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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

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RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

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DIRECT MARKETING OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS - A STUDY OF RYTHU BAZAARS (FARMERS' MARKET) IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Direct marketing is a long felt need of the farmers and consumers of the country as it goes a long way in ensuring higher remuneration to the farmers and meeting the satisfaction level of the consumers through direct sale of the agricultural commodity by the farmers to the consumer at affordable prices. In this backdrop the first farmer's market namely Apni Mandi or Kisan Mandi was started in Chandigarh, Punjab in 1987 and later on at Karnal, Haryana in 1988. In Andhra Pradesh, Rythu Bazaar (Farmer's Market) has been planned for creating a direct interface between farmers and consumers by eliminating middlemen. The main objective of this paper is to study the concept of Rythu Bazaars (Farmers' Market) in general and to analyze the major preferences and satisfaction levels of consumers towards Rythu Bazaar (Farmers' Market) in Andhra Pradesh in particular.

KEYWORDS

Direct marketing, Agriculture products, Rythu Bazaars.

INTRODUCTION

One of the weakest links in the chain of activities concerned with production and disposal of agricultural products is marketing. Besides the farmers, other major sufferers due to lack of proper marketing facilities are the consumers who are deprived of the fresh farm products. Direct marketing is a long felt need of the farmers and consumers of the country as it goes a long way in ensuring higher remuneration to the farmers and meeting the satisfaction level of the consumers through direct sale of the agricultural commodity by the farmers to the consumer at an affordable price. Direct marketing of agricultural produce helps in complete elimination of middlemen and commission agents who charge high level of commission from the farmers, coming to the market yards for selling their produce and then artificially inflate the retail prices. Marketing of fruits and vegetables is more complex in nature in comparison with the other field crops because of special traits like highly perishable nature, seasonality and bulkiness, which needs special care and immediate disposal. Regulated market yards for fruits and vegetables are functioning only at a few centers. The marketing system for fruits and vegetables is now in the hands of middlemen. Middlemen exist at various levels between the farmers and the consumers and exploit through malpractice in weighing, handling and payments. Large numbers of small farmers are unable to effectively bargain for better prices in the wholesale market. Inefficiencies in the wholesale markets result in a long chain of intermediaries, multiple handling, and loss of quality and increase the gap between the producer and consumer prices. Large number of small retailers, each handling small quantities, create high overheads leading to high margin on produce. It is, therefore, felt necessary to evolve an alternate marketing strategy where both farmers and consumers are benefited through Farmers Markets locally called as *Rythu Bazaars*. Hence the marketing system like farmers' market, if properly organized not only facilitate the proper and smooth disposal of what the farmer produces, but also acts as a catalyst to stimulate increased production and satisfy the consumers' needs. These markets are usually held out-of-doors, in public places, where farmers can sell their produce to the public.

AGRICULTURAL MARKETING IN INDIA

Agriculture continues to be the mainstay of the Indian economy. Agriculture is the principal means of livelihood for over 58.4 per cent of India's population and accounts for approximately one-fifth of the total gross domestic product (GDP)¹. While significant strides have been made in increasing agricultural production over the years, immense problems continue to cloud the system of agricultural marketing in the country. Ironically, the burden of inefficient marketing procedures affects the farmers of the country the most, when in fact as producers they are entitled to the benefits of a robust marketing system.

The agricultural marketing structure in India consists of three types of markets²: a) rural primary markets or *haats* (tribal markets in tribal areas) that are meant to meet local demands, b) secondary markets that attract potential buyers and traders who take agricultural produce in bulk quantity for sales in the city, and c) wholesale markets that act as centers for gathering large amounts of agricultural produce from different sources. Retailers in the country procure produce from these wholesale markets and then sell it to the consumers.

The operations in rural primary markets and secondary markets are largely informal and lack proper infrastructural facilities. As wholesale markets handle large volumes of agricultural produce and act as dispersal points, they form a very crucial component of the entire agricultural marketing system in the country. These markets require elaborate infrastructural facilities. The GOI is responsible for the provision of such facilities in the market. Wholesale markets operate within a legal framework and are covered under the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee Act (APMC). The implementation of the APMC is in the hands of respective State Governments.

As a result of the APMC, wholesale markets started functioning as regulated markets. The purpose of these regulated markets was to promote organized marketing of agricultural commodities in the country and ensure that farmers get a reasonable share in profits. It was hoped that with market regulation, agricultural trade practices would become more efficient that until now were plagued with inefficiencies like subjection of farmers to heavy market charges and defective use of weights and scales in the markets.

