
THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE UNORGANISED STREET VENDORS IN THE CITY OF MADURAI – A STUDY

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Abstract

This research paper explores the characteristic features of street vendors in Madurai city based on interviews and participant observations of street vendors in Madurai city. The purpose of this research work was to know the characteristic features of sample street vendors in Madurai city. The findings of this study unveil that 25.2 per cent of sample street vendors sold eatery items, 46.8 per cent of the street vendors travels daily for more than 8 kilometers of distance from their residence to the business places, 31.8 per cent of the respondents took their own decision to start vending business and a vast majority of the respondents (72.6 per cent) had not engaged any member of their family in their vending activities in the city of Madurai.

Keywords Characteristics, Communication Strategies, Benefits of Street Vendor, Street Vendors, Madurai city.

Introduction

The term "street vendor" in English is typically used interchangeably with "street trader," "hawker," and "peddler." There are also many local terms and regional variations. Street vendors are sometimes distinguished from vendors who operate on the types of public spaces that are not specifically streets or related to the streets – train stations, buses, public parks, and so on – but most commonly the term is used inclusively (Government of India – The Street Vendors Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending, 2014). Street vending in India falls in the unorganized sector category. Street vending has been a profession since time immemorial, with street vendors an integral part of our urban history and culture. Shopping and

marketing, in a traditional Indian sense, has primarily been informal. Social interaction is integral to Indian markets in contrast to the mechanized and the sterile concept of shopping favoured by modern market and super market structures.¹ Vendors exhibit remarkable entrepreneurial skills. Purchasing of commodities is no easy task with constant market fluctuations. Besides, middlemen have a major say in the wholesale markets. Commodities have to be in sync with both consumer tastes and paying capacity. As most vendors deal in perishables, the goods have to be sold at the right time.²

Urbanization is the most significant all India phenomena of our times. Today the city has become an engine of growth, the main job provider. Twenty-nine per cent of the people of the country generate 60% of the GDP. However, our cities remain ill-prepared to address the problems of poverty. Planning and governance continue to be the preserve of the politician-mafia-bureaucrat nexus. Whatever policy that does exist is poorly implemented.³ Every social system must cater to the needs of its members to enable them to survive; it must have effective means of allocating and distributing resources. The vendors provide a wide array of goods and commodities to the urban populace at reasonable prices and convenient locations. The type of goods they sell makes an interesting study – from daily needs like vegetables, fruits, fish, meat and snacks to occasional needs like flowers and ready-made garments. A survey conducted by the Indian Institute of Health and Hygiene in 1997 counted 300 types of eatables sold by the hawkers of Calcutta. It would be hard to find an urban Indian who doesn't purchase anything from a vendor. The middle and lower class consumer specifically prefer to purchase from them, though even well-off citizens purchase many commodities given reasonable prices.⁴

The family has engaged in various stages of agricultural production, i.e., sowing, harvesting and so on. The same system has crept into urban areas; it is not uncommon to find the entire family involved in the micro-enterprise. Thus, on a roadside tea stall, while the husband looks after customers, the wife prepares tea and snacks, and children wash utensils. The same is true for vegetable and fish vendors where the husband purchases commodities while the wife sells.⁵

Vendors are regularly subjected to mental and physical pressures by city officials. At times this has led to riotous situations, loss of property, or monetary loss. A major problem is that master plans prepared for the cities do not allocate space to vendors/hawkers, as planners blindly imitate the western concept of marketing, ignoring Indian traditions. No wonder, weekly markets struggle to survive and natural markets are ignored. The policy statements of the Regional Development Authorities talk of making provision for trading and commercial activities, which unfortunately is interpreted as making provision for rich traders and big business. The vendors have to deal with multiple authorities – the Municipal Corporation, Police, Regional Development Authorities, District Administration, and Local Panchayats. This leads to

exploitation and extortion. In many cases the positive steps taken by one authority are nullified by the actions of others.⁶

Objectives

The broad objective of the present work was to study the characteristic features of sample street vendors in Madurai city and the specific objectives were to study the types of the street vendors, business types of street vendors, distance between residence and the business place, street vendors traveling hours to vending site, social network persuaded vending business, number of family member(s) involved in the vending activities, marketing communication strategies adopted by street vendors and benefits of being a street vendor.

Study Area

The present work kept with ten streets in Madurai city, to be specific, Anna Nagar, East Masi Street, Goripalayam, Netaji Road, North Veli Street, South Veli Street, Thalavai Agraharam Street, Town Hall Road, West Chitrai Street and West Masi Street.

Methodology Adapted

An explorative method has been adopted to study the characteristic features of street vendors in Madurai city. The structured interview schedule was used to collect primary data relating to types of the street vendors, business types of street vendors, distance between residence and the business place, street vendors traveling hours to vending site, social network persuaded vending business, number of family member(s) involved in the vending activities, marketing communication strategies adopted by street vendors and benefits of being a street vendor in Madurai city. The present study employed tools like descriptive statistics and ranking for analysis and interpret results.

