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CONSUMER'S PERCEPTION TOWARDS HORTICULTURE KIOSKS IN THE VICINITY OF MARGAO

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ABSTRACT

Horticulture is one of the major allied activities of agriculture which includes wide varieties of crops, be it fruits, vegetables, meditative, aromatic, etc. Over the years horticulture has evolved as an essential part of agriculture, aiming towards self sufficiency and sustainable development. The Goa State Horticulture Corporation Limited (GSHCL) had emerged to develop flower and vegetable cultivation in Goa. One major impetus was the initiation of outlets or kiosks for sale of the farmer's produce. In order to promote vegetables with assured markets, these kiosks along with the government's assistance sell vegetables at subsidized rates to the general public. However, it has been noticed that such kiosks which are set up in areas wherein there already exists a larger wholesale local vegetable market face high competition, as the latter has more varieties and better freshly available produce. This paper reveals that although these horticulture kiosks sell vegetables at a subsidized rate, the quality of vegetables is a matter of concern. Lack of proper grading and proper quality control have led to some kiosks selling stale and wilted produce, thereby forcing consumers to purchase better, fresh produce from the larger local market at a slightly higher price.

Keywords: Horticulture, Kiosks, Consumers, Perception, Vegetable

INTRODUCTION

India is developing in leaps and bounds, and the fact remains and still holds strong that agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy. Majority of the Indians still depend on agriculture for their livelihood. In the realm of agriculture, we have a lot of allied activities such as horticulture, sericulture, fishing, animal husbandry, poultry farming, dairy farming, etc. One of the strong stem sprouting from agriculture is Horticulture. Horticulture is one of the major allied activities of agriculture, which includes wide

varieties of crops be it fruits, vegetables, meditative, aromatic, etc. According to the American Society for Horticultural Science, 'Horticulture is the science and art of producing, improving, marketing, and using fruits, vegetables, flowers, and ornamental plants'. Over the years the horticultural activities in Goa, have evolved as an integral part of agricultural development aiming towards self sufficiency and sustainable development. The Goa State Horticulture Corporation Limited (GSHCL) has emerged to develop flower and vegetable cultivation in Goa. By enhancing and improving agricultural development in Goa through wide assistance provided to the farmers the Goa State Horticulture Corporation Limited tries to reduce the State's dependency on neighbouring states for agricultural produce. One major impetus was the initiation of outlets or kiosks for sale of the farmer's produce. In order to promote vegetables with assured markets these kiosks, along with the government's assistance sell the vegetables at subsidized rates to the general public. However, it has been seen that such kiosks which are set up in areas wherein there already exists a large wholesale vegetable market face high competition, as the larger local market has more varieties and better freshly available stock of vegetables. It has been noticed that although these outlets sell vegetables at a subsidized rate, the quality of vegetables is a matter of concern. Lack of proper grading and proper quality control have led to some outlets selling sub-standard, stale and wilted produce, thereby forcing consumers to purchase better fresh produce from the larger local market or any local vegetable vendor even at a slightly higher price.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to a study by Times of India (2017) the supply of rotten and stale vegetables by the State run Goa State Horticulture Corporation Limited (GSHCL) had irked operators of the subsidized vegetable stores and left consumers disappointed with the service. Most of the officials said they were helpless and blamed the situation on post monsoon showers. It was also informed that during the monsoons the vegetable bags get drenched in transit leading to rotting. Many a times the suppliers received bags of vegetables to the extent of 70 percent being spoilt on receipt itself. Customers hence feel much better in going to and buying from the local wholesale market or even small retail vegetable vendors who sell fresh stock of vegetables even though they would have to pay a slightly higher price.

In another study on the similar grounds by team Herald (2017), it was found that the several consumers have complained about "rotten" and "poor quality" of vegetables at the carts. The outlets are flooded with old and poor quality vegetables. Repeated complaints to the Corporation have been made and assurances have been given that the situation will improve, however, all have fallen on deaf ears. People prefer buying vegetables from other local outlets, while some poor complain that they are helpless and forced to buy such poor quality produce.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To study whether consumers are satisfied with the vegetables available at the Goa State Horticulture Corporation Limited (GSHCL) outlets/ kiosks.
- 2) To analyze whether people would compromise quality for subsidized price.
- 3) To find out whether the GSHCL kiosks meet the aim of the government to provide fresh vegetables at a subsidized rate to the general public.