Although regulation of markets has helped in reducing the burden on farmers in the form of lesser market charges, verified weights and scales, and establishment of market committees, the system still remains largely inefficient and has been monopolized by traders and intermediaries. In reality, no person or agency can operate in the wholesale market area without a license issued by the market committee that, in turn, is under the influence of dominant traders.

¹ <http://india.gov.in/sectors/agriculture/index.php>. Web. 3 August. 2011

² Gokul Patnaik. 'Marketing, Storage and Extension Services: State of Agriculture in India'. Working Paper No.9. *Bazaar Chintan*. April. 2003. New Delhi

This defeats the very purpose of market regulation, which is to benefit the farmers. Inefficiencies in the wholesale markets result in a chain of intermediaries, quality degradation and increase the gap between producer and consumer prices.

DIRECT AGRICULTURAL MARKETING

An effective answer to these issues lies in the establishment of direct linkages between farmers and consumers. Direct marketing of agricultural produce helps in eliminating middlemen and makes the farmers directly responsible for selling his/her produce. This helps in ensuring financial returns for farmers as well as increased consumer satisfaction.

In order to promote the development of direct agricultural marketing in the country, the GOI enacted the *Scheme for the Development of Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure, Grading and Standardization*. As a crucial component of the scheme, all Indian States and Union Territories are required to amend their specific APMC acts in pursuance of the development of direct agricultural marketing practices. Many Indian states adopted the concept of direct agricultural marketing. Examples include Apni Mandi in Haryana, Uzhavar Sandhai in Tamil Nadu, Shetkari Bazaar in Maharashtra and Rythu Bazar in Andhra Pradesh.

RYTHU BAZAR IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Rythu Bazar is one of the most successful models of direct agricultural marketing in the country. The first Rythu Bazar was established in 1999 in Hyderabad. Rythu Bazars provide facilities to farmers for selling their produce directly to consumers under a proper administrative system and government protection. Presently there are 106 Rythu Bazars operating in all the 23 districts of Andhra Pradesh.

RYTHU BAZAR AIMS

- ✓ To eliminate middlemen in wholesale agricultural markets and enable farmers to sell their produce directly to consumers
- ✓ To ensure that farmers get remunerative prices
- ✓ To curb marketing malpractices like defective weighing
- ✓ To provide fresh products to consumers at reasonable rates.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Producers use different market outlets (commission agents, local traders, and farmers' markets) at the different times of the years, a strategy to maximize their profits. Farmers' markets are especially beneficial for small producers, who have difficulties in selling small volumes during the dry season on the conventional market system. Farmers' markets have influenced producers practices in two main ways; 1) Diversification of production, to include a wider variety of vegetables, and 2) Intensification to maximize the use of water and land resources throughout the year. Farmers' markets have also stimulated producers' adoption of marketing strategies, through a better understanding of consumers' needs and preferences based on incomes, dietary habits and religious celebrations. Experience sharing and communication between farmers has also increased. But unlike conventional marketers who always watch the pulse of their consumers by studying their behaviour, farmers are too naïve to conduct market research on behaviour of the vegetable purchasers. So it was felt a study could be undertaken to observe the preferences, needs and wants of the vegetable buyers and make them available to farmers so that they can take correct decisions regarding the marketing strategies to be implemented in Rythu Bazars.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Keeping in view the relevance of the study in the present market scenario the following objectives have been framed.

- ✓ To study the Farmers' Market concept in general and particularly Rythu Bazars in Andhra Pradesh
- ✓ To evaluate the consumers perception towards farmers' markets.

DATA & METHODOLOGY

This study based on survey method. Data has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. For collecting primary data, a sample of 240 regular purchasers of vegetables at Rythu Bazaar from Karimnagar urban area, was selected through convenience sampling method. A structured questionnaire was administered among the consumers to collect primary data. Secondary data has been collected from newspapers, journals, and magazines and through informal discussion with officials of the department concerned.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is confined to only 240 consumers of Rythu Bazaar, situated at Karimnagar. It is assumed that the respondents are honest in expressing their opinions. Though the sample size is small and less scope for generalizations, but every care has been taken to include all types of consumers in the sample to make it a representative one.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

TABLE 1: PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Age	Below 25Yrs	25-40 Yrs	40-50 Yrs	Above 50 Yrs
	38 (15.84%)	76 (31.67%)	82 (34.16%)	44 (18.33%)
Sex	Male: 94 (39.16%)		Female 146 (60.84%)	
Marital Status	Married: 182 (75.83%)		Un-married; 58 (24.17%)	
Education	Illiterate	Below SSC	Inter	Degree & above
	22 (9.17%)	69 (28.75%)	96 (40.00%)	53 (22.08%)
Occupation	Employee	Business	Professional	Others
	118 (49.16%)	83 (34.58%)	32 (13.34%)	7 (2.92%)
Distance traveled (In Kms.)	Below 1	1 to 2	2 to 5	Above 5
	71 (29.58%)	92 (38.33%)	61 (25.42%)	16 (6.67%)

