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A STUDY ON CHALLENGES FACED BY THE PRODUCERS IN SALT MARKETING IN THOOTHUKUDI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

In order to determine the state's chosen marketing approach, the study polled 150 producers in Tamil Nadu's salt sector. It was discovered that the state also used the identical marketing techniques as were used for India overall. However, it was discovered that the competitive pricing methods for iodized salt were effective, as companies such as Annapurna and Tata Salt were able to secure the largest market shares. The industry's salt producers are facing a number of competitive challenges that highlight both their critical advantages and disadvantages. It can pinpoint the industries where changes are most likely to have a big impact as opportunities or dangers. This study was intended to be carried out using specific criteria before a marketing strategy was created for salt by its producers.

KEYWORDS: *Salt, Marketing, Strategy, Market, Producers*

INTRODUCTION

After China and the United States, India is the world's third-largest producer of salt, with over 13,000 manufacturers and an extremely intricate transportation system (GAIN 2012; Varmudy 2014). With an output of 24.55 million tonnes, India contributed roughly 8.7% of the 282 million tonnes of salt produced in 2012. This sector exports salt to over 80 countries, including Japan, China, Bangladesh, Qatar, Vietnam, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, and Thailand, in addition to meeting domestic need (Varmudy 2014).

With more than 13,000 producers and a very complex transportation network, India is the third-largest producer of salt in the world, behind the US and China (GAIN 2012; Varmudy 2014). About 8.7% of the 282 million tonnes of salt produced in 2012 came from India, which produced 24.55 million tonnes. In addition to supplying domestic need, this industry exports salt to more than 80 nations, including China, Japan, Bangladesh, Qatar, Vietnam, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, and Thailand (Varmudy 2014). Over 95% of India's salt production comes from the private sector, which dominates the country's salt business. The public sector only makes about two to three percent of the total. Additionally, there are roughly 5 lakh acres of land used for salt production, and the salt manufacturing sector directly employs 1 lakh people daily (Economy Watch 2010). Participants in the Salt Satyagraha came from all over India, including the north, south, east, and west. It marked a sea change in Indian history. The idea of the Salt March was ridiculed by the British authorities. It was a common saying in the barracks: "Let them make as much salt as they want and eat it too." There will be no movement from the Empire. However, as the Salt.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Salt producers in the Thoothukudi District are invaluable to satisfying the salt needs of the region and an enormous part of the nation. However, the salt producers face numerous challenges in marketing their product. Problems like minimal warehousing, competition from big, branded companies, competition in delivery and distribution also reduce utilized capacity because producers do not have the reach in the marketplace to represent their true capacity. Solutions to the marketing issues can vary depending on their working conditions of the producers and also their working hours. Structural marketing problems can raise more issues, like the balance of power, which favours bigger suppliers and they create the identity that producers can not. This study will look at how these similar challenges differ by producers' working hours and provide relevant recommendations to convert their approaches to marketing their products.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study's aims are to analyse India's salt business in relation to the marketing tactics that have been used.

To study the marketing challenges faced by salt producers based on the working hours of producers in Thoothukudi District,

HYPOTHESIS

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between problems faced by salt producers across different working hours and the problems faced by salt producers.

Marketing Strategies and Practices within Salt Industry

Price

The price of raw salt increased by Rs 100 to Rs 150 in 2011 compared to Rs 600 to Rs 800 per tonne in 2010. Depending on the brand and packaging, the retail price of refined iodized salt ranged from Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,200 per tonne in 2010, but in 2011, it was between Rs 1,200 and Rs 1,800 per tonne. Additionally, export agreements were reached for prices ranging from Rs 1700 to Rs 2000 per tonne. Salt prices are often steady because of the relatively stable supply and demand. But two factors are likely to cause the same thing to fluctuate. First of all, adjustments to export tactics may be revolutionary. Second, the cost of salt can go up due to

Promotion

Tata salt was the industry leader in this regard when major players first introduced salt as a pure salt. As the issue of iodine deficiency and iodized salt gained more attention in 1997, salt manufacturers advertised their product as iodized salt, promising health benefits. Additionally, salt has been promoted as the market's whitest, cleanest, and most uniformly proportioned salt. In order to reduce the amount of iodine lost during storage, transit, and cooking, several companies promoted their product as iodized salt with stable iodine technology. The development of low-sodium salt for those with high blood pressure is yet another strategy to promote salt. Additionally, salt has been marketed as a motivator by marketers.

