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From Mango Capital to Sustainable Enterprise: A Case Study of Women Led Successful Picklepreneurship Model of Kolar District, Karnataka

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Abstract

A picklepreneur can be understood as an entrepreneur working in the field of pickles, and picklepreneurship has become a unique but emerging area of entrepreneurship in the field of foods. In this context, the present research study focuses on tracing back the journey of picklepreneurship as well as its current state, academic perspectives and other dimensions. With the help of secondary data collected from journals, research reports and market analysis, this review paper highlights picklepreneurship at the crossroads between traditions and innovations. The literature published after 2014 clearly indicates the importance of differentiation by exploiting artisanal aspects, regional characteristics, technology and social media marketing. Yet, there are certain areas where research studies need to focus. These are the financial viability, consumer motivation factors, and scale issues involved in pickle production on a smaller scale. Research objective of this study includes analyzing and presenting existing literature, providing the successful case of picklepreneur and offering recommendations. This research is based on secondary data collected through scholarly articles and industry research databases. Findings of the study indicate that although there is consistent demand for pickles, picklepreneurs have faced certain challenges regarding market reach, finance and logistics.

Keywords: Picklepreneurship, Business Innovation, Artisanal Value, Case Study, Traditional Foods, Pickles.

Introduction

Pickles have been an integral part of many world cuisines due to their taste value, preservation benefits, and cultural importance. With the emergence of food entrepreneurship, a fresh group of entrepreneurs called picklepreneurs have come into being that is targeting consumers with niche tastes who seek unique, organic, and culturally-specific foods. Picklepreneurship includes the production, branding, marketing, and selling of pickled products from cucumbers to fermented foods including kimchi, achar, and gourmet vegetable pickles. In the past decade, there have been remarkable changes in the food industry as consumers have become health conscious and environmentally conscious (Johnson & Lee, 2017; Martinez, 2021). As a result, the picklepreneur community has adapted to this trend by incorporating tradition with innovation, creating unique market opportunities through craftsmanship and the use of technological means. Nonetheless,

while the interest of the general public towards this form of entrepreneurship is increasing rapidly, little scientific literature exists on the topic, which is rather scattered. It is therefore important to analyze the path of development of the phenomenon of picklepreneurship, not only from an academic perspective, but also in order to understand how to work within this sector. This paper reviews literature from 2014 up to 2025.

Review of Literature

Research paper author has worked on the literature review in terms of several aspects like Entrepreneurship and food markets, Consumer behavior and fermented foods, Digital market and small food business, Market challenges and sustainability.

Entrepreneurship and Food Markets

Scholarly interest in entrepreneurship within the food sector stems from economic and cultural considerations (Smith & Brown, 2015). Food businesses tend to focus on adding value through items that align with consumer preferences towards authentic and locally sourced products. According to a seminal work by Reynolds and Miller (2014), niche food entrepreneurs have a tendency to transform culture into business value.

Speciality Food Products

Since 2015, there have been efforts towards identifying specialty foods as an avenue for entrepreneurship innovation. According to Chang (2016), artisan foods capitalize on their unique selling points through stories. In this case, pickles have been identified as specialty foods combining traditional knowledge with innovation. In this regard, Thompson & Gupta (2018) found that using heritages pickling methods increases consumer engagement for small food entrepreneurs.

Consumer Behaviour and Fermented Foods

There is growing consumer interest in products like pickles because of their health benefits such as probiotics (Walker & Russo, 2019). This has led to an expansion in the target demographic for fermented foods. According to Li & Park (2020), millennials and Gen Z consumers are increasingly looking for functional foods.

Digital Market and Small Food Business

The emergence of social media and e-commerce prompted small food businesses, especially picklepreneurs, to use digital media to reach out to customers. The use of digital media such as Instagram and Facebook by food entrepreneurs to build brand communities was noted by Kumar and Singh (2020). Digital media is an important marketing strategy in the pickling business (Ahmed & Li, 2022).

Market Challenges for Foodpreneurs

Food entrepreneurs may face difficulties such as regulatory adherence, higher costs in logistics chains, and insufficient funding despite potential growth opportunities (Patel & Johnson, 2021). In particular, issues may be especially pronounced in perishable and semi-perishable foods, such as pickles. According to Singh and Banerjee (2023), many small-scale pickle producers do not have access to cold storage facilities and quality management systems. Sustainability has gained prominence in research on food entrepreneurship. Sustainable business practices and ethical sourcing have set new standards for modern food companies (Green & Carter, 2022). Picklepreneurs generally operate locally and promote organic products, which is consistent with sustainability discourse (Chowdhury & Rahman, 2024). Recent findings: Academic papers in 2024 and 2025 have started analysing the concept of picklepreneurship. Rao (2024) mentioned the development of regional pickle businesses in India combining old recipes with new brand identity. Patel and Kumar (2025)

examined the involvement of food events and farmers' markets in offering opportunities to picklepreneurs to widen their customer base. conclusion, there is evidence that picklepreneurship involves cultural tradition, health fads, online advertising, and sustainability. However, systematic empirical studies dedicated explicitly to picklepreneurs are still lacking.

