

Challenges Faced By Vegetable and Fruit Vendors Due To Waste: A Case Study of Anna Market and MGR Market in Coimbatore City

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Abstract: This study investigates the challenges faced by vegetable and fruit vendors in Anna Market and MGR Market in Coimbatore, India, due to waste generation and management issues. Using a qualitative research approach, data were collected through interviews and observations from 30 vendors. The findings indicate that vendors face significant economic losses, inadequate waste disposal facilities, and the psychological burden of waste management. Recommendations for improved waste management practices, infrastructure development, and community engagement are discussed to enhance vendor sustainability and environmental health.

Keywords: Waste Management, Vegetable Vendors, Fruit Vendors, Coimbatore, Urban Markets, Sustainable Practices

INTRODUCTION

Urban markets are essential components of the food supply chain, particularly in densely populated cities like Coimbatore, India. As urbanization accelerates and population densities increase, the demand for fresh produce rises significantly. In this context, vegetable and fruit vendors play a pivotal role as intermediaries between farmers and consumers, providing convenient access to a diverse range of fresh fruits and vegetables. These vendors not only contribute to local economies and foster community cohesion but also serve as vital links in ensuring food security and promoting healthy dietary choices. Their presence facilitates regional agricultural practices, thereby enhancing the resilience of the local food system.

Despite their critical importance, vegetable and fruit vendors face numerous challenges that hinder their operations and impact their livelihoods, with waste generation and management being among the most pressing issues. According to the Central Pollution Control Board of India (2021), urban areas generate substantial quantities of organic waste, a significant

portion of which originates from fresh produce. The waste generated by these vendors arises from various factors, including over-purchasing, spoilage due to inadequate storage facilities, and unpredictable fluctuations in consumer demand. In the dynamic environment of urban markets, vendors often struggle to accurately estimate customer demand, leading to excess produce that cannot be sold within its freshness window and resulting in substantial economic losses. Moreover, inadequate waste management infrastructure exacerbates these challenges, as many urban markets in Coimbatore lack sufficient disposal facilities, compelling vendors to resort to improper waste disposal methods that pose health risks and contribute to environmental degradation. Addressing these issues necessitates a multifaceted approach that includes enhancing waste management infrastructure, providing education on sustainable practices, and fostering active engagement from local authorities and community stakeholders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing literature highlights several challenges related to waste management in urban markets. Gupta et al. (2017) noted that fluctuations in consumer demand often result in unsold produce, leading to significant waste. This waste not only represents a financial loss for vendors but also contributes to urban environmental problems.

Singh and Kumar (2019) identified inadequate waste disposal facilities as a primary concern for vendors, leading to improper disposal practices that compromise public health. These findings underscore the need for improved waste management strategies that consider the unique circumstances of vegetable and fruit vendors.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative research design to explore the challenges faced by vegetable and fruit vendors in Anna Market and MGR Market. A purposive sampling method was employed to select 30 vendors, ensuring a diverse representation of various vendor types, including wholesalers, retailers, and street vendors. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing for in-depth exploration of vendors' experiences with waste management. Observations were also made to document the waste management practices in place. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key challenges and patterns within the data.

FINDINGS

Excess Waste Generation

A significant challenge identified by vendors was the high volume of waste generated from unsold or spoiled produce. Many vendors reported that fluctuations in customer demand often resulted in substantial quantities of unsold fruits and vegetables. For instance, Vendor A stated, "On busy days, I sell almost everything, but on slow days, I end up throwing away a lot of good produce." This excess waste not only leads to economic losses but also contributes to environmental issues in the market area.

Economic Impact

The economic implications of waste management were profound. Many vendors reported losing up to 30% of their potential income due to unsold produce and associated disposal costs. Vendor B explained, "Every day, I have to calculate how much I can sell, but sometimes I end up with too much. It feels like a loss every time I throw away food." This cycle of waste and loss hindered vendors' ability to sustain their businesses, exacerbating their economic vulnerabilities.

Inadequate Waste Disposal Facilities

A recurring theme among the vendors was the lack of adequate waste disposal facilities. Many vendors expressed frustration with the existing infrastructure, which often consisted of a few bins that were not emptied regularly. Vendor C noted, "The garbage is piled up, and there is nowhere for us to dispose of waste properly. It creates a terrible smell and attracts pests." The insufficient infrastructure for waste

disposal led to improper disposal practices, further compounding the environmental issues in the market area.

Psychological Burden

The psychological impact of waste management was another significant challenge faced by vendors. The stress associated with managing unsold produce and the responsibility of waste disposal affected vendors' mental well-being. Vendor D remarked, "I feel anxious every time I see unsold items. It's like I'm wasting money and resources." This psychological burden highlighted the need for support systems and resources to assist vendors in managing their waste more effectively.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this case study reveal that vegetable and fruit vendors in Anna Market and MGR Market face multifaceted challenges related to waste management. Excessive waste generation due to market dynamics, inadequate disposal facilities, economic losses, and psychological stress contribute to a complex set of issues impacting their livelihoods and community health.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address these challenges, several strategies can be implemented:

- **Improved Infrastructure:** Local authorities should invest in enhancing waste disposal infrastructure, ensuring that sufficient bins are available and regularly emptied to prevent overflow and unsanitary conditions.
- **Vendor Education:** Educational programs focused on effective waste management practices, including waste segregation and composting, should be introduced to empower vendors and improve their understanding of sustainable practices.
- **Community Engagement:** Engaging vendors in decision-making processes regarding waste management can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to more effective practices.
- **Collaboration with NGOs:** Partnerships with non-governmental organizations can provide vendors with resources and support for better

waste management strategies, including training and financial assistance.

CONCLUSION

This case study highlights the significant challenges faced by vegetable and fruit vendors in Anna Market and MGR Market in Coimbatore due to waste generation and management issues. The economic, infrastructural, and psychological impacts of waste create barriers to the sustainability of these vendors' businesses. By implementing targeted strategies to improve waste management practices and support vendor livelihoods, local authorities and communities can enhance the overall health of urban environments while fostering a more sustainable food system.

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