
A Study on Robustness of Uzhavar Sandhai (Farmers' Market) in Salem District

P. Ashok kumar, K. Sundar***

ABSTRACT

The present study has been conducted in Salem district to appraise the level of strength and performance about the Uzhavar Sandhai (Farmers' Market). A sample of 200 respondents (100 Farmers and 100 Consumers) has been contacted for this purpose. It has brought to light the negative factors interfering with the smooth functioning of Uzhavar Sandhai (Farmers' Market). The study has proposed some valid measures for enabling Uzhavar Sandhai to operate more transparently. If these measures are implemented in true letters and sprits, there would be a spectacular growth of Uzhavar Sandhai (Farmers Market) in Tamil Nadu.

Introduction

The Concept of Marketing, today starts with identification of potential customers and their needs ; then it selects a co-ordinate set of products and programmes to serve those needs. Thus, the concept of marketing is developed on the basis of the customer orientation and Integrated Marketing technique for generating customer satisfaction as well as organizational goals. For agricultural products, there is a need for the direct links between the Farmers and Consumers with out any intermediaries. A long chain of middlemen naturally increases marketing costs and reduces the price received by the grower. Uzhavar Sandhai (Farmers Market) increases the benefits both to the grower and consumer. The farmers are identified by the agricultural officer and then given identity card. The Farmers are permitted to sell only the vegetables and Fruits in the Uzhavar Sandhai (Farmers' Market). This method avoids middle men's exploitation of the consumers. There is a fair deal to the farmers and the consumers in the Uzhavar Sandhai.

The marketing of fruits and vegetables is more complex in nature in comparison to other field crops because of special traits like highly perishable nature, seasonality and bulkiness which needs special care and immediate disposal. The Uzhavar Sandhai has assumed more relevance and significance especially in respect of marketing fruits and vegetables. The Uzhavar Sandhai is mainly organised to enhance the farmer's income by preventing intermediaries and distress selling. As the sale at the Uzhavar Sandhai is only for cash, the farmers are getting money immediately. This is absent when they sell

***Mr. P. Ashok kumar**
Project Fellow (UGC-MRP) and Ph.D Research Scholar, DE, Department of Commerce Wing, Annamalai University. E-Mail: ashokg224@gmail.com

****Dr. K. Sundar**, Associate Professor,
Commerce Wing, DDE, Annamalai University.

their produce to the middlemen because most of the traders make delayed payments.

The Uzhavar Sandhai revolves around the farmers and practices the method of farmer-to-farmer sales. The farmers are motivated to bring his produce to the Uzhavar Sandhai as they can directly market it to the consumers. Daily, they come to the market which has become their life breath and in turn, the farmer sellers have become the life breath of the market. Hence an attempt has been made to analyse the farmer sellers and consumers in selected Uzhavar Sandhai at Salem district in Tamil Nadu.

Origin of Uzhavar Sandhai

Uzhavar Sandhai had its birth in the concept of Kal Ghoj in Russia. The former Union agriculture secretary, MS Gill on his visit to this country was impressed by this concept of farmers' market and he replicated this concept by initiating Apna Mandis in Punjab and Haryana in early 1987. The ruling DMK Government in Tamilnadu subsequently replicated this concept in 1999 in the form of Uzhavar Sandhais. Andhra Pradesh followed suit and started the Rythu Bazar on similar lines. In order to eliminate the involvement of intermediaries the state government introduced Uzhavar Sandhai (Farmers' market) where the farmers and consumers can have direct dealings. The idea of setting the Uzhavar Sandhai exclusively for selling vegetables grown by the local growers was conceived in the early 1990s by former Union Agricultural Secretary, M.S. Gill.

The First "Uzhavar Sandhai" of the state inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister on 14 – 11 – 1999 at Madurai. The " Uzhavar Sandhai" opened at Madurai has proved to be very successful as it was attracting more and more farmers as well as consumers daily and was considered to be a model for other districts in the state. Within a year, 103 such markets were operational. This top-down scheme has provided a valuable space for direct interaction between producers and consumers. Uzhavar Sandhai aims at organising local farmers and helps them to maximise their income. It does so by providing a bridge between urban customers and rural vegetable growers. In this novel design, tracing the origin of vegetables becomes easy. The Salem district Uzhavar Sandhais serves as a nodal agency for the farmers and consumers.

Analysis of the data collected from the Salem district Uzhavar Sandhais is significant due to its continuity and Income generation to the farmers.

