Sheds | Vendors Operating | Vendor Respondent selection |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Ima Keithel 1 (Leimarel Sidabi) | 28            | 1691              | 100                         |
| Ima Keithel 2 (Emoinu)          | 14            | 734               | 100                         |
| Ima Keithel 3 (Phouoibi)        | 18            | 1196              | 100                         |
| Total                           | 60            | 3621              | 300                         |

Source: Imphal Khwairamband Vendor Survey 2019



Women Vendors of Ima Keithel 1



Women Vendors of Ima Keithel 1



Women Vendors of Ima Keithel 1



Women vendors of Ima Keithel 3

**Financial Support Sysytem of IMA Keithel**

For any business financial support is a major key to start. The new trend in the economic participation of women is the emergence of self-help groups that are gendered under the principle of thrift that the Manipuri local people term as “ Marup” with the advent of a self group in the state, the women vendors are able to produce substitute goods and become more effective in creating economic efficient. From the survey reports data, this present days women vendors are getting Government as well as private micro finance banks funded small loan to them to run a smooth trade in the Ima Keithel.

**Objectives**

- ✦ To study the 3 (three) Ima Keithel & local traditional products sell.
- ✦ To asses how far they are self-sufficient.
- ✦ To examine how they manage their house chores with business entrepreneurship.
- ✦ To explore their social economic & political roles.
- ✦ To examine their economic growth in local business which help in promoting Tourism Industry in the state.

**Methodology**

The Present study was conducted through survey method on the random sample of 300 women vendors. Vendors are selected from each Ema Keithel 1, 2 & 3. The test for the study has used an interview followed by questionnaire methods.

**Suggestions**

- ✦ To improve the condition of women vendors of Ima Keithel by providing adequate fund or loan from Government sector with less interest rate.
- ✦ Expanding extra space to accommodate more women vendors.
- ✦ To encourage the women vendor of Ima Keithel to open the saving account in the bank.
- ✦ To showcase their products or items of the Ima Keithel through online shopping media so that to improve their economy impact to large extent.
- ✦ To introduce digital payment system in the whole 3 Ima keithel.

**Conclusion**

The socio-economic life of women in this three Ima Keithel is remarkable. Their entrepreneur skill activities in running a Traditional business trend are extremely commendable. They took greater part, share, and work activity in the development and upliftment in

the economic life in earning in private as well as social movement participation. Besides their market activities, they always took up seasonal earning practices like agriculture, fishing, collection of firewood etc. Over and above the daily routine, earning programmes such as weaving, pottery marketing and business etc.

The women of Ima Keithel enjoy their economic status according to the prevailing social political and cultural environment. Their entrepreneurship and consciousness provide a livelihood to their family and bring standard marketing system to the state as well. The women of Ima Keithel have a strong capabilities and skill to run a iconic model way of market in the global world. These three Ima Keithel (mother's market) existing market system is indeed a worthy of praise and spectacular and hence their involvement in building the economic freedom & upliftment in the society needs to be recognized and respected.

The three Ima Keithel and the traditional local business are productive and growing in fast rate and given a tremendous economic growth in the state. This helps in promoting the local business perspective in Tourism and hospitality industry in the state of Manipur.

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