Sample:

For the purpose of the study an individual survey procedure was used vide convenience sampling. A total of 200 individuals participated in the study. The sampled individuals comprised of residents from the vicinity of Margao, residing in Aquem, Borda, Fatorda, Comba, Pedda Margao and Ambaji, during November 2018.

Data collection tools:

The sample was administered a structured questionnaire. The questions were designed in a forced choice (dichotomous) and in a 3 point *Likert* scale format. The questions aimed at understanding the consumer's perception towards Goa State Horticulture Corporation Limited (GSHCL) vegetable outlets/ kiosks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data was analyzed using statistical tools of percentage analysis to compare the results among the respondents.

Problem 1: To study whether consumers are satisfied with the vegetables available at the Goa State Horticulture Corporation Limited (GSHCL) outlets/ kiosks.

Table 1: Satisfaction levels of consumers/ freshness levels of vegetables with GSHCL outlets.

Intensity levels	Satisfaction levels of consumers with GSHCL outlets	Level of freshness of vegetables available at GSHCL outlets
Extremely	2%	4%
Moderately	18%	76.5%
Not at all	80%	19.5%

Source: Fieldwork

As seen in Table 1, it can be seen that 80 percent of the consumers are not at all satisfied with the vegetables available at the Goa State Horticulture Corporation Limited (GSHCL) outlets/ kiosks. 18 percent were moderately satisfied, while only 2 percent were extremely satisfied. With respect to the level of freshness of the vegetables available at the GSHCL outlets, 76.5 percent were moderately satisfied, 4 percent of consumers were extremely satisfied, whilst 19.5 percent were not at all satisfied with the freshness of the vegetable stock available at the Goa State Horticulture Corporation Limited (GSHCL) outlets/ kiosks.

Problem 2: To analyze whether people would compromise quality for subsidized price.

Table 2: Price difference between GSHCL outlets and local vendors

Price difference level intensity	Consumers perception
Extremely	3.5%
Moderately	94.5%
Not at all	2%

Source: Fieldwork

Table 3: Consumers compensation views between quality and price.

Intensity levels	Consumers compensation between quality and price
Most of the time	2%
Sometimes	27%
Never	71%

Source: Fieldwork

Table 4: Consumers preferred outlet to buy vegetables

GSHCL	Local wholesale market or local retail vegetable vendor
15%	85%

Source: Fieldwork

With respect to problem 2, i.e. to analyze whether people would compromise quality for subsidized price, it can be seen in Table 2 that on the whole there is a moderate amount of price difference between the produce available at the GSHCL kiosks and local vegetable vendors. 94.5 percent consumers perceive that the price difference levels are moderate, 3.5 percent perceive that the difference is extreme, while 2 percent observe that there is no price difference at all between the vegetables available at the GSHCL outlets and the

local vegetable vendors. When asked whether they would compromise quality for price, it can be clearly seen in Table 3, that 71 percent replied that they would never compromise quality for price, 27 percent said that they sometimes would, while 2 percent said that most of the time they would not mind buying not so fresh vegetable at a lower price which is usually available at the GSHCL outlets. On the whole it can be seen in Table 4, that 85 percent consumers prefer buying vegetables from the local wholesale market or local retail vegetable vendor, while only 15 percent prefer buying vegetables from the GSHCL outlets.

Problem 3: To study whether the GSHCL kiosks meet the aim of the government to provide fresh vegetables at a subsidized rate to the general public.

Table 5: Consumers perception of vegetables available being sub-standard, stale and wilted

Intensity levels	Consumers perception
Most of the time	89.5%
Sometimes	8%
Never	2.5%

Source: Fieldwork

Table 6: Consumers perception of GSHCL in meeting the aim of providing fresh and subsidized vegetables.

