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Regulated Street Vending as Livelihood Infrastructure: Reconciling Urban Order, Tourism and Economic Survival in Public Space

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Abstract

Street vending is a crucial livelihood strategy for the urban poor in Nepal, but its governance is often characterized by significant tension. Municipal practices tend to focus on eviction and enforcement efforts to protect public space and right-of-way, viewing vending mainly as an obstacle to urban order. This study examines whether and how street vending can be managed in a way that balances livelihood security with effective public space management in urban and tourism settings.

The study employs a qualitative, multi-sourced research design, including a thematic literature and policy review, an analysis of media discourse (2014–2025), and a field study at Narayani Riverside in Bharatpur. This methodology is designed to build a comprehensive, triangulated understanding of street vending as a complex socio-spatial and governance issue.

Findings reveal a persistent disconnect between the economic necessity of vending and inconsistent municipal regulation. Vendors demonstrate adaptable spatial practices and contribute to tourism vitality, yet they operate under profound legal insecurity and arbitrary enforcement. A comparative analysis shows this pattern is consistent across the country, although the responses from the local governments range from crackdowns to pragmatic tolerance.

Synthesizing this evidence, the study concludes that the current eviction-led approaches are ineffective. It explores a paradigm shift toward planned, participatory regulation as a viable alternative. The research results in a concrete policy framework and an implementation roadmap, proposing mechanisms such as legal recognition, town vending committees, and viability-based zoning. This work provides an evidence-based contribution to the ongoing debate on integrating informal livelihoods into equitable and well-managed urban spaces in Nepal.

Keywords: Street Vending, Urban Governance, Municipality, Right-of-Way (ROW), Informal Economy, Public Space, Tourism, Regulation, Public Policy, Policy Research

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जीविकोपार्जन पूर्वाधारको लागि नियमन गरिएको सडक व्यापार: सार्वजनिक स्थलमा शहरी सुव्यवस्था, पर्यटन र आर्थिक अस्तित्वको मेलमिलाप

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सार

सडक व्यापार नेपालको शहरी गरिब वर्गको जीविकोपार्जनको एक महत्त्वपूर्ण उपाय भए पनि यसको शासन व्यवस्थापनमा भने उल्लेखनीय तनाव रहेको छ । सार्वजनिक स्थल र बाटोको अधिकारको सुरक्षा गर्न भनेर नगर पालिकाहरूले प्रायः सडक व्यापार हटाउने र कारबाही गर्ने कदमलाई प्राथमिकता दिन्छन् जसले गर्दा सडक व्यापार मुख्यतया शहरी सुव्यवस्थाको बाधाको रूपमा चित्रण हुन गएको छ । प्रस्तुत अध्ययनले शहर र पर्यटनका सन्दर्भमा सार्वजनिक स्थलको प्रभावकारी व्यवस्थापनसँग मानिसको जीविकोपार्जनको सुरक्षालाई सम्मीलन गर्ने तरिकाले सडक व्यापारलाई के-कसरी नियमन गर्न सकिन्छ भन्ने प्रश्नका साथ यस तनावको अनुसन्धान गरेको छ ।

अध्ययनले गुणात्मक र बहु-स्रोत अनुसन्धान ढाँचा प्रयोग गरेको छ । यसमा प्राज्ञिक साहित्य र नीति समीक्षा, मिडिया बहसको विश्लेषण र भरतपुरको नारायणी नदीकिनारमा स्थलगत अध्ययन समावेश छ । यो पद्धति जटिल सामाजिक-स्थानिक र शासन प्रबन्ध मुद्दाको रूपमा सडक व्यापारको सम्मिलित बुझाइ निर्माण गर्न डिजाइन गरिएको हो । सडक व्यापारलाई एक जटिल सामाजिक-स्थानिक र शासन सम्बन्धी मुद्दाको रूपमा समग्रतामा बुझ्नको लागि यो विधि प्रयोग गरिएको हो ।

अध्ययनका निष्कर्षहरूले सडक व्यापारको आर्थिक आवश्यकता र असङ्गत नगरपालिका नियमन बिचको निरन्तर खाडल देखाएको छ । सडक व्यापारीहरूले अनुकूलनीय स्थानिक अभ्यासहरू प्रयोग गरेको भेटिन्छ र उनीहरूले पर्यटनको जीवन्ततामा योगदान पुऱ्याएका छन् । तथापि उनीहरूले गहिरो कानुनी असुरक्षा र मनमानी कारबाही भोग्दै काम गर्नु परेको छ । तुलनात्मक विश्लेषणले के देखाउँछ भने यस्तो ढाँचा राष्ट्रिय ढाँचाको रूपमा रहेको छ, यद्यपि स्थानीय शासनका प्रतिक्रियाहरू भने हटाउने कारबाहीदेखि व्यावहारिक सहिष्णुतासम्मका गरी विविध छन् । यस प्रमाणलाई संश्लेषण गर्दै अध्ययनले के निष्कर्ष निकालेको छ भने हालको सडक व्यापार हटाउने दृष्टिकोणहरू अप्रभावी छन् । यसले एक व्यावहारिक विकल्पको रूपमा योजनाबद्ध र सहभागितामूलक नियमन तर्फ प्रतिमान परिवर्तन कसरी गर्न सकिन्छ भनेर उपाय खोजेको छ । अनुसन्धानले कानुनी मान्यता, शहरी सडक व्यापार समितिहरू, र व्यावहारिकतामा-आधारित स्थल निर्धारण जस्ता संयन्त्रहरू प्रस्ताव गर्दै, ठोस नीति ढाँचा र कार्यान्वयन मार्गचित्र प्रस्ताव गरेको छ । समग्रमा, यस अध्ययनले नेपालमा अनौपचारिक जीविकोपार्जन र समन्यायिक तथा सुव्यवस्थित शहरी स्थल प्रयोगलाई एकीकृत गर्नेबारे चलिरहेको बहसमा अध्ययनमा आधारित प्रमाण जुटाई योगदान गरेको छ ।

Keywords: Street Vending, Urban Governance, Municipality, Right-of-Way (ROW), Informal Economy, Public Space, Tourism, Regulation, Public Policy, Policy Research

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1. Introduction

Street vending is one of the most visible and persistent forms of informal economic activity in cities of the Global South. It provides essential employment and income to millions who are systematically excluded from formal labour markets due to factors such as low levels of education, rural-to-urban migration, gender-related barriers, and persistent structural unemployment (Bromley, 2000; Chen, 2012). In South Asia, street vending plays a particularly crucial role in urban livelihoods, offering affordable goods and services while absorbing surplus labour caused by agrarian distress and limited industrial growth (Bhowmik, 2005, 2010; Bhowmik & Saha, 2012). For many households, especially those led by women, migrants, and marginalized caste and ethnic groups, street vending is not just a supplemental activity, but the primary means of survival, serving as a key poverty alleviation mechanism within the larger informal economy (ILO, 2018).

Despite its significant socioeconomic importance, street vending is often portrayed in public and policy debates as a problem of illegality, encroachment, and urban disorder. Urban governance, especially in rapidly growing cities, typically regards streets and sidewalks mainly as pathways for movement, emphasizing smooth pedestrian and vehicle flow. From this narrow perspective, vendors are viewed as obstacles to the right-of-way (ROW), disrupting urban beauty, cleanliness, and safety. Consequently, municipal actions in many places, including Nepal, have generally focused on eviction, confiscation, and clearing space rather than regulating, accommodating, or integrating vendors (Brown & Mackie, 2018; Donovan, 2008; Gautam et al., 2025).

However, a body of critical literature on public space and urban informality challenges this overly simple view. Urban theorists argue that public space is naturally multifunctional, serving not only for mobility but also for social interaction, economic exchange, and cultural expression (Lefebvre, 1991; Mitchell, 2003). From this perspective, conflicts over street vending reflect deeper struggles over the "right to the city" and competing claims to urban space, rather than just violations of rules. Empirical studies further show that congestion and disorder are often caused by poor planning, inconsistent enforcement, and a lack of regulatory frameworks, not an inherent trait of vending itself (Roever & Skinner, 2016). The tourism sector adds another layer of complexity. In many destinations, street vendors are key to the tourism economy, providing street food, informal guiding, photography, and leisure services that shape visitors' authentic experiences of place (Timothy & Wall, 1997). They greatly contribute to destination vibrancy, affordability, and cultural authenticity. Yet, tourism-driven urban development often paradoxically

worsens exclusionary governance, as cities try to "sanitize" public spaces to meet elite or global aesthetic standards, while economically relying on vendors and at the same time marginalizing them politically and spatially (Zukin, 2010).

In Nepal, this contradiction is clearly evident. The Constitution of Nepal 2015 guarantees the right to employment, freedom of occupation, and social justice, establishing a strong normative foundation for safeguarding livelihoods. However, the country lacks a dedicated national law regulating street vending. Instead, regulations are scattered across sectoral laws on roads, public order, sanitation, and local governance, and are applied selectively and inconsistently by municipalities. Decentralization within the federal system has transferred regulatory authority to local governments, resulting in a patchwork of municipal practices ranging from outright bans to informal tolerance, often shaped by political discretion rather than clear policies (Gautam et al., 2025). A recent comprehensive study on Kathmandu Valley (Gautam et al., 2025) provides clear, data-supported evidence of this systemic failure, highlighting widespread harassment, confiscation, lack of social protection, and significant livelihood insecurity faced by vendors despite their economic contributions.

This fragmented policy landscape coexists with a significant research gap. While studies on street vending in major metropolitan areas like Kathmandu are emerging, there is a noticeable lack of empirical analysis focused on semi-urban tourism corridors such as riverfronts, religious sites, and leisure promenades. These hybrid spaces, where tourism, daily life, and informal economies closely intersect, are critical points for ROW disputes, aesthetic regulation, and political visibility. They provide a vital, understudied context for understanding how street vending is practically governed and how conflicts between livelihood security and urban management are negotiated on the ground.