Results and Discussions

An analysis of the characteristic features of street vendors of Madurai city in terms of types of the street vendors, business types of street vendors, distance between residence and the business place, street vendors traveling hours to vending site, social network persuaded vending business, number of family member(s) involved in the vending activities, marketing communication strategies adopted by street vendors and benefits of being a street vendor.

Types of Street Vendors

The sample street vendors by their types of vending in Madurai city is presented in table 5.1. The study reveals that, the majority of the street vendors (74.4 per cent) in Madurai city had carried out their trade in a permanent place, 16.8 per cent of street vendors carried out their trade activities by carrying loads on head and 8.8 per cent of the sample street vendors carried out their trade by way of mobile on wheel.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by types of street vendors in Madurai city

Sl. No.	Types of street vendors	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Stationary	372	74.4
2.	Mobile on wheel	44	08.8
3.	Mobile head load	84	16.8
Total		500	100

Source: Primary data

Business types of Street Vendors

Table 5.2 presents the business types of street vendors in Madurai city. The study shows that 25.2 per cent of sample street vendors sold eatery items, 20 per cent of the sample street vendors sold fruits, 15.4 per cent of sample respondents were trading garment goods, 13 per cent of the sample street vendors carried out trading of household utensil items, 12.4 per cent of the sample street vendors sold vegetables, 7 per cent of the respondents traded electronic items, 3 per cent of the respondents were vending leather goods, 2.4 per cent of the sample street vendors were engaged in providing services to customers and 1.6 per cent of the street vendors sold stationery goods.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by types of business of street vendors in Madurai city

Sl. No.	Trade types of street vendors	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Eateries	126	25.2
2.	Fruits	100	20.0
3.	Vegetables	62	12.4
4.	Household utensils	65	13.0
5.	Garments	77	15.4
6.	Electronic items	35	07.0
7.	Leather goods	15	03.0
8.	Stationery goods	08	01.6
9.	Services	12	02.4
Total		500	100

Source: Primary data

Distance between Residence and the Business Place

The distribution of respondents by the distance between their residence and the business places in Madurai city is presented in table 5.3. The study reveals that 46.8 per cent of the street vendors travels daily for more than 8 kilometers of distance from their residence to the business places, 34.2 per cent of the respondents travels daily for their business for distance of 6 kilometers to 8 kilometers, 8.4 per cent of the street vendors' vending places from home were away between 4 kilometers and 6 kilometers, 7.6 per cent of the respondents business places were at the distance between 1 kilometer to 2 kilometers from their residence, 3 per cent of the respondents' trading places were away between 2 kilometers and 4 kilometers from their residence. Hence, there were

street vendors who have to travel for more than 16 kilometers to carry out their daily business activities.

Table 3: Respondents' distance between residence and the business place in Madurai city

Source: Primary data

Sl. No.	Distance (in km)	Frequency	Percentage
1.	0-2	38	07.6
2.	2-4	15	03.0
3.	4-6	42	08.4
4.	6-8	171	34.2
5.	8 and above	234	46.8
Total		500	100

Street Vendors Traveling Hours to Vending Site

Table 5.4 presents the street vendors traveling hours to street vending site in Madurai city. The study shows that, the majority of the sample respondents (59.6 per cent)

have to spent their time in traveling for one hour to one and half hours, 24.8 per cent of the street vendors' traveling hours was between 31 minutes to one hour, 7.4 per cent of the sample respondents took traveling time between 15 minutes to 30 minutes, 4.2 per cent of the street vendors took traveling time less than 15 minutes and 4 per cent of the sample respondents took traveling hours between one and half hours to two hours to street vending site among the studied population.

Table 4: Respondents' traveling time to vending site

Source: Primary data

Sl. No.	Traveling time	Frequency	%
1.	Less than 15 minutes	21	04.2
2.	15 minutes to 30 minutes	37	07.4
3.	31 minutes to 1 hour	124	24.8
4.	1 hour to one and half hours	298	59.6
5.	One and half hours to two hours	20	04.0
Total		500	100

A Social Network that Persuaded to Street Vendors

A social network that persuaded to street vendors in Madurai city is presented in table 5.5. It was found that 31.8 per cent of the respondents took their own decision to start vending business, 31.2 per cent of the

street vendors were persuaded by their friends, 22.4 per cent of the street vendors took up the present profession due to their family financial constrain, 9.4 per cent of the sample street vendors were persuaded by their neighbours and 5.2 per cent of the sample respondents were persuaded by their relatives.