Uzhavar Sandhais (Farmers Market) in Tamil Nadu

- ✓ 103 Uzhavar Sandhais (Farmers Market) are functioning. They are renovated at a cost of Rs. 42 lakhs.
- ✓ 50 New Farmers' Markets are proposed to be established during the current year.

Performance of Uzhavar Sandhai in Tamil Nadu

The Tamil Nadu Uzhavar Sandhais is healthy with regard to continuity of supply and income. Every day on an average 1070 M.T. of vegetables and fruits worth Rs.1.15 Crore bought and sold by 6250 farmers benefiting 1,80,000 consumers.

Table – 1 Total Uzhavar Sandhais in Tamil Nadu		
Sl.No	Arrivals per day (in MT)	No of Markets in TN
1	More than 15	19
2	5 to 15	42
3	3 to 5	22
4	Less than 3	20
Total no. of Uzhavar Sandhais in TN		103

Source: Uzhavar Santhai head office, Salem.

Need for the Study

A large number of attempts has been made by the Government and other agencies to eliminate the exploitation of farmers and consumers by a number of middlemen such as broker, village land Leaders etc. though regulated markets and cooperative marketing societies have been started for the purpose, still many a farmers are exploited. Therefore a new institution of direct marketing is necessary. There can be the 'Uzhavar Sandhai' to the benefits of Farmers and consumers.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the reasons for choosing Uzhavar Sandhais both by farmers and consumers.
2. To find out the farmers and consumers level of satisfaction in Uzhavar Sandhai.
3. To find functions of Uzhavar Sandhai in general and in particular of the selected farmers.
4. To identify the performance of Uzhavar Sandhais in Salem District.
5. To make suggestions for improvement of the Uzhavar Sandhais.

Research Design

Sample

Data were collected using the 'personal contact' approach. Questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 200 respondents (100 Farmers and 100 Consumers) under convenient sampling method in major Uzhavar Sandhais in Salem District, viz., Junction, Attur, Ammapetai, Thadhagpatti, Mettur, Attayampatti. The questionnaires were formed after consulting relevant literature and some academicians researching on the concept. Besides attitudes scale, the survey questionnaire also included a section to capture the general profile of respondents. They were asked about their demographic background including age, educational level, marital status, and income groups. The data were analyzed with the help of the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) package. The statistical tools used for data analysis included tabulation and frequency distribution, mean, standard deviation, and Garrett's Ranking Method.

Limitations of the Study

- ✓ It is also assumed that the respondents are true and honest in expressing their views.
- ✓ The study is applicable only to Uzhavar Sandhais in Salem District and not to any other similar areas.
- ✓ For want of time, only 200 respondents were contacted (100 Farmers and 100 Consumers).

Intentions of Uzhavar Sandhai (Farmers Market)

- ✓ To avoid too many middlemen
- ✓ To maximize the benefits of both to the Farmers and Consumers
- ✓ Direct Marketing
- ✓ To increase the standard of living

Benefits to Farmers

- ✓ No Commission
- ✓ No rent for shops
- ✓ Additional Facilities
 - ✓ Water facility,
 - ✓ Vehicle standard,
 - ✓ Toilet and phone facility,
 - ✓ Canteen facility.
- ✓ Storage facilities
- ✓ Daily Price Determination
- ✓ Availability of Quality seeds
- ✓ Immediate Cash on hand on sale
- ✓ Weighting Scales
- ✓ Price Board
- ✓ No Entrance Fee
- ✓ More Profit
- ✓ Savings facilities

Benefits to Consumers

- ✓ Correct Weight
- ✓ Affordable and fair price of vegetables
- ✓ Fresh and Quality Vegetables
- ✓ Additional Facilities to Consumers
- ✓ Price Board
- ✓ Availability of all Vegetables

Functions of Uzhavar Sandhai

- ✓ Shops are allotted to identified farmers on first come first served basis.
- ✓ Assistant Director of Agriculture (Marketing / Secretary, market Committee has been made responsible for collecting daily whole – sale / retail price of all vegetables)
- ✓ The Prices are exhibited in sign boards of 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.
- ✓ The identification of farmers is the responsibility of the Horticulture and Agriculture Department.
 - ✓ Adequate arrangement for security, cleaning of the premises and maintenance of the balances should be worked out and organized before the Uzhavar Sandhai starts its function.
 - ✓ 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 Farmer's Information Centers run by the Horticulture and Agriculture Departments for the entire Uzhavar Sandhai.