Therefore, this study is driven by two interconnected concerns. First, there is a pressing need for detailed, empirical evidence about how street vending operates within tourism-focused public spaces in semi-urban Nepal, including how vendors adapt to spatial limits and pedestrian flows. Second, current policy and public debates often suggest a false choice between protecting livelihoods and managing public space, ignoring the potential of carefully planned regulation as a third option. Addressing these concerns requires a multi-source, triangulated approach. A complex, multi-faceted issue like street vending cannot be fully understood through just one perspective. This involves combining insights from academic research, legal and policy analysis, media discussions, and on-the-ground fieldwork to develop a comprehensive, evidence-based understanding.

Against this backdrop, the current study aims to empirically examine the real-world conditions of street vending in a semi-urban tourism corridor. It investigates potential governance frameworks that can address concerns about public space while supporting livelihoods. By placing street vending within the interconnected contexts of informal livelihoods, public space governance, and tourism, the study seeks to go beyond debates and offer a practical, evidence-based rationale for regulatory strategies that respect the right-of-way, protect vital livelihoods, and enhance the social and economic vitality of urban public spaces.

2. Objectives, Research Questions, and Methodological Framework

2.1 Study Objectives

The main goal of this study is to develop a thorough, evidence-based understanding of street vending in Nepal's urban and semi-urban tourism settings. It aims to go beyond polarized debates by empirically exploring the complex relationship between livelihood practices, spatial governance, and policy frameworks. The specific objectives are as follows:

a) To document and analyze the socio-economic roles of street vending and its regulatory environment by reviewing global and Nepali literature, as well as national and municipal policies, and media discourse (2014–2025).
b) To explore the real-world aspects of street vending through empirical fieldwork at Narayani Riverside, focusing on spatial practices, stakeholder interactions, and governance dynamics.
c) To synthesize insights from all data sources in order to identify key patterns, systemic challenges, and potential pathways for governance that address both livelihood security and public space management.

2.2 Research Questions

To achieve these objectives, the study is guided by the following exploratory research questions:

a) What are the dominant narratives, policy frameworks, and legal contradictions that shape the governance of street vending in Nepal?
b) How do street vendors at Narayani Riverside negotiate their use of public space, adapt to enforcement, and contribute to the tourism and social dynamics of the area?

c) Based on the synthesized evidence, what are the principal tensions between current governance practices and the practical realities of street vending, and what are the potential components of a more effective regulatory approach?

2.3 Research Design and Philosophical Approach

This study uses a qualitative, exploratory research design based on a multi-source, triangulation method. Street vending is a complex phenomenon shaped by informal practices, discretionary governance, and everyday socio-spatial negotiations. A qualitative approach is therefore best suited to capture the depth, context, and meanings behind these interactions. The research adopts an interpretive perspective, seeing informality not as an anomaly but as a core part of urban economies that must be understood within its specific institutional and spatial setting.

The core strength of the design is its use of four complementary data sources: (1) a narrative review of academic and grey literature, (2) an analysis of policy and legal documents, (3) a review of media reports, and (4) primary fieldwork. This triangulation enables cross-verification of findings, reduces the limitations of any single source, and creates a more comprehensive and reliable evidence base. Including a comparative analysis with the Kathmandu Valley study further enhances the validity of the findings by testing their relevance beyond a single case study.

2.4 Case Study Site: Narayani Riverside

The primary field research was conducted at the Narayani Riverside in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. This site was purposively selected as a critical case study because of its role as a hybrid, multifunctional public space. It serves simultaneously as a pilgrimage site, a leisure and picnic spot, a transit corridor, and a tourism gateway to Chitwan National Park. This combination of uses has created a dense informal economic zone, with vendor counts ranging from about 60 in the off-season to over 120 during peak festival and tourism times. This varied mix of livelihoods, tourism activities, public space use, and right-of-way issues makes the riverfront an ideal spot to examine the practical governance of street vending in a semi-urban, tourism-oriented context.

2.5 Data Collection Methods and Procedures

a. Sampling Strategy

The study employed a purposive and snowball sampling approach to ensure diversity across vending activities, gender, ethnicity, and length of experience. The sample included three main vendor categories: (i) food vendors, (ii) boating service

providers, and (iii) photography/ritual-item sellers. In total, 20 street vendors were interviewed. To gather governance and market perspectives, three municipal officials and two nearby formal business owners were also included as key informants.

b. Data Collection Techniques

Semi-Structured Interviews: The main method involved using flexible interview guides to explore themes such as livelihood dependence, spatial negotiation, interactions with authorities and tourists, and perceptions of legality. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, were conducted in Nepali, and detailed notes were taken.

Participant Observation: The researcher spent extended periods at the site at various times of day, including weekdays, weekends, and seasonal peaks. Observations targeted spatial arrangements, vendor mobility, hygiene practices, enforcement dynamics, and tourist-vendor interactions, recorded through detailed field notes.

Document and Media Analysis: This involved a narrative review of policies, municipal bylaws, and news articles to establish the study's contextual and discursive framework.

c. Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were at the core of the fieldwork, considering the vulnerable status of participants. Verbal informed consent was obtained from all interviewees after explaining the study's purpose. Anonymity was maintained through the use of pseudonyms, and all identifying details (such as exact vending spots) were omitted or generalized. Participants were reassured of confidentiality and their right to skip questions or end the interview at any time, with special care taken when discussing encounters with authorities.

2.6 Data Analysis and Synthesis

All qualitative data from interviews, field notes, and documents were analyzed through thematic analysis. This involved systematically coding the data to identify recurring patterns, themes, and contradictions related to the research questions. After analyzing the Narayani Riverside data, a comparative analysis was conducted against the findings from the 2025 Kathmandu Valley report (Gautam et al., 2025). This final synthesis phase combined insights from all four data streams – literature, policy, media, and primary field research—to develop cohesive, evidence-based conclusions and recommendations presented in this report.

3. Results and Discussion

In this section, I first present the results and summaries of the narrative review of academic and grey literature, then review federal and local policies and laws related to street vending, followed by findings from the media review. Finally, I share the results from the case study of the Narayanghat riverside street vending. These results serve as a walkthrough from global to local scenarios and provide an evidence base for drawing conclusions and policy recommendations on addressing street vending in Nepal.

3.1 3.1 Literature Review

In this section, I first present a structured overview of the key academic literature reviewed for this study. The literature is organized thematically to capture major debates on street vending, informal livelihoods, public space and right-of-way, governance and regulation, tourism connections, and social differentiation (Table 1). Then I summarize the main themes that emerge from these studies.

Table 1. Academic Studies/sources reviewed for the study

S.No	Study	Location	Main themes	Main message
1.	Adhikari (2011)	Kathmandu, Nepal	Income generation in the informal sector; socio-economic conditions of street vendors.	Create a conducive environment for vendors through access to credit, training, and secure vending sites.
2.	Anja & Zhang (2024)	Dilla Town, Ethiopia	Social capital as a survival strategy; role of networks and trust among vendors.	Support and strengthen vendor associations and networks to enhance their resilience.
3.	Anja & Zhang (2025)	Dilla Town, Ethiopia	Street vending as a vital livelihood for the urban poor; the concept of vending as “lifeblood” for survival.	Recognize street vending as a permanent livelihood strategy and integrate it into urban plans, rather than viewing it as a temporary problem.
4.	Berhanu (2021)	Ethiopia	Street vending as a livelihood for the urban poor; conflict between vendors and city administrations.	Design inclusive urban policies that balance the livelihood needs of vendors with city management objectives.

S.No	Study	Location	Main themes	Main message
5.	Bhattarai & Pathak (2020)	Kathmandu Valley, Nepal	Income generation from street vending; its role in poverty reduction.	Provide micro-credit facilities, skill development training, and designated vending zones.
6.	Bhattarai et al. (2021)	Nepal	Status and vulnerabilities of informal workers, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Extend social protection measures (e.g., relief, healthcare) to informal workers and include them in formal recovery plans.
7.	Bhattarai & Pathak (2020)	Nepal	Informal sector's contribution to livelihood practices.	(Implicit) Recognize and support the informal sector as a key component of the urban economy.
8.	Bhowmik (2005)	Asia (Multiple Countries)	Overview of street vending in Asia; working conditions, associations, and policy responses.	Formulate national policies for street vendors that provide legal status, designated spaces, and self-regulatory mechanisms.
9.	Bhowmik (2010)	Global	Street vending in the global urban economy; issues of space, regulation, and organization.	Advocate for pro-poor urban planning that includes vendors and recognizes their economic contribution.
10.	Bhowmik & Saha (2012)	India (10 Cities)	A comprehensive survey of street vendors; their numbers, working conditions, and challenges.	Recommends implementation of a national policy to protect vendors' livelihoods and regulate vending activities.
11.	Briedenhann & Wickens (2004)	Rural Areas (General)	Tourism routes as a tool for economic development.	Use tourism routes to stimulate local economic development, which could include promoting local crafts and food sold by vendors.
12.	Bromley (2000)	Global	Global review of street vending and public policy; ambivalence of authorities, issues of legality and space.	Shift from repressive policies (eviction, clearance) to more accommodative and regulatory approaches.

S.No	Study	Location	Main themes	Main message
13.	Brown & Mackie (2018)	Africa	Politics of street trading; comparative framework for understanding governance and contestation.	Understand the political dynamics and power relations shaping street vending to develop more effective and just policies.
14.	Chen (2012)	Global (Theoretical)	Definitions, theories, and policies related to the informal economy.	Calls for an integrated approach that moves beyond a binary formal/informal view and promotes inclusive policies.
15.	Deore & Lathia (2019)	Ahmedabad, India	Streets as public spaces; lessons from street vending for urban planning and design.	Design streets as multi-functional public spaces that can accommodate vending, rather than prioritizing only traffic movement.
16.	Donovan (2008)	Bogotá, Colombia	Contestation of public space; policies of eviction and displacement.	Recommends policies that balance the right to public space with the right to work, moving beyond purely repressive measures.
17.	Gautam et al. (2025)	Kathmandu Valley, Nepal	Rights of street vendors; comprehensive study on their situation and challenges.	A call for legal recognition, social security, and the formation of vendor associations to safeguard their rights.
18.	International Labour Organization (2012)	Global	Statistical update on employment in the informal economy.	N/A (Data provision)
19.	International Labour Organization (2015)	Global	ILO Recommendation on transitioning from the informal to the formal economy.	Member states should facilitate the transition to the formal economy, ensuring respect for workers' rights and promoting inclusive development.
20.	Iyenda (2005)	Kinshasa, DRC	Street enterprises as a key component of urban livelihoods and poverty reduction.	Support street enterprises through access to micro-credit and by providing basic infrastructure.