Yes	No
12%	88%

Source: Fieldwork

As can be seen in Table 5, 89.5 percent of the consumers feel that the most of the time the vegetables available at the GSHCL outlets are sub-standard, stale and wilted. Eight percent perceive that only sometimes they are of such quality, while 2.5 percent perceive that the vegetables are never sub-standard. However, in support to the 89.5 percent consumers, a finding done by Times of India (2017) also confirmed that the vegetable stocks available at the GSHCL outlets are of sub-standard quality. It was found that most of the potatoes at this outlet were oozing and were in a state of rot, onions were undersized and slimy, carrots and tomatoes had softened and ladyfingers and brinjals were stale. Hence it can clearly be seen in Table 6 that only 12 percent of the consumers perceive that the GSHCL kiosks meet the aim of the government to provide fresh

vegetables at a subsidized rate to the general public, while 88 percent of the consumers perceive that they do not.

The GSHCL outlet owners themselves agree to the consumers woes. In a finding by Team Times of India (2017), one of the owner informed that his customers were hesitant to purchase vegetables from him because of such stale vegetable stock. He claims to be losing income and has brought this matter to the attention of the horticulture corporation several times but in vain. With such kind of treatment the outlet owner plans to soon discontinue the franchise. In a similar finding by Team Herald (2017) GSHCL outlet owners say that the Corporation has prohibited them from buying vegetables to sell at their carts. The Corporation has hired some contractors who supply vegetables to them but the quality is very bad. Many outlets have faced the ire of their consumers, who have even returned the vegetables after purchase.

OTHER GSHCL KIOSK ISSUES

A study by Team Times of India (2017), was a complaint about the Goa State Horticulture outlets getting vegetables stock late, forcing daily customers of the GSHCL to go empty handed since they were asked to come later for their purchases as the supplies had not yet come. It is said that a 'Customer is King', hence the seller has to by all means try to satisfy the consumer. Such treatment of not getting the stock on time, hence forcing the customer to either go without any purchase or buy old stock of vegetables, dissatisfies a customer, who in turn prefers purchasing from the local vegetable vendors who have ample of fresh stock available at their disposal for sale.

Goa State Horticulture Corporation Limited aims to provide assistance to the farmers of Goa and tries to reduce the State's dependency on neighbouring states for agricultural produce. However, a finding by Team GOA365(2018), reveals that the farmers feel cheated and are suffering losses. Farmers say that the government started these horticulture stalls to promote local farmers, but it is not happening. Farmers say that these stalls vendors are buying vegetable at a cheaper rate from the neighbouring state. In such situation the local farmers feel cheated and de-motivated to grow and sell their produce.

Another new setback faced by GSHCL outlets is the opening of 'TaazaTokri' at several cities in Goa. TaazaTokri is an air-conditioned outlet providing fresh fruits and vegetables at reasonable rates. This outlet even provides the service of free doorstep delivery of a customer's order. Such service is definitely going to prove very competitive to the GSHCL outlets, who will ultimately have to bear the brunt of it, if they do not improve their services.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that majority of the people living within the vicinity of Margao i.e. in the surrounding areas of Margao like Aquem, Borda, Fatorda, Ambaji, Comba, Pedda Margao, etc., prefer to purchase vegetables from the local wholesale market or any other local vegetable vendor rather than from Goa State Horticulture Corporation Limited (GSHCL) outlets/ kiosks due to the freshly available stock at the former. However, the results also show that some people still do prefer to purchase from the horticulture kiosks owing to the subsidized pricing of the produce available at GSHCL outlets. The only main issue with the Goa State Horticulture Corporation Limited (GSHCL) outlets/ kiosks is the supply of fresh stock of vegetables which will ensure safeguarding their customers, protect the welfare of the local farmers and ultimately aim towards self sufficiency and sustainable development in the field of horticulture in Goa. According to Gaonkar (1997) in order to increase efficiency of growers they should be provided with enough incentives in terms of remunerative prices and technological back-up. This will help ensure farmers with good quality produce which can be profitable to the farmers and ensure satisfaction to the consumers.

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