

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMPUTER APPLICATION & MANAGEMENT

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DIRECT AGRICULTURAL MARKETING: A STUDY OF UZHAVAR SANDHAI (FARMERS' MARKET) IN SALEM DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture occupies a very important role in the growth of economy of our country, which is also the backbone of the economic system. India is primarily an agricultural country. Agriculture marketing is a method of buying and selling of agricultural products. It determines the value of the agricultural product in terms of money and delivers them to the final customer. Most of the farmers sell their produce through village level markets, fairs, Mandies, Co-operative Societies etc. In the above process of agricultural marketing, the middlemen exploit farmers as well as consumers. In order to eliminate the middlemen between farmers and consumers, the Government of Tamil Nadu introduced the new concept, namely "UZHAVAR SANTHAI" in 1999. In this system, the farmers sell agricultural produce directly to the ultimate consumers. Hence, in this study, an attempt has been made to study the direct agricultural marketing called "Uzhavar Santhai".

KEYWORDS

Farmers Market, Performance of Farmers Market, Direct agricultural Marketing, Uzhavar Sandhai.

INTRODUCTION

Uzhavar Sandhai (Farmers' Market) was introduced with a view to eliminate the middlemen and arrange facilities for the farmers to sell their produce directly to the consumers at reasonable rates fixed every day. The scheme benefits both the farmers and the consumers. 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 malpractices in weighing, handling and payments. Large Number of small farmers are unable to effectively bargain for better price 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 produces.

DIRECT AGRICULTURAL MARKETING

"Direct Marketing" is perhaps the only channel suitable for both the consumers and cultivators. Direct marketing of agricultural produce helps to eliminate middle men and commission agents who charge high commission fees from the farmers coming to the markets for selling their produce and then artificially inflate the retail prices. 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. Many Indian states have adopted the concept of direct agricultural marketing.

UZHAVAR SANTHAI (FARMERS' MARKETS) IN TAMIL NADU

Uzhavar Sandhai is one of the most successful models of direct agricultural marketing in the country. The idea of setting up marketplaces which directly link producers and consumers and exclude traders and middlemen in Tamil Nadu is called as 'Uzhavar Santhai' (Farmers' Markets), started during 1999. The major objectives of Farmers' markets in Tamil Nadu are to: eliminate middlemen and traders from the marketing of vegetables in the Farmers' markets; establish direct contact between farmers and consumers; maintain stability in the prices of fresh vegetables and fruits; increase coordination between the agriculture and the horticulture departments; act as information centers for the marketing of fresh vegetables and fruits, and promote awareness and to provide training in relation to the preservation and packaging of perishable fresh vegetables and fruits. This has been fairly successful. Many of the farmers depend on rains for vegetable growing and hence there are vagaries of nature that need to be understood.

AIM OF UZHAVAR SANDHAI (FARMERS' MARKET)

- To facilitate direct contact between the farmers and public.
- To provide fresh vegetables and fruits at reasonable price daily without any interference of middlemen.
- To provide correct measurement to the consumers.
- To give full satisfaction to the farmers and public.
- To aim for providing higher price than that of wholesale price to the farmers for their vegetables and fruits.
- To provide the fresh fruits and vegetables at the lesser price than that of retail price to consumers.

FUNCTIONS OF UZHAVAR SANDHAI (FARMERS' MARKET)

- ❖ Shops are allotted to identified farmers on first come first served basis.
- ❖ The Prices are exhibited in sign boards as in each shop.
- ❖ Weighting scales are provided for the use of farmers and they are retrieved after the sale proceedings are over.
- ❖ The day – to – day functioning of the market is being recorded and weekly reports sent to Govt. Through the commissioner of Agriculture marketing, who is nominated as the Nodal officer for implementation of the scheme.
- ❖ Price fixation is the most important aspect of running of Uzhavar Sandhai and different sources of information must be used to collect prices on a daily basis.
- ❖ The entire Uzhavar Sandhai must farmer's Information Centers run by the Horticulture and Agriculture Departments.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The basic elements of agriculture system are production and marketing. Marketing of agriculture produce is an important as the production itself. As a link between producer and consumer, marketing plays an important role not only in stimulating and consumption but also in increasing the pace of economic development. Marketing of agricultural produce is considered as an integral part of agriculture, since an agriculturist is encouraged to make more investment and to increase production. This is an interesting aspect to find out the various trends happening in the field of marketing of agricultural produce.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the Socio – economic profile of the farmers who participate in the Uzhavar Sandhai.
- To evaluate the consumers perception towards farmers' markets.

DATA & METHODOLOGY

This study is an empirical based on survey and analysis method. Data has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. For collecting primary data, a sample of 100 regular purchasers of vegetables at Uzhavar Sandhai's from Salem District 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.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1. It is also assumed that the respondents are true and honest in expressing their views.
2. The study is applicable only to Uzhavar Sandhai's (Farmers' Market) in Salem District and not to any other similar areas.
3. For want of time, only 100 respondents were contacted.

TABLE 1: GENERAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Factors	Classification	No. Of Respondents	Percentage
Sex	Male	20	20 %
	Female	80	80 %
Age	21-35	10	10 %
	36-50	30	30 %
	Above 50	60	60 %
Family Income	Below 4000	10	10 %
	4001-6000	12	12 %
	6001-8000	10	10 %
	8001-10000	30	30 %
	Above 10000	38	38 %
Educational Qualification	Illiterate	13	13 %
	School level	51	51 %
	Diploma level	36	36 %

Sources: Primary Data

Inference

Regarding personal profile of the consumer, the above table shows that 80% of the respondents are female, 60% of the respondents are having the age of above 50 years, and then the earnings of the family is above 38% under the income group of above Rs.10,000. The educational back ground indicates that 51% of the respondents are school levels.