S.No	Study	Location	Main themes	Main message
21.	Khawas (2022)	Pokhara, Nepal	Vendors' struggle for urban space; spatial claims and contestations.	Implement the Street Vendors Act (or similar) to create Town Vending Committees and designate vending zones.
22.	Kumar (2012)	Bhubaneshwar, India	A policy model for the regularization of street vending.	Proposes a model involving a tripartite committee (vendors, government, civil society) to manage vending in a participatory manner.
23.	Lefebvre (1991)	N/A (Theory)	The social production of space; concepts of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces.	N/A (Theoretical framework for analysis)
24.	Lyngwa & Sahoo (2025)	Aizawl, India	Insecurity and spatial dynamics of street vending during crises (like COVID-19).	Develop crisis-resilient urban policies that provide social safety nets and protect vendors' access to public space during emergencies.
25.	Makinde & Lanrewaju (2024)	N/A (Theory)	Critical interpretation of Henri Lefebvre's theory of space.	N/A
26.	Mengistu & Jibat (2015)	Jimma Town, Ethiopia	Street vending as a safety-net for disadvantaged groups (e.g., migrants, women, uneducated).	Create a supportive environment with access to credit and designated market areas, as vending is a crucial fallback option.
27.	Mesele (2019)	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Street vending as a livelihood strategy for the urban poor.	Formalizing street vending through licensing, designated spaces, and access to finance to enhance its viability.
28.	Mitchell (2003)	N/A (Theory)	The right to the city and the fight for public space; public space as a site for political action and survival.	N/A (Theoretical framework for the right to public space)

S.No	Study	Location	Main themes	Main message
29.	Mitullah (2003)	Africa (6 countries)	Synthesis of street vending in African cities; policy and regulatory frameworks.	Advocate for a multi-sectoral approach involving all stakeholders (vendors, local authorities, police) to develop inclusive policies.
30.	Peimani & Kamalipour (2022)	Global	Systematic review of street vending and informal urbanism; spatiality, governance, and socio-economic aspects.	Highlights the need for more nuanced and context-sensitive urban policies that recognize the complexity of informal vending.
31.	Rahayu et al. (2025)	Urban Indonesia	The paradox of public space: balancing governance (order, cleanliness) with the reality of street vending.	Proposes collaborative governance models that involve vendors in decision-making to manage public space more equitably.
32.	Roever (2014)	Global (WIEGO study)	Monitoring the informal economy; detailed sector report on street vendors' working conditions.	Improve data collection on street vendors and use it to inform policies that address their specific needs (e.g., infrastructure, finance).
33.	Roever & Skinner (2016)	Global	The relationship between street vendors and cities; issues of urban governance, policy, and planning.	Argues for a shift from neglect and repression to policies that support inclusive public space and secure livelihoods.
34.	Saha (2016)	Urban India	Informal markets, livelihoods, and the politics of street vending.	(Implicit) Recognize the political agency of vendors and their associations in shaping urban space and policy.
35.	Salès (2018)	Mumbai, India	The Street Vendors Act of 2014 and its implementation regarding the right to public space.	Highlights the gap between the progressive Act and its implementation, calling for stronger enforcement and political will.
36.	Sharma & Pradhan (2017)	Kathmandu Valley, Nepal	Livelihoods of petty street vendors; their socio-economic profile and challenges.	Integrate street vending into urban development and poverty reduction strategies.

S.No	Study	Location	Main themes	Main message
37.	Shrestha et al. (2019)	Kathmandu, Nepal	Use and appropriation of urban public space for street vending.	Plan for and manage public space to accommodate the needs of street vendors as legitimate users of the city.
38.	Shrestha (2013)	Kathmandu, Nepal	Socio-economic study of street vendors; their characteristics and reasons for vending.	Recommends legal recognition, provision of basic facilities (water, toilets), and access to credit.
39.	Skinner (2008)	Africa	A review of street trade in Africa; its scale, nature, and the policy environment.	Calls for more nuanced and supportive policies that move beyond a simplistic informal/ formal dichotomy and recognize street trade's economic role.
40.	Tallavajjula (2023)	Global (Conceptual)	Socio-spatial equity in public space; how design and policy can create inclusive spaces.	Design public spaces with principles of socio-spatial equity, ensuring they are accessible and usable by all, including street vendors.
41.	Tamirat & Nega (2015)	Jimma Town, Ethiopia	(Same as Mengistu & Jibat, 2015) Street vending as a safety-net.	Create a supportive environment with access to credit and designated market areas.
42.	Thapa-Parajuli et al. (2024)	Kirtipur, Nepal	Drivers, financial performance, and challenges street vendors	Need for local governments to implement skill development programs, formalize the sector and invest in infrastructure. Inclusive policies and financial support mechanisms are essential.
43.	Timalsina (2007)	Kathmandu, Nepal	Rural-urban migration and livelihood in the informal sector, focusing on street vendors.	Address the root causes of rural-urban migration and provide support systems for migrants in cities, including access to vending opportunities.
44.	Timothy & Wall (1997)	General (Tourism)	The dynamics of selling to tourists; interactions between vendors and tourists.	Manage tourist-vendor interactions to ensure a positive experience for both, potentially through organized markets and clear guidelines.

S.No	Study	Location	Main themes	Main message
45.	Tucker & Devlin (2019)	Global North/ South	Uncertainty in the governance of street vending; comparison of how different cities manage informality and risk.	Move towards more flexible and adaptive governance models that can manage uncertainty and provide greater stability for vendors.
46.	Uwamahoro & Khoo (2025)	Sub-Saharan Africa	Scoping review on the vulnerability of street vendors to displacement due to urban development.	Advocate for "just relocation" or in-situ upgrading that protects vendors' livelihoods and involves them in urban development planning.
47.	WIEGO (2019)	Multiple Countries	Legal advocacy strategies for street vendors; reflections from national and local struggles.	Support vendor organizations in their legal struggles for rights and recognition, using law as a tool for social change.
48.	Wongtada (2014)	Global	Literature review and research agenda for the study of street vending phenomena.	Research agenda setting
49.	Zhang et al. (2022)	China	Sustainable development of China's street vendor economy, likely in a post-COVID context.	Develop supportive policies that balance economic vitality with urban management, such as designated night markets and simplified licensing.
50.	Zhang & Shao (2024)	China	Evaluating the suitability of street vending planning in urban public space in the post-COVID-19 era.	Proposes a planning evaluation framework to create more suitable, flexible, and hygienic vending spaces that meet public needs.
51.	Zukin (2010)	New York City, USA	The death and life of authentic urban places; the role of street vendors and markets in creating urban authenticity.	Protect the social and cultural diversity of urban neighborhoods, including the presence of street vendors, against the forces of gentrification and commercialization.

The literature on street vending spans multiple disciplinae, including urban studies, development economics, public policy, planning, and tourism studies. While

perspectives differ, there is broad agreement that street vending is a vital and persistent part of urban economies in the Global South rather than a temporary or leftover activity (Chen, 2012; Mitullah, 2003). This section reviews the literature by theme, focusing on five interconnected topics that shape the analytical framework of this study: (i) street vending and informal livelihoods, (ii) public space and right-of-way, (iii) governance and regulation, (iv) street vending and tourism, and (v) gender and social differentiation.

3.1.1 Street Vending and Informal Livelihoods

A substantial body of literature places street vending within the broader informal economy, emphasizing its role as a livelihood option for populations excluded from formal employment due to structural constraints in labor markets (Bromley, 2000; Chen, 2012). Informality is understood not as a temporary deviation from formal employment but as a systemic outcome of economic restructuring, limited industrial absorption, rural-urban migration, and uneven urban development (Chen, 2012; Mengistu & Jibat, 2015; Bromley, 2000; Mitullah, 2003; Berhanu, 2021).

Within this framework, street vending provides an accessible way to earn income because it requires low initial investment, offers flexible working hours, and depends on public space rather than private property or formal business locations (Anja & Zhang, 2025; Mitullah, 2003). Studies from South Asia show that vending often serves as a main source of household income rather than just supplemental earnings, with vendors gaining skills, building customer networks, and developing spatial strategies over time (Bhowmik, 2005, 2010; Kumar, 2012; Gautam et al., 2025; Saha, 2016; Sharma & Pradhan, 2017). These findings challenge the idea that vendors are merely transient or opportunistic and instead depict vending as a relatively stable, though insecure, livelihood woven into daily urban economies.

In Nepal, empirical research remains limited, but existing studies consistently show that informal employment is the primary form of non-agricultural work and that street vending is vital for urban survival strategies (Government of Nepal, 2021; ILO, 2012; Adhikari, 2011; Bhattarai & Pathak, 2020; Timalsina, 2007). Vendors frequently include rural migrants, women with caregiving responsibilities, and individuals from marginalized caste and ethnic groups, for whom access to formal employment is constrained (Bhattarai & Pathak, 2020; Khawas, 2022). The literature further emphasizes that attempts to ban vending without offering viable alternatives often worsen poverty, food insecurity, and social exclusion (Berhanu, 2021; Iyenda, 2005; Thapa-Parajuli, 2024).

3.1.2 Public Space, Streets, and Right-of-Way

The management and regulation of public space are central to debates on street vending. Traditional urban planning approaches often view streets and sidewalks mainly as circulation infrastructure, emphasizing uninterrupted pedestrian and vehicle flow (Deore & Lathia, 2019; Shrestha et al., 2019; Peimani & Kamalipour, 2022). From this perspective, street vending is seen as an obstacle to the right-of-way (ROW) and a disruption of urban order (Shrestha et al., 2019).