Primary data compiled from Questionnaire

The data in Table 1 reveals that 34.16 per cent of the respondents belong to 40-50 years age group, followed by 31.67 per cent belong to the age group of 25-40 years and the remaining respondents fall either in above 50 years or below 25 years age group. In the sample respondents about 61 per cent are female. The marital status of the respondents shows that about 76 per cent are married and others are un married. The educational background indicates that 40 per cent of the respondents have Inter mediate education and 28.75 per cent have below SSC qualification. 22.08 per cent respondents have Degree and above qualifications and the remaining are illiterates. It is to be noted that majority of respondent have inter mediate and above qualifications. The data further shows that 49.16 per cent of the respondents are employees and 34.58 per cent are business people. The remaining respondent are either professionals or other category people.

Further the respondents were asked about the distance they travel to purchase the vegetables from the market and the relevant information is placed in Table 1. The data shows that 38.33 per cent of the respondents are traveling 1to 2 Kms and 29.58 per cent are traveling less than 1 Kmr distance to purchase the vegetables and the remaining respondents are traveling more than 2 Kms to purchase the vegetables.

TABLE 2: FREQUENCY OF PURCHASING THE VEGETABLES IN RYTHU BAZAARS

Details of Purchasing	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Daily	25	10.42
Alternate Days	24	10.00
Once in Three Days	106	44.17
Weekly Once	66	27.50
Others	19	7.92
Total	240	100

Primary data compiled from Questionnaire

From Table 2 it is clear that majority of the respondents purchase vegetables once in three days (44.17 per cent) followed by 27.50 per cent consumers who purchase vegetables with a frequency of once in a week. Almost equal number of respondents said that they purchase vegetables either daily or on alternate days (about 10 per cent) and the remaining said that they purchase occasionally. From the foregoing discussion it can be inferred that majority of the consumers buy vegetables either weekly or once in three days.

TABLE 3: TIMING OF PURCHASING THE VEGETABLES IN RYTHU BAZAARS

Time of Purchase	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Morning Hours	114	47.50
Afternoon	54	22.50
Evening	72	30.00
Total	240	100

Primary data compiled from Questionnaire

The data in Table 3 makes it clear that majority of the respondents (47.50 per cent) purchase vegetables in the morning hours and 30 per cent mentioned that they purchase in the evening hours. The remaining 22.50 per cent replied that they purchase in afternoon hours. Majority of the respondents prefer morning hours with the perception that the vegetables will be fresh in that session only.

TABLE 4: FACTORS INFLUENCING FOR SELECTING RYTHU BAZAARS FOR PURCHASING VEGETABLES

Factors	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Quality	70	29.17
Right Measurements	44	18.33
Freshness	40	16.67
Location of Rythu Bazaar	12	5.00
Availability	18	7.50
Price	44	18.33
Others	12	5.00
Total	240	100

Primary data compiled from Questionnaire

Table 4 depicts that majority of respondents considered quality as the most influencing factor (29.17 per cent) followed by Right measurements and Price (18.33 per cent). Freshness (16.67 percent), location (5 per cent), availability (7.50) and other (5.00) stood in other places in the order. It can be observed from the above information that majority are preferring Rythu Bazars due to Quality, freshness, right measurement and reasonable price.

TABLE 5: QUALITY OF VEGETABLES IN RYTHU BAZAARS

Quality Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Excellent	76	31.67
Good	89	37.08
Average	65	27.08
Poor	7	2.92
Very Poor	3	1.25
Total	240	100

Primary data compiled from Questionnaire

From Table 5 it was found that majority of the respondents perceived quality of the vegetables at Rythu Bazars as good (37.08 per cent), followed by Excellent (31.67 percent). The respondents who stated that the quality is Average (27.08 per cent), Poor (2.92 per cent) and Very Poor (1.25 per cent) stood in third, fourth and fifth place respectively. It can be concluded from the discussion that the majority of the respondents are satisfied with quality of the vegetables at Rythu Bazars

TABLE 6: PRICE OF VEGETABLES IN RYTHU BAZAARS

Price Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Very High	23	9.58
High	38	15.83
Average	65	27.08
Low	59	24.58
Very Low	55	22.93
Total	240	100

Primary data compiled from Questionnaire

From the data in Table 6 it was found that majority of the respondents perceived price as average (27.08 per cent), followed by low (24.58 percent), very low (22.92 per cent), high (15.83 per cent) and Very high (9.58 per cent). From the foregoing discussion we can conclude that an overwhelming majority are satisfied with the prices that prevailed in Rythu Bazars.