Table 5: A social network that persuaded to street vendors

Source: Primary data

Sl. No.	Social Network	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Relatives	26	05.2
2.	Family	112	22.4
3.	Friends	156	31.2
4.	Neighbours	47	09.4
5.	Own Decision	159	31.8
Total		500	100

Number of Family Member(s) Involved in the Vending Activities

The sample respondents that engaged their number of family members in their vending activities in Madurai city is presented in

table 5.6. The study found that, a vast majority of the respondents (72.6 per cent) had not engaged any member of their family in their vending activities and few had engaged (27.4 per cent) one to three members of their family in their business activities directly or indirectly.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents by number of family Member (s) involved in the vending activities in Madurai city

Source: Primary data

Sl. No.	No. of family member(s)	Frequency	%
1.	Nil	363	72.6
2.	1	43	08.6
3.	2	58	11.6
4.	3	36	07.2
Total		500	100

Mode of Communication of Products' Price by Street Vendors to Customers

The mode of communication by street vendors to customers of their products' price in Madurai city is presented in table 5.7. The

study shows that 47 per cent of the sample respondents adopted their sales promotion in the form of point of sale display as marketing communication strategy, 36.8 per cent of the sample street vendors were adopted word of mouth, 8.6 per cent of the street vendors were following personal selling, 6 per cent of the respondent were adopting price discount of the product as marketing strategy and 1.6 per cent of the street vendors were following free product promotion as their communication strategy among the sample respondents.

Table 7: Mode of communication of products' price by street vendors to customers

Source: Primary data

Sl. No.	Communication strategies	Frequency	%
1.	Word of mouth	184	36.8
2.	Personal selling	43	08.6
3.	Point of sale display	235	47.0
4.	Price discount	30	06.0
5.	Free product promotion	08	01.6
Total		500	100

Level of Satisfaction with the Benefits of Being Street Vending Business

The sample street vendors' level of satisfaction with the benefits of being a street vending business in Madurai city

is presented in table 5.8. The majority (62.4 per cent) of the street vendors in the study area agreed to have much benefitted by taking up vending business even though they were not aware the benefit that they received from the Madurai Corporation in regard to the taxation policy on the street vendors. Further, the street vending business has helped the majority (56.6 per cent) of the street vendors in their family economic affair as it has created employment opportunities (73.2 per cent) even though it has not improved their standard of livelihood. The calculated mean score for the level of satisfaction with the benefits of being street vending business for three factors, such as; it creates employment opportunity, has helped in their family economic affair and

there was a daily profit making concentrated around the score of 5 which signifies that they have very much benefitted from vending business. Further, the calculated mean score concentrated around the score of 4 for the benefit such as; street vending business has improved their family livelihood and there was tax from the government.

Street vending creates an employment opportunity to unemployed people was ranked 1st among the 5 benefits that was considered in the present study, 2nd rank was given to the receive cash daily when doing street vending business, street vending business helps themselves and their family members was ranked 3rd, 4th rank was given to the street vending profession helps to improve their livelihood and the taxation imposed by the Madurai Corporation was placed in the last rank.

Hence, the present study concludes that street vendors in Madurai city have benefitted a lot for taking up street vending business.

Table 8: Respondents by their level of benefits from street vending business

Sl. No.	Variable	Very much benefitted	benefitted	Undecided	Not benefitted	Not at all benefitted	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Rank
		No.	No.	No.	No.	No.			
1.	There was daily profit making	312 (62.4)	136 (27.2)	10 (02.0)	24 (04.8)	18 (03.6)	4.40	1.001	II
2.	There was no government tax	87 (17.4)	129 (25.8)	256 (51.2)	07 (01.4)	21 (04.2)	3.51	.938	V
3.	Has helped in their family economic affair	283 (56.6)	114 (22.8)	58 (11.6)	36 (07.2)	09 (01.8)	4.25	1.035	III
4.	Has improved their family livelihood	143 (28.6)	169 (33.8)	84 (16.8)	12 (02.4)	92 (18.4)	3.52	1.406	IV
5.	It creates employment opportunity	366 (73.2)	83 (16.6)	15 (03.0)	20 (04.0)	16 (03.2)	4.53	.967	I

Source: Computer from the sample survey, **No.:** Number of respondents, **Note:** Figures in parenthesis represent the percentage to their respective total sample respondent

Conclusion and Suggestion

While standards have been facilitating for FDI in multi-brand retail, no exertion is taken to facilitate the occupation of the poor street vendors. The streets of each city in the nation are not just home to thousands of working poor and dejected men and women; they are additionally dynamic centers of vocation for devastated individuals; and reliable locales for shoddy and reasonable retail. On city pavements, women and men vivaciously sell assortment of merchandise, including foods grown from ground, apparel, toys, books, etc. The study concluded that majority of the street vendors in Madurai city had carried out their trade in a permanent place with near to half per cent of the street vendors travels daily for more than 8 kilometers of distance from their residence to the business places and 31.8 per cent of the respondents took their own decision to start street vending business even they spent their time in traveling for one hour to one and half hours but a vast majority of the respondents had not engaged any member of their family in their street

vending activities and 47 per cent of the sample respondents adopted their sales promotion in the form of point of sale display as marketing communication strategy. Further, the present study concludes that street vendors in Madurai city have benefited a lot for taking up street vending business. In this manner, we can infer that street vending is a gainful business and adds to the economy huge other than being a type of independent work which cuts down the quantities of unemployed in the nation. However, it is suggested that the training should be conducted on how to maintain hygienic and cleanliness while preparing eatery items. The study registered the maximum number of street vendors doing eatery business.

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