Review of Literature

Maheswari (M.Phil Dissertations **2001**) has carried out a study about the problems and prospects of the Uzhavar Sandhai in Virudhu Nagar district. According to her study, the price determining method followed in the Uzhavar Sandhai was transparent and fair. The criteria for fixing the price for the vegetables and fruits are as follows. The prevailing wholesale price was inflated by 20 percent and then the prevailing retail

price was adjusted downward by 20 percent. The price for this market was fixed on the average of the above two markets. This study showed that the majorities of the farmers were satisfied with the method of price fixation by the government.

On the basis of the Study Commissioned by the Oxfam GB in India Uzhavar Sandhai is in operation in Tamilnadu since 1999 with first such farmers' market being set up in Madurai. As per data in the year 2002, there are about 102 Uzhavar Sandhais in various urban centers in Tamil Nadu. "It has survived despite inadequate support from the government, which has focused its energies behind promotion of Self Help Group (SHGs), providing them with infrastructure and soft bank loans. Therefore, the Uzavar Sandhais have survived purely because of the merits in their unique system of marketing," the study said. Farmers are allotted a space where they can sell their produces. The government has set up marketing committees to identify farmers and give them a permit or identity cards. Farmers do not pay any rent or commission. The marketing committee fixes the prices of fruits and vegetables which holds good for the whole day.

Table - 2

Level of Satisfaction of in Uzhavar Sandhais (Farmers & consumers)

Uzhavar Sandhai	Level of Satisfaction					Total
	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Moderate	Dissatisfied	Highly Dissatisfied	
Farmers	26 (26.00)	33 (33.00)	27 (27.00)	9 (9.00)	5 (5.00)	100 (100)
Consumers	24 (24.00)	46 (46.00)	15 (15.00)	12 (12.00)	3 (3.00)	100 (100)
Total	50 (25.00)	79 (39.50)	42 (21.00)	21 (10.50)	8 (4.00)	200 (100)

Reason for choosing Uzhavar Sandhais

Table 2 reveals that only 5.00 percent and 9.00 percent of Farmers gave opinion about the Uzhavar Sandhai as highly dissatisfied and dissatisfied respectively and 86.00 percent Farmers are satisfied (it includes Highly Satisfied of 26.00 percent, Satisfied of 33.00 percent and Moderate with 27.00 percent).

3.00 percent and 12.00 percent of consumers are highly dissatisfied about the opinion about Uzhavar Sandhai as highly dissatisfied Uzhavar Sandhai and dissatisfied respectively and 85.00 percent consumers are satisfied (it include Highly Satisfied of 24.00 percent, Satisfied of 46.00 percent & moderate with 15.00 percent)

Garrett's Ranking Technique is used to find out the primary reason for choosing the Uzhavar Sandhai by the sample farmer sellers and consumers. The various reasons are listed in Table 3 and 4 along with Garette Ranking. The table 3 and 4 highlights the Garrett's scores which help to decide the most important factor adopted by the farmers and consumers choosing Uzhavar Sandhai.

In order to determine the importance of the factors which influence Farmers and Consumers among the respondents while choosing Uzhavar Sandhai, computation such as the total score and total mean score were computed through **Garrett Ranking Technique**. On the basis of their mean values, the factors were ranked. The results are presented in Table 3 and 4.

Garrett Ranking Technique

To identify the most important benefits that are derived by the Farmers and consumers, Garrett ranking can be employed and its computation procedures are given below:

$$\text{Percentage Position} = \frac{100 * (R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}$$

Where,

- R_{ij} – rank allotted to the i^{th} factor by the j^{th} individual, and
- N_j – total number of factors ranked by the j^{th} individual.

The percentage position of each rank was further converted into scores by using the Garret's Ranking Table. Then, the scores of all respondents assigned to each factor were added and divided by the total number of respondents who had responded. Next, the mean scores of all the items of particulars were arranged in a descending order and ranks allotted to them according to the score obtained.

Table – 3

Reason for choosing Uzhavar Sandhai (Farmers)

Reasons	Total Score	Total Mean Score	Rank
Immediate cash on hand	5602	56.02	III
Reasonable price	4962	49.62	IV
Direct marketing	6146	61.46	I
To avoid too many middle man	5626	56.26	II
No entrance fee	3136	31.36	VI
No rent for shop and no charge for weighting machine	4184	41.84	V

Rankwise the most important reasons influencing by the farmer sellers, quoted for choosing Uzhavar Sandhai, is Direct Marketing which has been assigned the first rank among other factors. The second rank goes "to avoid too many middle man", followed by Immediate cash on hand at the third rank, "Reasonable price" get the fourth rank, while the fifth rank was given to No rent for shop and no charge for weighting machine, followed by No entrance fee as the sixth rank.