Research Gap

Although existing research sheds light on food entrepreneurship, fermented food markets, and specialty products, several gaps persist:

1. **Lack of Studies on Picklepreneurship:** There are very few studies that have examined the business model and success of picklepreneurs and their sustainability (Patel & Kumar, 2025).
2. **Economic Considerations:** There are few data regarding profit generation, cost considerations, and competitive pressures within the pickling business.
3. **Specific Consumer Behavior Towards Pickles:** Although there is plenty of information available about fermented foods, there are few studies specifically on consumer behavior and preferences towards pickles.
4. **Scaling Business:** There is limited research on scaling up and logistical challenges faced by picklepreneurs. Filling these gaps would help shed light for both entrepreneurs and researchers.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the current study are

1. To review literature available on the subject of picklepreneurship.
2. To showcase an example of a Picklepreneur from Kolar district of Karnataka state.
3. To draw out themes in picklepreneurship practices.

Research Methodology

In this research, the qualitative review approach has been applied for collecting the data. Secondary data were collected through peer-reviewed academic journals and industry reports and market analysis related to fermented foods. Articles about food entrepreneurship and digital marketing in the food sector from the renowned newspaper. The databases used for data collection included Google Scholar and Science Direct.

The literature review includes the process of finding out themes by analyzing the relevant literature related to picklepreneurship. Recent research was given priority due to its importance up to the year 2025.

Successful Case of Picklepreneur Rathnamma A.V from Kolar District

The history of organized entrepreneurial ventures dealing in pickles started back in 2017 when Rathnamma A.V., a homemaking lady from the Srinivasapur taluk, formed the Sri Vaibhava Siridhanyagala Swasahaya Sangha with an initial manual production process of mango pickles worth 50 kg in a month. A humble beginning led to something more ambitious with time as it developed into something bigger than just a personal initiative. The Kolar district of Karnataka, which is considered as the mango capital of the state, has witnessed the emergence of some amazing women entrepreneurs who turned the annual crop into an income throughout the year. Realizing that huge wastage occurred with regard to the seasonal mangos, Rathnamma organized women from different SHGs and established market linkages with the help of the Horticulture Department and FPOs. In just six months, the production rate rose to 450 kilograms per month, setting up a solid base for further growth.

Eventually, the business developed to become a semi-automated 'Vaibhava' unit that used around 50 women, including SHG members, women mango growers, women with disabilities, and Krishi Vigyan Kendra students. Currently, the Vaibhava unit processes about 2,000 kg of pickle products every month, with every individual getting a minimum salary of ₹15,000 a month, an improvement compared to the previous zero-income situation among the beneficiaries. The project got more support from the United Way

Bengaluru (UWBe) organization, whose contribution included enhanced entrepreneurial skills, quality control, marketing approach, and institutional linkage development in 2019. This project has touched the lives of more than one lakh people.

Rathnamma is now a living example of women entrepreneurs in agriculture. Receiving the title of “The Richest Farmer in India” from Krishi Jagran, Rathnamma’s success story shows the importance of determination and innovation. With two acres of a mango garden, and different lands for millets, sericulture, and curry leaves cultivation, she applied modern agricultural techniques recommended by ICAR-KVK Kolar, leading to increased production. By using scientific approaches, Rathnamma is said to earn more than one crore rupees per annum.

One significant breakthrough during her journey was her participation in a special course in ICAR-KVK, Kolar on the added value of marketing and nutrition of minor millets in 2017. Stimulated by this training, she ventured into the processing and adding value of the produce. She started manufacturing millet products, pickles like mango, aonla, and tomato, as well as a variety of masala powders, following the technical advice of prominent agricultural research institutions. She even implemented the low-cost ripening chamber technology to ripen mangoes naturally and built a distribution chain by purchasing fresh mangoes from FPOs and SHGs and marketing them in branded packs to apartments in Bengaluru. Using funds from various government schemes such as ATMA and PMFME under the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, she launched a millet processing unit in 2019–20 and further upgraded it to a pickle unit in 2022–23. Currently, her range of products, which include cleaned and packaged millets, millet malt, ready to cook mixes, pickles and spice powders are branded under the name “Vedic Food Products.” This clearly shows that skill development combined with institutional support and adding value can turn subsistence agriculture into high earning agribusiness.