Critical urban scholarship challenges this narrow functionalist perspective. Lefebvre's concept of the "right to the city" highlights that urban space is socially constructed and fulfills multiple economic, social, and cultural roles beyond just mobility (Lefebvre, 1991; Makinde & Lanrewaju, 2024). Mitchell (2003) similarly contends that disputes over public space are fundamentally political, reflecting battles over visibility, legitimacy, and the right to make a living in the city.

Empirical studies suggest that pedestrian congestion and conflicts are not natural results of street vending but often arise from poor spatial planning, inconsistent enforcement, and unclear regulatory frameworks (Brown & Mackie, 2018; Donovan, 2008; Roever & Skinner, 2016; Tucker & Devlin, 2019). Vendors often adapt their practices to manage pedestrian flow by changing stall size, location, and operating hours (Tucker & Devlin, 2019; Zhang & Shao, 2024). Evidence from different settings indicates that spatially sensitive regulatory measures, such as designated vending zones, time-sharing arrangements, and pedestrian-priority street designs, can resolve ROW issues while protecting livelihoods (Tallavajjula, 2023; Zhang et al., 2022).

This body of literature redefines ROW not as a zero-sum conflict between vendors and pedestrians, but as a governance challenge that requires planning, negotiation, and predictable enforcement mechanisms.

3.1.3 Governance, Regulation, and Legal Recognition

A key theme in the literature is how street vending is managed amid legal ambiguity. In many cities, vendors operate in a gray area where vending is neither clearly legal nor fully prohibited, allowing for discretionary enforcement, selective tolerance, and occasional eviction campaigns (Roever & Skinner, 2016; Saha, 2016; Gautam et al., 2025; Uwamahoro & Khoo, 2025). This ambiguity often stems from conflicting policy priorities, such as urban beautification, traffic control, and political pressures from formal business interests (Gautam et al., 2025; Uwamahoro & Khoo, 2025).

Eviction-led governance has faced widespread criticism for its ineffectiveness and social costs. Research across Latin America, Africa, and South Asia show that evictions disrupt livelihoods, increase vulnerability, and create cycles of displacement and return without addressing fundamental issues like congestion or sanitation (Donovan, 2008; Iyenda, 2005; Roever & Skinner, 2016; Brown & Mackie, 2018). These strategies also weaken trust between vendors and authorities, harming prospects for compliance and cooperation (Brown & Mackie, 2018).

In contrast, research on regulatory alternatives highlights legal recognition, participatory governance, and negotiated regulation. Analyses of India's Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act illustrate how formal recognition, vendor committees, and integration into urban planning can enhance livelihood security, even though implementation challenges persist (Bhowmik, 2012; Salès, 2018; Tallavajjula, 2023). International policy frameworks support these findings. ILO Recommendation No. 204 advocates inclusive, rights-based approaches to transitioning from informal to formal economies, while the New Urban Agenda emphasizes inclusive governance of public space and the recognition of informal livelihoods (ILO, 2015; UN-Habitat, 2020; WIEGO, 2019).

3.1.4 Street Vending, Tourism, and Urban Experience

A growing body of literature examines street vending in tourism-driven economies, especially in cities where tourism blends with everyday urban life. Scholars contend that informal vendors play a crucial role in shaping destination character, authenticity, and affordability, primarily through street food, informal guiding, and leisure services (Timothy & Wall, 1997; Wongtada, 2014; Zukin, 2010; Khawas, 2022).

Street vendors often serve as cultural mediators, influencing tourists' sensory and social experiences through everyday interactions that are mostly absent in formal tourism settings. This role is especially important at religious sites, riverfronts, and heritage districts, where informal services contribute to rituals, leisure, and social activities.

At the same time, tourism-driven urban development can reinforce exclusionary practices. Zukin (2010) describes how cities create sanitized and aestheticized public spaces to attract elite tourism and investment, often displacing informal workers. Similar patterns are observed in South Asian and Nepali tourism settings, where informal actors are economically vital but excluded from tourism planning and branding narratives (Khawas, 2022; Sharma & Pradhan, 2017).

3.1.5 Gender, Social Differentiation, and Vulnerability

The literature consistently highlights that street vending is socially stratified. Factors such as gender, caste, ethnicity, age, and migration status influence entry into vending, types of activities, income levels, and exposure to risks (Khawas, 2022; Mitullah, 2003). Women vendors often focus on food vending and small-scale retail because of lower barriers to entry and greater flexibility, but they face increased vulnerability due to caregiving responsibilities, mobility restrictions, and harassment (Berhanu, 2021; Mitullah, 2003; Khawas, 2022; Uwamahoro & Khoo, 2025).

Research shows that women and marginalized groups are disproportionately impacted by eviction and confiscation, as even brief income disruptions can lead to serious household consequences (Iyenda, 2005; Uwamahoro & Khoo, 2025). These findings highlight the importance of gender-sensitive and socially inclusive regulatory frameworks that recognize different vulnerabilities rather than using uniform enforcement approaches.

3.1.6 Street Vending as the Ultimate Livelihood Safety Net

Street vending acts as a vital safety net for people who have lost access to jobs, assets, and formal social protections. Across the Global South, studies consistently show that individuals turn to street vending not by choice but out of necessity, often after trying all other means of survival (Bromley, 2000; Iyenda et al., 2005). Since street vending requires little start-up capital, no formal education, and provides immediate income, it remains accessible even to those who are broke, displaced, or socially marginalized.

Several studies explicitly frame street vending as a last-resort livelihood. Tamirat and Nega (2015) describe street vending as a "safety net for disadvantaged people," especially the unemployed, migrants, and asset-poor urban residents. Similarly, Mesele (2019) and Berhanu (2021) show that street vending absorbs individuals excluded from formal labor markets, serving more as an economic shelter than as an entrepreneurial choice. Evidence from Nepal further shows that street vending allows households to meet basic needs such as food, health care, and education, helping prevent a descent into extreme poverty when other income sources are unavailable (Bhattarai & Pathak, 2020; Timalsina, 2007; Thapa-Parajuli, 2024).

While direct peer-reviewed studies explicitly framing street vending as a formal rehabilitation pathway for homeless or violence-affected populations remain limited, related evidence strongly supports its reintegrative function. Research shows how street vending provides immediate income, restores economic agency,

and enables gradual stabilization for individuals facing severe livelihood shocks (Lyngwa & Sahoo, 2025). Studies also emphasize the role of vendor networks in providing informal insurance, social support, and pathways back into community life, which are crucial to social and economic reintegration (Anja & Zhang, 2024; Roever, 2014).

Taken together, the literature supports the argument that street vending functions as the ultimate safety net for livelihoods: the economic activity people rely on when formal employment, welfare systems, and personal resources have failed, providing a last chance for survival and gradual reintegration into urban economies.

3.1.7 Synthesis and Relevance to the Present Study

Taken together, the literature presents several key insights relevant to this study. First, street vending is a structural livelihood strategy embedded in urban economies rather than a temporary survival activity. Second, conflicts over rights of way (ROW) and public space are a result of governance failures, not inherent traits of vending. Third, eviction-based approaches are ineffective and socially harmful, while regulated and participatory models have a greater potential to balance livelihoods with urban order. Fourth, street vendors play a crucial role in tourism economies and daily urban life, yet they are largely excluded from formal planning processes. Finally, although it might seem obvious without studies, street vending appears to be a last-resort livelihood, the ultimate safety net, and an integrative pathway for the poor and those who have lost everything.

Despite these insights, empirical research on semi-urban tourism areas in Nepal remains limited. Existing studies mainly focus on major metropolitan regions or consider vending as a broad urban issue. This gap supports the current study's focus on the Narayani Riverside and its analysis of regulated street vending as a governance strategy that sustains livelihoods while respecting right-of-way.

3.2 Policy Review

3.2.1 National Level Policies and Laws

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 provides a broad rights-based foundation that directly relates to street vending as a livelihood. Article 17 guarantees the freedom to choose an occupation, employment, trade, or business, recognizing street vending as a constitutionally protected form of economic activity (Constitution of Nepal, 2015). Article 18 affirms equality before the law and prohibits discriminatory treatment of individuals involved in informal or non-traditional occupations. Article 33 affirms the right to employment, while Article 34 enshrines workers' rights,

including fair labor practices and social security principles (Constitution of Nepal, 2015).

The Constitution also recognizes socio-economic rights that are closely linked to informal livelihoods. Article 35 guarantees the right to health, and Article 36 guarantees the right to food. Together, these provisions imply a government obligation to support livelihood strategies enabling individuals and households to access food, healthcare, and basic well-being. From a constitutional perspective, street vending can therefore be viewed as an essential part of the right to livelihood, especially for populations excluded from formal employment (Constitution of Nepal, 2015).

However, constitutional guarantees are not absolute. The state has the authority to regulate economic activities to protect public order, health, and morality. In practice, municipal authorities often use this regulatory space to justify eviction drives, confiscation of goods, and exclusionary urban management practices. Vendors are frequently labeled as encroachers, despite their long-term presence and economic contributions. This highlights a persistent gap between constitutional intent and everyday governance, where livelihood rights are subordinated to narrow interpretations of urban order (Khawas, 2022; MoFAGA, 2015, 2021).

Beyond constitutional provisions, several national laws indirectly regulate street vending. The Local Government Operation Act of 2017 delegates regulatory powers to municipalities for managing public spaces, collecting revenue, and urban planning, but it does not provide specific guidelines for vending regulation (Local Government Operation Act, 2017). The Public Roads Act of 1974 authorizes authorities to control encroachments on roadsides, often used to evict vendors without livelihood protections (Public Roads Act, 1974). The Labour Act of 2017 and Social Security Act of 2017 focus on formal workers, leaving informal vendors outside their scope (Labour Act, 2017).

National tourism policies, such as the Tourism Policy 2025 (2082), emphasize formal enterprises, infrastructure development, and destination promotion, while overlooking the contributions of informal vendors to daily tourism economies (Government of Nepal, 2025). Public health laws like the Food Act 1966 address hygiene but impose burdensome compliance requirements that hinder most street vendors from registering formally (GoN, 1966). The Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA) guidelines (MoFAGA, 2015, 2021) on urban management acknowledge informal economies but lack practical vending frameworks (MoFAGA, 2015, 202).