Place

Domestically, there is a demand for salt for both residential and commercial uses. About 10.7 million tonnes of salt are utilized for industrial reasons, compared to the 5–5.9 million tonnes that are required and provided for human use. Furthermore, roads convey the remaining 40% of salt for human use, while rail transports around 60% of it. However, when it comes to salt used for industrial purposes, 88% of it is shipped by road, 10% by rail, and 2% by coastal transportation to various industry locations (SaltCompanyIndia, n.d.).

Regarding the supply and demand for iodized salt in the states, the combined amount of salt that was required in 2008–09 was around 5.2 million tonnes. But the supply was just 4.92

Product

The Indian salt industry faces a problem in supplying the nation's demand for iodized salt due to growing public knowledge of its health benefits. Iron fortified salt, double fortified salt, and low sodium salt are among the many additional types of edible salt that are consumed in the Indian salt market. The micronutrients iodine, iron, and folic acid are present in the novel salt variety known as "Health Salt" that was launched in Tamil Nadu (Rajendra & Shah 2003).

Key Players (competitors) in the Market

There are many local players in the sector in addition to a few major ones. Ashirwad (ITC), Annapurna (HLL), Nirma's Shuda salt, and Tata Salt are the main participants. With over 64% of the market for branded salt, Tata Salt is the most prominent of these. Other participants include Conagra Foods, Cargil, Pillsbury, Dandi salt, Marico's Saffold salt (low sodium premium), and Dabur's Nutra salt (low sodium premium) (Rajendra & Shah 2003).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A systematic questionnaire with Likert-scaled items was used to gather the primary data. The data was collected by a quantitative survey of 100 workers in Tamil Nadu's salt business, and it was subsequently analysed using SPSS 19.0 and Microsoft Excel

Data Collection Tools

- **Primary Data:** Information on demographics, economic position, working circumstances, difficulties, and knowledge of government programs was gathered using a standardized interview schedule.
- **Secondary Data:** To supplement the primary data, policy documents, reports, and earlier research on the weaving and welfare programs of salt producers were examined.

The current analysis was conducted using study objective-oriented variables such income, spending, gender-specific and general literacy, health, etc.

Data Analysis

The current analysis was conducted using study objectives-oriented variables, including population age and gender.

Table 1: Gender Wise Salt Producers

Gender	No. of Producers	Percentage
Female	49	32.7
Male	101	67.3
Total	**150**	**100**

(Source: Primary data)

Table 1 presents the gender distribution of the study population, consisting of 150 respondents. Out of the total population, 49 are female, accounting for 32.7 per cent, while 101 are male, making up 67.3 per cent.

Table 2: Age Wise Salt Producers

Age Group	No. of Producers	Percentage
19-29	4	3
30-40	45	30
41-50	56	37
51-58	34	23
62+	11	7
Total	**150**	**100**

(Source: Primary Data)

Table 2 presents the age group distribution of the 150 respondents. The largest group is those aged 41-50, comprising 56 individuals, with 37 per cent of the total population. This is followed by the 30-40 age group, with 45 respondents, accounting for 30 per cent of the sample. The 51-62 age group includes 34 individuals, representing 23 per cent, while 11 respondents fall into the 66+ category, making up 7 per cent. Lastly, the 19-29 age group is the smallest, with just 4 respondents, or 3 per cent of the total sample. This age distribution suggests a significant concentration of respondents in the middle-aged groups, with a smaller representation of younger and older individuals.

Table 3: Working Hours of Salt Producers

Hours	No. Salt producers	Percentage
Up to 6	5	1.4
7-8	60	40
9-11	43	28.6
12-13	28	18.6
14-16	10	10
17 hours &above	4	1.4
Total	**150**	**100**

(Source: Primary Data)

Table 3 presents the distribution of working hours among the 150 salt producers. The majority of the respondents, 60 producers (40 per cent), work between 7–8 hours per day, followed by 43 producers (28.6 per cent) who work 9–11 hours. A smaller proportion, 28 producers (18.6 per cent), work between 12–13 hours, and 10 producers (6.7 per cent) work between 14–16 hours. Only 5 producers (3.3 per cent) work for 6 hours or less, while 4 producers (2.8 per cent) work for 17 hours or more, representing the least common working hour categories.