TABLE 7: CONVENIENCE OF THE LOCATION OF RYTHU BAZAARS

Convenience of the Location	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Convenient	46	19.17
Neither convenient nor in-convenient	52	21.67
In-Convenient	142	59.17
Total	240	100

Primary data compiled from Questionnaire

The survey reveals that the majority of the respondents felt the location of the Rythu Bazaars are in-convenient (59.17 per cent) and 21.67 per cent stated that the Rythu Bazaars are neither convenient nor in-convenient. Only 19.17 per cent expressed that the location of the Rythu Bazar is convenient for them. We can observe from the discussion that the location of the Rythu Bazaars is not convenient for majority of the respondents and there is need to provide a location which is convenient for majority buyers.

TABLE 8: WHETHER RECOMMENDED RYTHU BAZAARS TO OTHERS

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Recommended	158	65.83
Not Recommended	82	34.17
Total	240	100

Primary data compiled from Questionnaire

Further the respondents were asked whether they recommend the Rythu Bazaars for other customers to buy vegetables and the data is placed in Table 8. From Table 8 it is clear that most of the respondents (65.83 per cent) stated that they recommend the Rythu Bazaars to others to purchase the vegetables and the remaining said that they do not recommend (34.17 per cent) Rythu Bazaars to others to purchase the vegetables. Most of the on the basis of the perception about respondents recommended price and quality.

TABLE 9: ANY PROBLEMS FACED WHILE PURCHASING IN THE RYTHU BAZAARS?

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	92	38.33
No	148	61.67
Total	240	100

Primary data compiled from Questionnaire

The survey reveals that Most of the respondents did not face any problems while purchasing vegetables in rythu bazaars (61.67 per cent) while some of them (38.33 per cent) faced problems due to lack of facilities such as location of rythu bazaars, lack of hygiene facilities, lack of proper lighting, lack of space etc.

TABLE 10: BEHAVIOUR OF THE SELLERS IN THE RYTHU BAZAARS

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Very Courteous	53	22.08
Courteous	76	31.67
Indifferent	86	35.83
Rude	25	10.42
Total	240	100

Primary data compiled from Questionnaire

Table 10 depicts that most of the respondents felt that the sellers in the rythu bazaars are indifferent behaviour (35.83 per cent) followed by 31.67 per cent who stated that the behaviour is courteous. 22.08 per cent per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that the behaviour is Very Courteous and 10.42 per cent mentioned that the behaviour is rude. From the discussion it is observed that majority are not satisfied with the behaviour of the sellers.

TABLE 11: FACILITIES PROVIDED AT RYTHU BAZAARS

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Excellent	64	26.67
Good	38	15.83
Poor	138	57.50
Total	240	100

Primary data compiled from Questionnaire

From Table 11 it is clear that most of the respondents stated that the facilities provided is poor at rythu bazaars (57.50 per cent) followed by excellent (26.67 per cent) and good (15.83 per cent).

FINDINGS

- The study revealed that majority customers (44.17 per cent) purchase vegetables two times in a week at Rythu Bazaars.
- Majority customers prefer to buy vegetables in the morning (47.50 per cent) and evening (30 per cent) at Rythu Bazaars.
- Quality, Price and Right Measurement are the factors which attract the customers to buy vegetables at Rythu Bazaars.
- Majority of the customers rate the quality of vegetables at Rythu Bazaars is good (37.08 per cent) and excellent (31.67 per cent).
- Majority of the customers feel that the vegetables at Rythu Bazaars are fairly priced.
- Majority of the respondents (59.17 per cent) feel inconvenience with the location of Rythu Bazaars.
- Majority of the customers (65.83 per cent) recommend others to buy vegetables from Rythu Bazaars.
- Majority of customers (61.67 per cent) do not face any problems in purchasing vegetables from Rythu Bazaars.
- In the opinion of 57.50 per cent customers, the facilities provided at Rythu Bazaars are poor.

The Rythu Bazaars are acting as essential link between customers and producers as far as the marketing of vegetables is concerned. The concept of Rythu Bazaar is built on mutual benefit i.e. producers and users of the commodity. The state government introduced this to eliminate middle men, commission agents and other traders in the process of selling agricultural produce to customers. The study shows that the Rythu Bazaars are playing an important role in providing the fresh and qualitative vegetables at reasonable prices to the customers. Further it is observed that the location and other facilities provided at Rythu Bazaars are not up to the expectation of the customers and there is a need to improve them.

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