3.2.2 Local Level Policies and Bylaws

At the municipal level, street vending regulation varies significantly across Nepal's cities, characterized by inconsistent enforcement rather than uniform policies. Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) bylaws under the KMC Act 2046 prohibit vending on major roadsides and footpaths, citing right-of-way (ROW) obstruction, pedestrian safety, and urban aesthetics (KMC Act, 2046). Enforcement involves regular efforts to remove stalls, confiscate goods, and issue fines, often without prior notice or options for relocation. KMC collects revenue through temporary permits during festivals but resumes clearance operations afterward.

Pokhara Metropolitan City also bans vending in high-traffic tourist areas like Lakeside, citing it as incompatible with "world-class" city standards, although some tolerance exists during festivals (Pokhara Metropolitan City Act). The act highlights tourism aesthetics and pedestrian flow, leading to seasonal crackdowns that disrupt vendor incomes during peak visitor times.

Bharatpur Metropolitan City, the site of the Narayani Riverside case study, has a de facto policy of tolerance toward riverside vendors. Local rules under the Municipal Act allow for revenue collection through informal "fees" but do not create official vending zones or certification processes (Bharatpur Economic Act 2080; Business Tax Procedure 2080). Officials use discretion based on seasonal tourism, political pressure, and public complaints, leading to inconsistent enforcement. During festivals like *Teej* or *Maghi*, vending activities increase without interference, but complaints sometimes trigger sporadic clearance efforts. Riverfront-specific procedures, including the Narayani Riverside Management and Operation Procedure 2077, regulate activities along the riverfront without acknowledging street vendors as legitimate participants in tourism or urban governance (Narayani Riverside Procedure 2077).

Other municipalities like Lalitpur Sub-Metropolitan City and Biratnagar have experimented with designated vending zones, but these often fail due to poor location choices (low footfall), lack of vendor consultation, and inadequate infrastructure (no water or electricity) (Khawas, 2022). Across all levels of local government, revenue collection is mostly informal without providing services, while enforcement through fines and confiscations is more common than regulation (MoFAGA, 2015, 2021).

Table 2: Municipality policies regarding street vendors

S.N.	Municipality	Province	Status	Notes / Evidence
1.	Kathmandu	Bagmati	Ban / Enforcement	KMC officially banned street vending; active evictions & confiscations since 2023
2.	Pokhara	Gandaki	Restrict / Illegal without permit	Pokhara Metropolitan cites Economic Act: vending on footpaths treated as illegal if unregistered
3.	Bharatpur (Narayani Riverside)	Bagmati	Allow (De facto)	Active vending observed (food, tourism services). Likely tolerated, not formally codified
4.	Lalitpur	Bagmati	Restrict / Mixed	Reports of harassment and enforcement; legal insecurity persists

This table illustrates the uneven and inconsistent regulatory landscape across Nepal's major municipalities. Some cities enforce outright bans, while others rely on informal tolerance, and many operate under ambiguous or mixed approaches. This inconsistency increases uncertainty for vendors and makes it difficult to plan livelihoods predictably.

3.2.3 International Policy Frameworks and Comparative Examples

Many countries worldwide have models for regulating street vending that Nepal could adopt. India's Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act 2014 exemplifies a rights-based approach (Government of India, 2014). The Act officially recognizes vending, establishes Town Vending Committees (TVCs) with one-third vendor representation, requires vending surveys for eligibility, and bans arbitrary evictions. Designated vending zones should consider foot traffic and viability, including provisions for grievance redressal, appeals, and training programs. Implementation challenges at the municipal level, such as corruption and uneven zone allocation, persist, but the framework has reduced harassment and increased spatial negotiation (Bhowmik, 2012; WIEGO, 2019).

South Africa's National Landside Management Policy designates vending zones but allows municipalities to prioritize evictions over allocation, creating gaps between national law and local practice (Skinner, 2008). In Johannesburg and Cape

Town, vendors report ongoing harassment despite legal zoning rules, highlighting the need for better enforcement.

Indonesia's city-level regulations (e.g., Surabaya, Jakarta) require permits but prioritize urban order over livelihoods, leading to relocation failures when zones lack customer access and infrastructure (Rahayu et al., 2025). Vendors often return to their original spots, perpetuating cycles of conflict.

China's zoning experiments in Beijing and Shanghai emphasize the importance of choosing locations, as vendor abandonment of designated areas highlights economic needs over administrative orders (Zhang et al., 2022; Zhang Shao, 2024). Pilot projects that include vendor feedback have resulted in higher compliance rates.

International labour standards further guide regulation. ILO Recommendation 204 (2015) promotes the gradual formalization of informal workers through rights protection, social protections expansion, and participatory governance without coercion (ILO, 2015). The UN-Habitat New Urban Agenda (2016) supports inclusive management of public spaces that recognize informal economies as legitimate parts of cities (UN-Habitat, 2016).

3.2.4 Gaps in Nepal's Policy Framework

Nepal lacks a specific national law for street vending, leaving vendors in legal uncertainty despite constitutional protections. Constitutional rights to livelihood (Articles 17, 33, 34) conflict with municipal ROW enforcement through fragmented bylaws and the Public Roads Act 1974 (Constitution of Nepal, 2015; Public Roads Act, 1974). There are no existing systems for vending surveys, certification, or TVC-style participation. Tourism policies like Tourism Policy 2025 exclude informal actors who are vital to destination vibrancy and everyday visitor experiences, while labor and social security laws overlook the informal sector, which accounts for over 80% of non-agricultural employment (ILO, 2012; Government of Nepal, 2025).

Devolution under the federal system (Local Government Operation Act 2017) worsens inconsistencies, as municipalities interpret "public order" differently without national guidelines or capacity-building support (Local Government Operation Act, 2017). Revenue collection happens informally (e.g., Bharatpur "fees") but does not lead to investments in supporting vendor infrastructure like hygiene facilities, waste management, or skills training. Evictions focus on short-term spatial clearance instead of long-term economic inclusion, perpetuating cycles of displacement, informal return, and increased vulnerability. Health regulations

discourage formalization through complicated compliance, excluding vendors from incentives for safe practices (Food Hygiene and Quality Act, 2081).

3.2.5 Lessons for Nepal from Comparative Policies

India's 2014 Act shows that legal recognition lowers vulnerability and allows negotiated space use, which applies directly to Nepal's tourism-focused urban areas like Narayani Riverside (Government of India, 2014). Participatory TVCs could connect central and local levels, giving vendors a voice in zoning, surveys, and dispute resolution. Cases from South Africa and Indonesia warn against zoning without economic viability checks (footfall analysis, infrastructure) and strong enforcement of national policies at local levels (Rahayu et al., 2025; Skinner, 2008).

ILO R204 principles align closely with Nepal's constitutional rights, promoting non-coercive formalization approaches that honour existing livelihoods (ILO, 2015). China's locational lessons highlight the importance of vendor consultation in zone planning to prevent abandonment (Zhang et al., 2022).

Successful models consistently emphasize five core elements: (1) legal recognition of vending as a legitimate occupation; (2) inclusive planning bodies with vendor representation; (3) footfall-sensitive zoning with relocation safeguards; (4) social protection linkages (health, pensions); and (5) accessible grievance mechanisms (WIEGO, 2019). Nepal could pass a national Street Vendors Act that mandates these elements, devolve implementation to MoFAGA, and maintain consistency through model bylaws and annual reports. Building capacity in municipalities, vendor literacy programs, and pilot zones in tourism sites would support effective implementation (Ministry of Urban Development, 2010; MoFAGA, 2015, 2021).

3.3 Media Reporting

A media review was conducted to examine public discourse and policy debates surrounding street vending in Nepal. News articles were collected from national English- and Nepali-language outlets published between 2014 and 2025. Selection was based on keyword searches including "street vendors," "footpath trade," "eviction," and "municipal regulation." The review included both reports critical of street vending and those highlighting vendors' livelihood concerns, enabling a balanced assessment of different perspectives on the use of public space, including arguments related to pedestrian access, urban order, and public health.

Table 3. Media Reporting on Street Vending in Nepal (2014–2025)

Source	Media	News/Op-Ed Heading (English/Nepali)	Issues Indicated	Suggested Solution (if any)	Significance
Kafle (2025)	Onlinekhabar	'२० हजार कमाएर जीवन धान्थ्यौं, महानगरले देखिसहेन' [We used to earn 20k to make a living, but the metropolis did not see it]	Informal workers ignored	Recognition, integration	Highlights invisibility of informal labour
Republica (2025)	MyRepublica	Street vendors stage protest against KMC	Protests	–	Shows mobilization
Onlinekhabar (202)	Onlinekhabar	अध्ययन निष्कर्ष: उपत्यकाका पालिका निर्मम [Study: Valley municipalities ruthless to vendors]	Harsh municipal policies	Humane regulation	Shows policy adhocism and cruelty
Republica (2024)	MyRepublica	Civil society leaders ask Mayor Balen to apologize to street vendors	Human rights	Apology, recognition	Civil society support
RSS (2024)	Himalayan Times	Street traders announce phase-wise protest	Broken promises	Protests escalate	Public challenge to city
Business Age (2024)	NewBiz Report	Street vendors announce phase-wise protest	Protests	–	Same protest wave
Himalayan News Service (2023)	Himalayan Times	77 hours of protest vs. KMC crackdown	Continuous protests	Recognition needed	Symbolic defiance
Himalayan News Service (2023)	Himalayan Times	Hundreds protest KMC's move against vendors	Eviction drives	Stop crackdown	Growing resistance