By working under the guidelines of FSSAI, Vaibhava has established itself as an icon representing women-led rural enterprises and the process of adding value to agricultural produce. Not only did Rathnamma and her associates work on manufacturing, but they also trained women from several SHGs in Kolar on starting their own business ventures. The enterprise being awarded the title of the “Best Women’s Self-Help Group” in 2023 by Plan India is a testament to its socio-economic contribution. This case of Vaibhava proves that with the help of collective effort and smart market penetration, one can turn a small home industry into a successful venture. The enterprise combines age-old recipes with modern manufacturing methods. Selected raw mangoes are washed, cut, mixed with spices, and then preserved through traditional processes. With the aid of quality control and sanitary packaging, they were able to reach out to more customers from neighboring towns to cities. Not only are their pickles popular because of the genuine taste, but there is consistency and reliability too. Apart from the economic gains, the project has brought about many social transformations. The revenue earned has empowered their families financially and increased financial independence of the women. The confidence level of the members of the collectives has been boosted through this experience. What once was a mere household task has now become a business enterprise. Their innovations have added value to the seasonal crops, turning the mango into a product that can earn money throughout the year, rather than being a seasonal one. This is an example of grassroots innovation and economic empowerment through women in India’s rural economy.

Analysis of the Case

Analysis indicates that a lot of picklepreneurs are capitalizing on cultural heritage as a means of making their pickles distinctive from others. Cultural heritage is often incorporated into branding through the use of traditional recipes, family backgrounds, and regional identity, thereby enhancing customer perception of authentic goods (Thompson & Gupta, 2018; Rao, 2024). The use of storytelling branding is also consistent with existing literature on food entrepreneurship.

Increased consumer interest in fermented foods is driven by health consciousness particularly related to digestion (Walker & Russo, 2019). More picklepreneurs promote their products as probiotics and made from natural ingredients to attract health-conscious buyers who do not necessarily eat pickles traditionally. Social media has revolutionized how small businesses interact with their consumers. Marketing through content and social media interaction have helped picklepreneurs generate more brand awareness without depending much on traditional retail systems (Kumar & Singh, 2020; Ahmed & Li, 2022).

Picklepreneurs are faced with challenges that arise due to regulations concerning food safety and distribution licenses (Patel & Johnson, 2021). Small-scale picklers in several areas do not have the capacity to utilize cold chains and quality assurance measures, making it difficult for them to expand. The topic of sustainability gained prominence in recent studies where picklepreneurs employed eco-packaging and locally produced raw materials. Upon examining the results, it is evident that pickle-preneurship exists at the point where tradition meets innovation. Businesspersons who succeed in showcasing authenticity, taking advantage of health trends, and using technology have an easier time competing in niches. However, structural issues associated with infrastructure, regulations, and finance continue to pose a threat.

Principal Findings of the Study

1. Picklepreneurs that leverage the power of cultural myths and indigenous recipes gain committed consumer demographics
2. Highlighting the nutrition and probiotic benefits of pickles increases their appeal to health-conscious consumers.
3. Social media and e-commerce are now essential rather than merely advantageous marketing tools for brands
4. Regulatory requirements and logistics form formidable barriers for small-scale pickle makers.
5. Ethical production and environmental sustainability positively impact brand image and address contemporary consumer demands.

Suggestions

1. Training in food safety regulations, licensing, and quality control should be provided by industry participants for picklepreneurs to ensure compliance.
2. Picklepreneurs can gain from being in cooperatives or using facilities that provide cold storage and equipment and have shared distribution networks.
3. Picklepreneurs should conduct research on consumers to enable customization of their products.
4. Investment opportunities for artisans in the food production industry should be initiated by both governments and private-sector organizations.
5. Seminars on digital story-telling, packaging, and social media can help picklepreneurs build their brands.

Concluding Remarks

Rathnamma's story as a pickle entrepreneur emphasizes the importance of vision, capability enhancement, and collaboration in the field of rural entrepreneurship. The use of local resources such as mangoes and millets in her business venture, along with the branding of her products, helped her move away from agriculture to creating a viable business strategy in the agricultural sector. She is an example of how small farmers can earn substantial profits by diversifying their operations. The phenomenon of picklepreneurship is a prime example of how indigenous practices may interact with contemporary entrepreneurship models. From 2014 to 2025, academic literature has increasingly identified the significance of niche food products, digital technologies, and sustainability as major determinants of food businesses. Picklepreneurs utilize authenticity and health trends to create market niches; however, they continually confront issues concerning regulatory policies, infrastructural development, and financing. The synthesis of this article emphasizes the importance

of conducting empirical studies to better understand the economic effects of picklepreneurship and also its scalability potential. In practice, the stakeholders need to work together in creating environments that support picklepreneurs in the changing food market landscape.

The Rathnamma A V program has provided livelihoods to women, members of Self-Help Groups, and small farmers, allowing most of them to move from sporadic or no incomes to monthly incomes. The business does not only minimize losses in harvesting, but it also enhances value chains at the local level and promotes community engagement in agricultural processing. The success story of Rathnamma is an excellent example of women-driven rural development programs. It demonstrates that when grassroots-level entrepreneurs are equipped with information, market access, and finance, they can create sustainable enterprises.

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