Table 4: Problems faced by Salt Producers

S. No	Problems	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	Total
1	Difficulty in warehouse maintenance	65	50	18	12	5	**150**
		43%	33%	12%	8%	4%	**100**
2	Difficulty in marketing	60	55	20	10	5	**150**
		40%	37%	13%	7%	3%	**100**
3	Problem among peer group	70	50	15	10	5	**150**
		47%	33%	10%	7%	3%	**100**
4	Problem faced by large salt marketers	55	20	10	50	15	**150**
		37%	13%	7%	33%	10%	**100**
5	Problem faced by branded salt companies by which small units are suffering.	60	55	20	10	5	**150**
		40%	37%	13%	7%	3%	**100**

Table 4 shows that Difficulty in warehouse maintenance as strongly agreed by 43 per cent, Difficult in marketing as agreed by 37 per cent, followed by Problem among peer group as strongly disagreed by 3 per cent, Problem faced by large salt marketers as mentioned by respondents 33 per cent disagreed and 40 per cent strongly agreed by Problem faced by branded salt companies by which small units are suffering.

Table 5: ANOVA test for the Working Hours and Problems Faced by Salt Producers

Variables	Working Hours	N	Mean	S.D.	F Value	Sig.
Difficulty in warehouse maintenance	Less than 6	5	4.0	0.5	4.85	0.002*
	7–8	60	4.2	0.8		
	9–11	43	4.1	0.7		
	12–13	28	3.9	0.6		
	14–16	10	3.7	0.9		
	17 hours & above	4	3.6	1.0		
	Total	150	4.06	0.74		
Difficulty in marketing	Less than 6	5	3.9	0.6	5.12	0.001*
	7–8	60	4.1	0.9		
	9–11	43	4.0	0.8		
	12–13	28	3.8	0.7		
	14–16	10	3.6	1.0		
	17 hours & above	4	3.5	1.1		
	Total	150	3.96	0.84		
Problem among peer group	Less than 6	5	4.1	0.6	4.95	0.002*
	7–8	60	4.3	0.7		
	9–11	43	4.2	0.7		
	12–13	28	4.0	0.6		
	14–16	10	3.8	0.8		
	17 hours & above	4	3.7	0.9		
	Total	150	4.14	0.70		
Problem faced by large salt marketers	Less than 6	5	3.6	0.8	6.23	0.000*
	7–8	60	3.4	1.0		
	9–11	43	3.3	1.1		
	12–13	28	3.1	1.0		
	14–16	10	3.0	1.2		
	17 hours & above	4	2.8	1.3		
	Total	150	3.29	1.03		
Problem faced by branded salt companies by which small units suffer	Less than 6	5	4.0	0.6	5.41	0.001*
	7–8	60	4.1	0.8		
	9–11	43	4.0	0.7		
	12–13	28	3.8	0.7		
	14–16	10	3.7	0.9		
	17 hours & above	4	3.6	1.0		
	Total	150	3.98	0.78		

Based on Primary Data * Sig.@5%

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the problems faced by salt marketers for any different working hours of salt producers. However, the ANOVA results for all five problem variables have statistically significant F-values ($p < 0.05$), which means that the working hours have some significant impact on the severity of problems perceived. The salt producers, indicating 7-8 and 9-11 hours, report heavier problem severity than the extreme working group. However, moderate working hours tend to correspond to a higher incidence of marketing-related challenges. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected for all problems. The consistency of significance across all variables suggests a relationship between working duration and problems experienced. Thus, specific measures may be required for those producers who work in the mid-hour categories.

FINDINGS

- Most respondents (67%) fall within the 30–50 age range, showing a concentration of middle-aged individuals in salt production.
- A significant majority (68.6%) of salt producers work between 7–11 hours daily, reflecting a standard moderate work duration.
- Salt producers working 7–11 hours face more severe marketing-related challenges, and ANOVA confirms a significant link between working hours and problems faced, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis.

SUGGESTIONS

- It would be advisable for small and medium-scale producers of salt, to be encouraged to form cooperatives or associations of some kind, to pool marketing resources, reduce competition with each other, and give some leverage with bargaining power within the market.
- Challenged due to market factors, producers face storage challenges that put the quality of salt at risk and are exacerbated during adverse weather periods. Government and industry needed to work together to plan and create modern, shared warehouse structures.
- Since working time affects the degree of obstacles faced, it would benefit participants to be introduced to intervention initiatives such as labor welfare plans, work distribution plans, labor-saving technology plans - all of which would relieve overworking and improve effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The study discovered differences in the marketing approaches used by Tamil Nadu's salt producers. Some businesses employed premium pricing, while others used competitive pricing. Some businesses advertised that their salt was pure and clean, while others focused on the potential health benefits. Additionally, several businesses introduced several salt varieties, such as low sodium, iron-fortified, and double-fortified salts, among others. However, as businesses using iodized salt were the most well-liked and held the highest market shares, it was discovered that the competitive pricing strategy worked better with this product.

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