Source	Media	News/Op-Ed Heading (English/Nepali)	Issues Indicated	Suggested Solution (if any)	Significance
Setopati Correspondence (2023)	Setopati	फुटपाथमा व्यापार गरे सामान लिलाम गर्ने [KMC to auction confiscated goods]	Punitive measures	–	Harsh stance by metropolis
Setopati Correspondence (2023)	Setopati	ईः र काठमाडौं महानगरबीच ४ बुँदे सहमति [4-point deal between KMC & Activist Ee]	Protest	Vendor options resolution	Signs of negotiation
Ojha (2023)	Kathmandu Post	Street vending ban a kick in the belly of the poor	Harsh ban	Inclusive policy	Grievance news
Kshetri (2022)	Naya Patrika	पहिचान खोज्दै सडक व्यवसाय [Street vendors seeking identity]	Lack of recognition	Municipal ID cards	Push for legal identity
Republica (2022)	MyRepublica	Deputy Mayor: Managing vendors not our job	Governance vacuum	–	Policy neglect
Setopati Correspondent (2022)	Setopati	काठमाडौं महानगरविरूद्ध फुटपाथ व्यापारी आन्दोलित [Vendors protest against KMC]	Vendor resistance	Dialogue	Shows activism
RSS (2022)	Himalayan Times	"No policy allows business on footpaths"	Legal vacuum	Strict stance	Highlights policy gap
Onlinekhabar (2020)	Onlinekhabar	उपत्यकामा अब फुटपाथ र ठेलाको व्यापार खुला [Street trade open post-lockdown]	COVID closure	Gradual reopening	Pandemic recovery

Source	Media	News/Op-Ed Heading (English/Nepali)	Issues Indicated	Suggested Solution (if any)	Significance
Himalayan News Service (2019)	Himalayan Times	Street vendors in KMC continue encroaching	Encroachment frame	–	Typical anti-vendor framing
Adhikari (2019)	Setopati	अब फुटपाथ व्यापारीका सामान खोसिँदैन... [No more confiscation of vendor goods, they will be warned politely]	Arbitrary confiscation	Humane enforcement	Turning point in policing/ enforcement
Himalayan News Service (2017)	Himalayan Times	Forced to pack up, vendors struggle to survive	Livelihood loss	–	Human impact angle
"Anuradha Koirala" (2016)	Nari	अनुराधा कोइराला	Homelessness and street begging (abandoned victims of sex offence)	Street vending as an initial rehabilitation step	Feature
Ghimire (2015)	Kathmandu Post	Evicted Lalitpur vendors await relocation	Displacement	Relocation needed	Example of displacement

An analysis of major Nepali media reports from 2014 to 2025 reveals a complex, often contradictory narrative about street vending. The discourse shows a constant tension between recognizing vendors' socioeconomic needs and depicting them as urban nuisances, all within a context of unclear policies and increasing civic pushback. The following themes stand out from the source materials.

3.3.1 Evictions, Crackdowns, and Municipal "Ruthlessness"

A dominant narrative in outlets like The Himalayan Times and Onlinekhabar discusses recurring municipal eviction drives, often justified as efforts for urban beautification, pedestrian safety, or public health enforcement. These actions are frequently depicted as harsh and excessive. A 2025 study highlighted by Onlinekhabar found that Kathmandu Valley municipalities seem "ruthless" toward street vendors. Reports mention the confiscation and even auctioning of vendors' goods (Setopati, 2023), actions that directly threaten their immediate livelihoods. This framing

depicts the municipality as an insensitive enforcer, prioritizing order over survival, a theme regularly critiqued in op-eds and investigative reports.

3.3.2 Livelihoods, Precarity, and Invisibility

Countering the enforcement narrative, much of the reporting emphasizes the vital economic role of vending and the deep vulnerability of vendors. Kafle's (2025) poignant report in Onlinekhabar highlights how displaced informal workers, earning a crucial monthly income (e.g., NPR 20,000), remain "invisible" to city planners. Older reports, like one from The Himalayan Times (2017), also described vendors "struggling to make ends meet" after being forced to shut down. This theme underscores that street vending is not just a choice but a necessary survival strategy for the urban poor, a reality often overlooked during crackdowns. The economic impact of COVID-19 closures and the need for gradual reopening further support this story of economic precarity (Onlinekhabar, 2020).

3.3.3 The Vacuum of Policy and Governance

Numerous articles point out a core governance failure: the absence of a clear, unified national policy on street vending. This results in a legal gray area for vendors. A 2022 Himalayan Times report, citing the Rastriya Samachar Samiti, bluntly stated, "No policy allows business on footpaths," emphasizing the legal basis for municipal action. On the other hand, this lack is criticized as a failure to take responsibility. A Republica story (2022) quoted a Deputy Mayor saying managing vendors "is not KMC's job," revealing institutional ambivalence. Commentators like Ojha (2023) in The Kathmandu Post describe sweeping bans as a "kick in the belly of the urban poor," and advocate for inclusive, regulated policies instead of outright bans. This theme frames the conflict as a systemic failure rather than just a dispute between vendors and the city.

3.3.4 Protest, Resistance, and Growing Organization

Media coverage traces an evolution in vendor agency from passive victims to organized resisters. Reports of protests are becoming more frequent. The Himalayan Times highlighted a "77-hour standing protest" in 2023, a symbolic act of defiance demanding recognition. Similarly, Republica and Business Age (2024) reported on "phase-wise protests," showing strategic, sustained mobilization. This activism has begun to lead to negotiations, such as the reported four-point agreement between vendors and KMC (Onlinekhabar, 2023). Additionally, civil society has increased this resistance, with leaders publicly urging the mayor to apologize to vendors

(Republica, 2024). This trend indicates a shifting discourse where vendors are active claimants of urban space and rights.

3.3.5 The Dual Identity: Lifeline vs. Encroacher

The media narrative often portrays street vendors in two conflicting ways, reflecting broader societal ambivalence. On one hand, they are shown as an essential economic resource for marginalized communities, especially as a source of informal employment and a safeguard against poverty (Kafle, 2025; Onlinekhabar, 2020). On the other hand, they are frequently depicted as encroachers who disrupt urban order, block sidewalks, and threaten aesthetics and hygiene standards (Himalayan News Service, 2019). This dual perspective allows the media to tell both sympathetic human-interest stories and condemnatory reports about urban disorder, rarely balancing the two views.

3.3.6 Street Vending as Social Rehabilitation

A less prominent but influential narrative, exemplified by a 2016 feature in Nari on Anuradha Koirala, highlights street vending as a tool for social rehabilitation. The article explained how Koirala, founder of Maiti Nepal, provided small capital to homeless women (often survivors of trafficking and violence) to start vending sweets and cigarettes. This approach offered dignified, immediate income, reducing reliance on begging and creating a pathway to greater security and community support. This case demonstrates the transformative potential of vending beyond just subsistence, positioning it as a critical entry point for reintegrating the most vulnerable into society; a perspective largely absent from mainstream policy discussions.

3.3.7 Health, Hygiene, and Asymmetric Responsibility

Public health is often used to justify regulation. Reports indicate that vendors frequently fail to meet health standards, potentially creating risks (Himalayan News Service, 2019). However, as commentators like Chapagain (2024) argue in Kantipur, this framing usually places the entire burden on vendors, ignoring the municipality's failure to provide essential infrastructure such as clean water, waste disposal, or suitable market spaces with proper facilities that would enable compliance. This creates an asymmetric narrative where vendors are blamed for problems caused by systemic neglect in urban planning.

Conclusion: An Evolving Discourse Amidst Persistent Tensions

Overall, Nepali media coverage between 2014 and 2025 depicts street vending as a crucial flashpoint in urban governance. The narrative has gradually shifted from one-sided reports of "encroachment" to a more balanced portrayal that includes livelihood struggles, protests, and policy critiques, especially after COVID-19. The inclusion of civil society voices and reports of negotiations shows a slowly maturing public discussion. However, the core tension remains unresolved: street vendors are both celebrated as resilient economic actors and vilified as obstacles to modern urban life. This ambivalence reflects the fragmented policy landscape and underscores the main challenge, which is integrating the informal economy's vital workforce into the city's legal and physical framework in a humane and regulated manner. The media, by covering both the harsh evictions and the inspiring stories of vending as a form of livelihood and rehabilitation, captures this national dilemma.

3.4 Field Study Findings: Narayani Riverside

This section presents the main empirical findings from the field study conducted at Narayani Riverside in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. As outlined in the methodological framework (Section 2), this site functions as a key case study of street vending in a semi-urban, tourism-focused public space. The following subsections organize the qualitative data around important thematic areas that emerged directly from analyzing interviews and observations. The findings are shown first to highlight the economic and livelihood importance of vending, then examine the spatial practices and negotiations vendors use, followed by their role in tourism and place-making, their interactions with authorities, and the social aspects of their work. This structure provides a detailed understanding of how street vending operates on the ground, setting the foundation for a comparative analysis with the Kathmandu Valley that I have added.

3.4.1 Livelihood Dependence and Economic Significance

For most respondents, street vending is the primary source of household income rather than a supplementary activity. Vendors emphasized its role in meeting basic survival needs such as food, healthcare, and education. As Maya, a food vendor with 12 years of experience, explained, "Vending pays my daughter's school fees and my husband's medicine. Without this, we'd starve."

Seasonal variation strongly affects earnings. During festivals and peak tourism seasons, daily income can reach NPR 5,000, while off-season earnings drop considerably. Still, vendors emphasized that even irregular income from vending provides more independence and stability than casual wage work. A Tharu woman vendor shared her daily routine: "I sell breakfast 7-10 AM, lunch 12-3 PM, and

evening 5-8 PM. Then cook at home, sleep 5 hours max. No choice, children need food."

3.4.2 Spatial Practices and Negotiation of Public Space

Vendors operate through continuous spatial negotiation rather than fixed occupation. Stalls are deliberately designed to be mobile, allowing quick relocation in response to crowd movement or enforcement. Hari, a *chatpate* vendor, explained, "We watch police from afar across the river; if they come, we shift 50-100 meters instantly. Carts have big wheels for this." He added, "My cart weighs 15 kg empty, rolls fast uphill."

Time-based sharing of space is common. One vendor noted, "We share space with fishermen mornings, they get riverside first; evenings are ours for picnickers." Such informal arrangements demonstrate self-regulation in the absence of formal zoning.