Table – 4

Reason for choosing Uzhavar Sandhais
(Consumers)

Reasons	Total Score	Total Mean Score	Rank
Fair price of vegetables	5368	53.68	II
Correct weight	3258	32.58	IV
Fresh and quality vegetables	5960	59.60	I
Availability of all vegetables	5214	52.14	III

Rankwise the most important reasons influencing that the Consumers, quoted for choosing Uzhavar Sandhai, is fresh and quality vegetables which has been assigned the first rank among other factors. The second rank goes to "Fair price of vegetables", followed by "Availability of all vegetables" at the third rank, followed by "correct weight" as the fourth rank.

Table - 5

Arrivals of farmers and their vegetables in Salem district Uzhavar santhais farmers (Nos)
Arrivals (Tonne)

Uzhavar santhai	2003-04		2004-05		2005-06		2006-07		2007-08		2008-09	
	Farmers	Arrivals	Farmers	Arrivals	Farmers	Arrivals	Farmers	Arrivals	Farmers	Arrivals	Farmers	Arrivals
Junction	1666209	20839660	71883	9048138	6732	10523830	70552	8403940	81681	8524554	87716	8505611
Attur	109277	10888132	48780	4557488	47177	4381676	42336	4435781	38450	3449481	16286	2901356
Ammapetai	34932	3684871	27237	3751840	24806	4325166	22518	22518	23954	3131252	23802	3883725
Thadhagpatti	84389	8410690	42562	4311256	37338	3830641	29221	29227	47450	459711	25315	4330679
Mettur	84359	2410997	19011	3748628	18444	3726786	17707	17807	16995	3729195	17235	3559971
Attaympatti	9360	630953	14792	1543417	10251	1230906	10601	10601	12307	1213302	12468	1219583

Table - 6

**Total Arrivals of consumers and total value of vegetables in Salem district Uzhavar
Santhais consumers (Nos) value (Rs)**

Uzhavar santhai	2003-04		2004-05		2005-06		2006-07		2007-08		2008-09	
	Cons	Value	Cons	Value	Cons	Value	Cons	Value	Cons	Value	Cons	Value
Junction	4431643	146949121	1693518	70587476	1908605	5789512	1779349	74963615	1657082	79655394	1366753	7879196
Attur	3507492	78336291	1325131	34656454	1100505	32786826	523854	39927062	852397	31237148	446002	26812648
Ammapetai	110351	24441058	637118	25392295	71913	32769634	791374	35655827	1119354	25345027	1648539	40706410
Thadhagpatti	367126	63762580	1081165	3518182	941603	327656334	791376	3565827	1119354	25345027	1648539	40706410
Mettur	509554	13219091	718122	31118200	820150	29865420	798760	32135740	875.320	20865110	825600	30488920
Attaympatti	185632	4894496	317731	12583235	237862	103884774	232493	10949942	308332	11186187	298600	11526222

Source: Salem district Uzhavar Santhai office 2009

Suggestion & Recommendations

The survey finds that the direct marketing, more varieties, fresh & green, leafy vegetables are the main factors that have influenced the consumer. Hence the study recommend the following.

1. Municipal Corporation (commissioner) may create awareness about uzhavar sandhai through local advertisement media (like announcement, hoardings, scrolling).
2. Some respondent are not satisfied with quantity of vegetables. Necessary action should be taken.
3. Concerned officers should make surprise visits at the uzhavar sandhai to inspect and regulate the activities.
4. Extending the working hours of sandhai in the evening time for office goers.

5. Farmers need more shops because there are many farmers who sold their vegetables in the open space
6. Farmers need storage facilities and refrigeration.
7. Shops for English vegetables are available only at 2 (or) 3 stalls. Looking at the long queuing of those shops, the study suggests that some more shops are needed for selling English vegetables.

CONCLUSION

Uzhavar Sandhai (Farmers Market) is the bridge between farmers & consumers. Farmers are getting right price for their product without the involvement of the middleman. Farmers are motivated by the 100% direct selling and the consumers are fully satisfied for freshness, availability and quality of vegetables. Hence, concerned authorities should take care for proper functioning and regularize the supply of vegetables in Uzhavar Sandhai (farmers market). It is essential that they manage their activities in a

logical way in order to align with the customer's needs. If the findings and suggestions from this study are considered and put into practice, definitely there will be more chances for further development and it may lead to better consumer satisfaction and increase in their purchasing in Salem district.

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