TABLE 2: DISTANCE TRAVELLED BY THE RESPONDENTS

Distance Travelled	No	Percent
Below 2 km	55	55 %
3km-5km	28	28 %
6km-8km	10	10 %
Above 8km	7	7 %
Total	100	100 %

Sources: Primary Data

Inference

It was found that the majority of the respondents' travelling distances are Below 2 km (55%), followed by 3km – 5km (28%).

TABLE 3: HOW MANY DAYS BUY THE VEGETABLES

Days	No	Percent
Weekly one day	43	43 %
Weekly 2-4 days	48	48 %
>4days	9	9 %
Total	100	100 %

Sources: Primary Data

Inference

It was found from the survey that most of the respondents were purchasing the vegetables weekly 2-4 days (48 %), followed by weekly one day (42 %).

TABLE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF MONEY SPENT BY AGE

		Age						Total	
		<=35		36-50		Above-50		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Money spent for Purchasing in Uzhavar Sandhai	50-100	7	25.9	10	19.2	10	47.6	27	27.0
	101-200	13	48.1	32	61.5	10	47.6	55	55.0
	201-400	7	25.9	10	19.2	1	4.8	18	18.0
Total		27	100.0	52	100.0	21	100.0	100	100.0

Sources: Primary Data

Inference

The above table shows that among the respondents of different age groups, 48.1% of the respondents in the age group 35 yrs or below spent an amount of Rs.101-200 where as 61.5% of the respondents in the age group of 36-50 years spent Rs.101-200 at Uzhavar Sandhai. Among the respondents of above 50 years age group 47.6% spent between Rs.50 and Rs.100 and another 47.6% of the respondents spent Rs.101-200. In order to find whether there is any significant relationship between money spent and age of the respondents the following hypothesis was framed and tested.

HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant relationship between money spent at Uzhavar Sandhai and age of the respondents.

CHI-SQUARE TEST

	Value	df	Sig.
Chi-Square	8.354	4	NS

Table value 9.488

Result: Chi square test was applied to find whether there is significant relationship between money spent and age of the respondents. The calculated value of Chi square is 8.354 which is less than the table value of 9.488 at 5 % level of significance. Since the calculated value is less than the table value it is inferred that there is no significant relationship between money spent and age of the respondents. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

TABLE 5: LEVEL OF SATISFACTION BASED ON AGE

		Satisfaction score		
		Mean	S.D	No.
Age	<=35	17.22	1.09	27
	36-50	17.38	1.63	52
	Above-50	17.71	1.42	21
TOTAL		17.41	1.46	100

Inference

From the above table, it is seen that the satisfaction scores are almost same for all age categories. While the average satisfaction score is 17.22 for the age group 35 years and below, the average satisfaction score for respondents above 50 years is 17.71. In order to find whether the average satisfaction scores vary significantly among the age groups, the following hypothesis was framed and tested.

Hypothesis

The satisfaction scores do not differ significantly among age groups.

ANOVA FOR SATISFACTION SCORE

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.930	2	1.465	.686	NS
Within Groups	207.260	97	2.137		
Total	210.190	99			

Table value 3.090

Result: One way ANOVA was applied to find whether the mean satisfaction scores differ significantly among the given age groups. The ANOVA result shows that the calculated F ratio value is 0.686 which is less than the table value of 3.090 at 5 % level of significance. Since the calculated value is less than the table value it is inferred that the satisfaction scores do not differ significantly among the age groups. Hence the Hypothesis is accepted.

FINDINGS

- Majority 52 % of the respondent are 36-50 years old.
- Majority 54 % of the respondent are female.
- The study revealed that majority customers (48 percent) purchase vegetables 2-4 times in a week at Uzhavar Sandhai's.
- Majority 51 % of the respondent are school level education.
- Moreover, customers were mostly satisfied with the statement like; availability of product variety in the market and right measurements in the market which means the market is functionally good.

SUGGESTIONS

- ❖ Communication strategy must be developed so that the department of agriculture will become more evident and relevant to the farmers and customers it serves.
- ❖ Grater collective efforts must be made to promote agricultural markets. Develop promotional strategies for local and national level markets.
- ❖ Sellers should make a positive impact on the customers mind by their courteous behaviour.

CONCLUSION

The Uzhavar Sandhai's a unique fair farmers' market mode which is capable of providing answers to several challenges put forth by the globalization of agriculture. One of the positive aspects of the Sandhai is that it does not require much training because all that is required is the introduction of the concept off air farmers' market. Organized innovations and institutional structures do not come that easily within the circle of poor and small and marginal farmers without support from government bodies. Such thought processes may not cross farmers' minds as they are for the most part engaged in thinking about their future prospects and family problems created by low income levels and the lack of market for their produce. Thus, if they are given the required simple training in marketing techniques, they can decide what to cultivate, at what time to sell, at what price and to whom.

So, what has been done effectively in Tamil Nadu should be practiced by others at governments in their own innovative ways. This will surely improve farmers' and agricultural labourers' lives, and will ultimately help the agriculture sector growth in the economy.

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