Collective vigilance is also critical. Vendors reported organized warning systems: "Group of 40 vendors shares police vehicle plates, raid times. Saved goods 10 times last year," and "Bote brothers watch bridge, signal women to hide carts."

3.4.3 Street Vending, Tourism, and Place-Making

Street vendors contribute significantly to the social and experiential quality of the riverfront. Rather than merely selling goods, they bring life to the area and improve visitor experiences. A photographer highlighted this importance: "Foreigners love it here... more personal than hotels, real Nepali food and river views."

Boating service providers described cultural exchange as part of their work. One Bote fisherman-turned-boater shared, "Tourists from India, Israel ask about Bote culture while boating; we share fishing stories, they tip extra." Repeat domestic visitors also build emotional attachments to vendors, as reflected in a customer's comment: "Uncle's *sel roti* is famous here; sweeter than anywhere, we come weekly from Narayangarh."

Vendors see their role as vital to place-making. As Laxmi, a ritual-item seller, stated, "Without us, this place is empty - just river and sadhus. We bring it to life."

3.4.4 Encounters with Authorities and Legal Insecurity

Despite their contributions, vendors face persistent legal insecurity. Enforcement is sporadic, discretionary, and often punitive. Kamala, a *momo* seller, recounted, "Police come once monthly, take goods worth NPR 5,000-10,000, demand NPR 2,000 'fine'. No receipt, just fear." Raju, involved in boating equipment, added,

"They break locks, load the cart on a truck. We recover next day after begging, paying double."

Such experiences foster a perception of arbitrary power. As one vendor summarized, "Today brother of officer, tomorrow enemy. No rule, only mood." Officials acknowledged this ambiguity. A ward chair stated, "We tolerate during festival peaks when thousands visit; clear footpaths if complaints or accidents. Can't ban completely; tourism dies."

3.4.5 Gender, Ethnicity, and Informal Solidarity

Women constitute a majority of vendors and face long working hours, safety risks, and dual burdens of care and income generation. Ethnic identity shapes occupational roles, particularly among the Bote community, whose river-based livelihoods transition naturally into boating services. Informal solidarity networks cut across gender and ethnicity, reinforcing collective survival strategies in the absence of institutional protection.

3.4.6 Perspectives of Formal Businesses and Officials

Formal business owners expressed mixed views. Some recognized the spillover benefits: "They draw families who later eat at my place. Without stalls, empty evenings." Others raised concerns: "They pay no tax/rent but use our electricity poles," and questioned the logic behind the location, "Who buys *momos* 500m from river?"

Officials and business owners converged on pragmatic solutions, suggesting to "designate spots, collect fair tax, provide water/waste bins."

3.4.7 Summary of Field Findings

The field study highlights street vending along the Narayani Riverside as a crucial livelihood, a boost for tourism, and a place-making activity that relies on mobility, informal regulation, and collective resilience. Vendors operate without legal recognition and face enforcement uncertainty, yet they show strong self-organization and adaptability. Their exclusion from formal planning sharply contrasts with their vital functional role, stressing the need for regulated, inclusive, and spatially aware governance approaches.

3.4.8 Comparative Analysis: Narayani Riverside and Kathmandu Valley

Recently, a study on street vendors in the Kathmandu Valley was published (Gautam et al., 2025). To place the Narayani Riverside findings in a broader national context,

these two studies can be compared. Gautam et al. (2025) is a comprehensive report based on surveys of 427 vendors and stakeholder interviews across three districts, providing a systematic, data-driven analysis of the challenges facing street vendors in Nepal's capital region.

The field study at Narayani Riverside and the 2025 Kathmandu Valley report, despite focusing on different areas, a tourism-focused riverfront versus busy urban cores, show a consistent national trend of informal street vending. Both studies reveal vendors operating in a severe policy and legal vacuum, facing unpredictable enforcement and confiscation of goods that threaten their means of livelihood. Economic insecurity is universal: vendors in both locations report irregular, low incomes that are vulnerable to sudden declines caused by municipal crackdowns or seasonal changes.

However, the contexts create significant differences. In the Kathmandu Valley, the conflict mainly revolves around discourses of urban order, encroachment, and public health, leading to outright bans and protests. At Narayani Riverside, the situation is milder due to the area's identity as a tourism and leisure destination. Vendors are informally recognized as essential to the "place-making" experience and festival economy, fostering a more practical, though still uncertain, coexistence with authorities. This results in different strategies: while Kathmandu vendors report growing organized resistance and union efforts, Narayani vendors focus on hyper-local mobility, collective vigilance, and informal time-sharing agreements to manage occasional enforcement.

Together, these studies show that street vending is not a minor issue but a vital part of Nepal's urban and peri-urban social and economic fabric. The similarities in livelihood dependence and systemic exclusion highlight a nationwide failure to legally recognize and include this workforce. The differences in governance approaches, from harsh eradication in Kathmandu to pragmatic tolerance in Bharatpur, demonstrate that solutions are possible when the economic and social value of vendors is acknowledged. The way forward, as both studies suggest, is not through blanket bans but by moving from informal tolerance to formal regulation. This involves transforming the effective self-organization seen in Narayani, along with the specific policy suggestions from the Kathmandu study, into a comprehensive national framework for legal recognition, designated vending zones, and access to social protection, ensuring that urban planning includes those who keep the city alive.

4. Conclusions

This section consolidates key findings from the Results and Discussion by synthesizing evidence from the literature review, policy review, media analysis, and Narayani Riverside field study into clear themes. Each theme is directly supported by empirical patterns, regulatory contradictions, and stakeholder perspectives documented throughout, providing an evidence-based foundation for policy recommendations.

a. Street Vending as Structural Economic Necessity and Social Infrastructure

Street vending emerges not as a residual activity but as a structural pillar of Nepal's urban and tourism economies, absorbing surplus labor excluded from formal employment (Chen, 2012; ILO, 2012). The 2025 Kathmandu Valley study (Gautam et al., 2025) provides robust data, revealing that vending is the sole source of income for 30-40% of vendors, with many earning below the national minimum wage. This mirrors the field findings from Narayani Riverside, where vending is the primary income for household survival, funding education and healthcare. Beyond economics, vending functions as critical social infrastructure. The media-documented case of Anuradha Koirala ("Anuradha Koirala", 2016) illustrates the transformative power of providing street-vending capital to homeless women, which served as a practical pathway to rehabilitation, dignity, and escape from exploitation, highlighting a role entirely absent from formal policy frameworks.

b. Systemic Policy Exclusion and Governance by Discretion

A central contradiction exists between Nepal's constitutional guarantees (Articles 17, 33, 34) for livelihood, occupation, and social security and the total lack of a specific national legal framework for street vending. This regulatory gap compels reliance on indirect, often conflicting laws like the Public Roads Act (1974), which municipalities use to justify evictions. The Kathmandu Valley study confirms this systemic failure, revealing that 95% of vendors are unregistered and operate in a state of permanent legal insecurity. Governance is marked by ad hoc tolerance and punitive discretion, as shown in Bharatpur's seasonal pragmatism and Kathmandu's "ruthless" crackdowns (Onlinekhabar, 2025). This creates a vicious cycle where, as media reports and field interviews show, enforcement is inconsistent, fines are informal and lack receipts, and confiscation remains a constant threat—undermining any chance of secure livelihoods or organized urban management.

c. Right-of-Way Conflicts as Symptoms of Planning Failure, Not Vendor Intransigence

Tensions over public space and right-of-way (ROW) are often seen as vendor-caused problems. However, evidence shows they actually indicate poor urban planning and a lack of inclusive spatial design. Vendors depend financially on busy areas with high-footfall areas, and moves to quieter zones frequently fail, as seen in cases from India and China (Shrestha et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2022). The field study at Narayani Riverside shows that without formal zoning, vendors create advanced self-regulating strategies, such as time-sharing with fishermen, mobile stall designs, and collective warning systems, that successfully manage congestion and pedestrian flow. This flexibility suggests that conflict is not built into vending but results from governance that prefers clearing vendors out over negotiating coexistence.

d. Gendered and Socially Stratified Informality

Informality is not uniform; it varies greatly based on gender, ethnicity, and social capital. Women constitute the majority of vendors in many areas, confronting the triple burden of earning income, managing household responsibilities, and facing heightened safety risks, as demonstrated in both the Kathmandu Valley study and the Narayani field research. Ethnicity influences occupational roles, such as the Bote community's participation in boating services. Moreover, the Kathmandu study revealed that vendors from Madhesi communities and individuals with disabilities experience disproportionate discrimination and harassment from authorities. Therefore, vulnerability is intersectional, yet policy responses tend to be generic and neglect these important differences, underscoring the need for gender-sensitive and socially inclusive regulatory frameworks.

e. The Tourism Policy Blind Spot: Celebrated in Practice, Excluded in Policy

Street vendors are a vital part of the tourism experience, offering authenticity, cultural exchange, and affordability that boost destination vibrancy (Wongtada, 2014). At Narayani Riverside, vendors significantly contribute to "place-making," with tourists seeking genuine interactions and local foods. Officials subtly recognize this by allowing vending during peak seasons to avoid "festival chaos." However, national tourism policy remains focused only on formal businesses (Tourism Policy 2025), rendering this essential informal sector invisible in official plans and branding. This gap weakens sustainable tourism by ignoring the very actors who create the lively, vibrant atmosphere visitors seek.

f. Evolving Media Discourse Mirrors National Ambivalence

The media review (2014–2025) reveals Nepal's deep-rooted ambivalence. Vendors are depicted with a dual identity: as essential "economic lifelines" for marginalized groups (Kafle, 2025) and as "encroachers" disrupting urban order (Himalayan News Service, 2019). This reflects broader societal and policy tensions. Over time, coverage has shifted to include more voices advocating for vendors' rights, especially after COVID-19, highlighting protests and demands from civil society (e.g., Republica, 2024). The media plays a role in holding authorities accountable, but its narratives continue to fluctuate between compassion and stigmatization, echoing the ongoing national debate.

g. A National Pattern of Informality with Localized Coping Strategies

A comparative analysis of the Narayani Riverside field study and the Kathmandu Valley report (Gautam et al., 2025) confirm a national pattern of economic insecurity, legal exclusion, and arbitrary enforcement. The main difference lies in local coping and resistance strategies. In Kathmandu, systemic harassment has led to organized protests and unionization efforts. In the tourism-focused Narayani area, vendors rely on hyper-local mobility, informal solidarity networks, and negotiated tolerance. Both strategies are grassroots responses to the same governance failure, showing notable resilience but offering no long-term security.

Major Highlights Summary

The evidence consistently highlights that street vending is a vital, regulated, and lively part of Nepal's urban and tourism landscape, yet it is systematically criminalized and disregarded by policy. The stories of livelihood survival, data on systemic vulnerability from Kathmandu, the case of vending as social rehabilitation, and the observed self-organization at Narayani Riverside all point to the same urgent need. The current eviction-led approach has proven to be ineffective. It does not help create orderly cities; instead, it increases poverty and insecurity. The way forward requires a fundamental shift from criminalization to regulated inclusion, taking inspiration from models like India's Street Vendors Act and the detailed recommendations of the Kathmandu Valley study, to ultimately balance urban order with economic justice and social vitality.

5. Recommendations and Road Map

5.1 Policy Recommendations

These policy recommendations are directly based on the evidence-based conclusions of this study, turning identified failures into practical governance actions. They address the legal gaps, spatial conflicts, social vulnerabilities, and tourism policy exclusions documented through literature, policy reviews, media analysis, and field studies at Narayani Riverside and Kathmandu Valley. Guided by international frameworks like India's Street Vendors Act and ILO Recommendation No. 204, the proposals are adapted to Nepal's federal context to shift the focus from eviction to regulated inclusion.

i. Enact a National Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act.

This is the foundational step to eliminate legal ambiguity and arbitrary municipal enforcement. The Act must establish a uniform, rights-based framework that recognizes street vending as a legitimate livelihood protected under the Constitution (Articles 17, 33). It should explicitly ban arbitrary evictions and confiscation of goods, endorsing the principle of "relocation before eviction." Importantly, the Act must institutionalize participatory governance by requiring the creation of Town Vending Committees (TVCs) in every municipality.

ii. Establish Participatory Town Vending Committees (TVCs) with Statutory Authority.

To bridge the governance gap and build trust, TVCs must serve as the primary authority for street vending management. Their composition should guarantee meaningful vendor representation—at least 40% of members, with reserved seats for women and marginalized ethnic groups—alongside municipal officials, local ward members, and civil society. TVCs should be empowered to conduct vending censuses, issue identity cards, designate and manage vending zones based on participatory footfall surveys, and act as the first level of grievance redressal.

iii. Designate and Manage Viability-Based Vending Zones through Inclusive Spatial Planning.

Addressing right-of-way conflicts requires shifting from simple clearance to planned coexistence. TVCs must identify and formalize "natural vending zones" in busy areas like Narayani Riverside and transit hubs, and where needed, establish new "designated zones." Zone design should focus on economic viability, include

time-sharing plans for multi-use public spaces, and provide essential infrastructure such as waste bins, water points, and shaded shelters. Moving vendors to zones with low customer traffic must be prohibited.

iv. Create a Simplified Certification and Social Protection Gateway for Vendors.

To reduce vulnerability and promote formalization, a simple, low-cost annual vending certificate should be introduced. This certificate, issued by the TVC after completing a basic hygiene training module, should serve as a gateway to state recognition and benefits. It must be linked to streamlined enrollment in the Social Security Fund (SSF) with a flexible contribution scheme tailored to irregular incomes and should provide access to targeted micro-credit and insurance programs, prioritizing women and vulnerable vendors.

v. Formally Integrate Street Vending into National and Local Tourism Policy.

The Tourism Policy 2025 and municipal tourism plans must be revised to recognize street vendors as vital contributors to destination vibrancy and authentic visitor experiences. This involves setting aside specific budgets for improving vending infrastructure in key tourism areas, promoting "street food and craft trails" in official marketing, and engaging vendor cooperatives in planning tourism festivals to highlight their economic and place-making contributions.

vi. Implement Gender-Responsive and Socially Inclusive Support Mechanisms.

Policy must recognize the gendered and ethnic aspects of informality. This includes setting aside a percentage of all vending certificates and prime zone spaces for women vendors, providing childcare support at major vending sites, and offering targeted grants or low-interest loans for women-led vending businesses. Support should also acknowledge and protect traditional ethnic livelihoods, such as the Bote community's boating services.

vii. Formalize Revenue and Reinvest in Vending Zone Infrastructure.

Replace informal and corrupt "fines" with a transparent, nominal annual fee collected with the vending certificate. All revenue generated must be kept in a dedicated municipal fund, with public dashboards displaying real-time collection and spending. This fund must be used solely for the maintenance, sanitation, and infrastructure improvements of the vending zones, ensuring vendors see a direct benefit from their compliance.

viii. Launch a Comprehensive Capacity Building and Public Sensitization Campaign.

Sustainable reform demands a change in mindset for both enforcers and the public. Implementing a mandatory training program for municipal police and officials on the new legal framework and rights-based enforcement is crucial. Simultaneously, public awareness campaigns should emphasize the economic importance of vendors, using platforms like the documented story of Anuradha Koirala's rehabilitation work to foster public empathy and support for regulated vending.

5.2 Policy Implementation Roadmap

The following roadmap translates the policy recommendations into practical steps, detailing responsible agencies, specific tasks, and anticipated impacts. These proposed implementation steps aim to foster stakeholder discussion, validation, and refinement through consultations with MoFAGA, municipalities, vendor associations, tourism boards, and civil society.

Recommendation	Responsible Agency (Lead)	Key Tasks	Expected Impact / Success Indicator
1. Enact National Street Vendors Act	Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD), Ministry of Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs (MoLJPA)	Form a multi-stakeholder drafting committee including vendor unions. Draft bill based on the 2014 Indian Act and ILO R204. Table bill in Parliament and enact into law.	A comprehensive National Street Vendors Act is passed within 18-24 months, providing a uniform legal framework.
2. Establish Town Vending Committees (TVCs)	Ministry of Federal Affairs & General Administration (MoFAGA), Municipalities	Issue binding directives to all municipalities to form TVCs within 6 months of the Act. Develop and disseminate standard operating procedures (SOPs) for TVC composition and functions. Conduct initial nationwide capacity-building workshop for TVC members.	100% of metropolitan and sub-metropolitan cities have operational TVCs within 12 months of the Act; 50% of vendor members are women.

Recommendation	Responsible Agency (Lead)	Key Tasks	Expected Impact / Success Indicator
3. Designate Viability-Based Vending Zones	Municipalities (Town Planning Dept.), TVCs	TVCs conduct participatory vending censuses and footfall surveys. Identify and map natural and designated vending zones using GIS. Pilot zone formalization in high-profile sites	Pilot vending zones are established and functional within a year, with reduced conflict reports.
4. Launch Simplified Certification and SSF Linkage	Social Security Fund (SSF), Municipalities, TVCs	Design a simple vending certificate and application form. Develop and roll out a 1-day basic hygiene & rights training module. Create an SSF enrollment window with flexible quarterly contribution options for certificate holders.	A significant number of vendors nationally receive certificates in Year 1; A portion (e.g., 1/5) of informal workers enroll in the SSF.
5. Integrate Vending into Tourism Policy	Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA), Nepal Tourism Board (NTB)	Amend the Tourism Policy 2025 to include a clause on informal economy integration. Allocate a specific budget line for "Vending Zone Beautification & Safety" in tourism sites. Feature street food vendors in the next official "Visit Nepal" campaign or local tourism campaigns	Formal policy amendment within 12 months; 2 tourism sites co-branded with their vending economies.
6. Implement Gender-Responsive Support	Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens (MoWCSC), TVCs, Local NGOs	Reserve 33% of all vending certificates and prime zone slots for women. Establish a pilot childcare corner at a major vending site (e.g., Pokhara Lakeside). Partner with banks to offer micro-loan products for women vendors. Have a provision for special mechanism and fund for rehabilitation via supported street vending	A increase in the number of registered women vendors in pilot municipalities

Recommendation	Responsible Agency (Lead)	Key Tasks	Expected Impact / Success Indicator
7. Formalize Revenue and Reinvestment	Municipal Finance Departments, Office of the Auditor General	Use digital payment system for vending certificate fees. Create a legally ring-fenced "Public Space and Vending Improvement Fund" at each municipality. Launch a public online dashboard showing fee collection and project-wise expenditure.	100% of vending-related municipal revenue is tracked and publicly reported; Most of the revenue is reinvested in zone infrastructure.
8. Conduct Capacity Building & Sensitization	MoFAGA, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Media	Develop and mandate a training curriculum on the new Act for all municipal police and officials.	More than two-third of municipal enforcement staff in major cities trained in Year 1; measurable improvement in media framing of vending issues.

This roadmap focuses on quick wins, such as establishing pilot zones and launching certification, along with essential legislative work. Success relies on ongoing multi-stakeholder dialogue, with regular review workshops recommended to evaluate progress and modify the plan.

This study systematically met its objectives through a thorough review of the literature, policies, media, and empirical fieldwork at Narayani Riverside, highlighting the structural need for street vending despite regulatory exclusion. The findings documented the core contradiction between constitutional livelihood rights and municipal practices of ad-hoc eviction, the spatial ingenuity of vendors that challenges simple ROW conflicts, and their vital yet unrecognized role in the tourism experience. These insights were compiled into evidence-based thematic conclusions. The policy recommendations and detailed implementation plan offer practical steps to shift from criminalization to regulated inclusion, providing municipalities with a clear model to balance urban order and economic fairness. Ultimately, this research shows that the vibrancy of places like Narayani Riverside is not accidental but built on informal systems waiting for formal recognition. By equipping policymakers with these data-driven solutions, the study bridges the gap between Nepal's informal realities and its formal goals for equitable federal governance and sustainable tourism development.

Conflict of Interest

The author has no conflict to declare.

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