A Study Conducted Among Fruit Vendors in Virudhunagar Town on Innovation in Retailing

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***Abstract*—Today, individuals are increasingly health-conscious. Because of consumers' awareness about health, fresh fruits are in demand. The present research examines the innovations employed by fruit vendors in the unorganized retail market of Virudhunagar town and the challenges they face in conducting their retail business. This research follows a descriptive research design and is grounded in both primary and secondary data. The survey was conducted among 60 fruit vendors using a well-designed questionnaire. The research identifies the fruit vendors' demographic profile, innovations adopted by the fruit vendors, and issues confronted by them. Findings indicate the low usage of online platforms and value-added products. The research provides practical recommendations for increasing competitiveness, such as local procurement, discounts, and online promotion. The findings highlight the significance of innovativeness in maintaining and expanding small-scale fruit enterprises.**

***Index Terms*—Innovation, Retail Business, and Fruit Selling**

I. INTRODUCTION

Health is essential for every human being. Every person has to consume a balanced diet in their day-to-day life. Fruits play a vital part in the human diet, providing essential Vitamins, Minerals, and Nutrients. The demand for fresh fruits has grown due to the increased awareness of health and wellness. A fruit is the ripened ovary of a flower that contains seeds. Fruits can be fleshy or dry and are available in many different shapes, colors, and flavours. Fruits can be classified into Simple fruits, Aggregate fruits, Multiple fruits, and Dry fruits.

Retail is selling the product in small quantities to consumers for their personal consumption or household consumption. Retail business is selling the products in small quantities to customers in-store or online. As per Kearney Research, India's retail industry is projected to grow at 9 per cent over 2019 - 2030. India's retail sector boasts an impressive market size, ranking fourth globally and contributing over 10 percent to the nation's GDP. Virudhunagar consists of unorganized retail businesses. It includes, coffee shop, a fruit shop, a flower shop, a sports shop, a book store, *etc*. Hence, an attempt has been made to study the innovations in the fruit business and the problems that are faced by the fruit sellers in Virudhunagar.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the current scenario, Fruit sellers are facing more challenges. Hence, they have to use effective marketing strategies to attract and retain customers. They struggle with setting the right prices, maintaining good quality, finding the right path to promote their fruits, and selecting the right places to sell. These challenges make it difficult for them to increase sales and to satisfy customers. Fruits are perishable in nature; they have to use the best marketing strategies to sell their fruits. Hence, an attempt has been made to study the problems that are faced by the fruit sellers and the innovations that are adopted in the fruit business in Virudhunagar town.

III. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study is limited to the fruit-selling business in Virudhunagar. The study was conducted among the respondents who are the sellers of fruits in Virudhunagar. The objective of the study is to study

the demographic profile of the respondents, to identify the innovations in the fruit business, and to find out the problems that are faced by the fruit sellers.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To study the demographic profile of the respondents.
2. To identify the innovations that are adopted in the fruit business.
3. To find out the problems that are faced by the fruit sellers.
4. To offer suggestions based on the findings of the study.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research type of the study is a descriptive study. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected from 60 respondents who are the sellers of fruits in Virudhunagar town. The primary data were collected through a well-structured questionnaire, and it was pre-tested. Secondary data have been collected from books, journals, magazines, and websites. Percentage analysis has been used to analyse the primary data. The convenience sampling method has been used for the study. The primary data was collected in January 2025.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the study have been categorized into the demographic profile of the respondents, innovations in the fruit business, and the problems faced by fruit sellers in Virudhunagar town.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Details of the demographic profile of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Profile		Number of Respondents	Percentage
Age (in years)	20 to 30	5	8.3
	31 to 40	20	33.3
	41 to 50	23	38.4
	Above 50	12	20.0
Gender	Male	54	90.0
	Female	6	10.0
Marital Status	Married	52	86.7
	Unmarried	8	13.3
Educational Qualification	Illiterate	9	15.0
	Up to SSLC	21	35.0
	Up to HSC	6	10.0
	Under Graduate	7	11.7
	Post Graduate	8	13.3
	Diploma	9	15.0
Family Size	2 to 4	38	63.3
	5 to 7	22	36.7
Type of Family	Nuclear	32	53.3
	Joint	28	46.7
Work Experience	1 to 5	13	21.7
	6 to 10	10	16.7
	11 to 15	14	23.3
	Above 15	23	38.3
Annual Income (In Rs.)	Below 1,00,000	3	5.0

	1,00,001 to 2,50,000	19	31.7
	2,50,001 to 5,00,000	26	43.3
	Above 5,00,000	12	20.0

Source: Primary data

From the above table, it is revealed that,

- ✓ 23(38.4%) belong to the age group of 41 to 50.
- ✓ 54(90%) respondents are male.
- ✓ 52(86.7%) respondents are married.
- ✓ 21(35%) respondents had education up to SSLC.
- ✓ 38(63.3%) respondents have 2 to 4 members in their family.
- ✓ 32(53.3%) respondents are living in a nuclear family.
- ✓ 23(38.3%) respondents have above 15 years of work experience.
- ✓ 26(43.3%) respondents are earning an annual income of Rs.2,50,001 to Rs.5,00,000.

INNOVATION IN FRUIT BUSINESS

Innovation in the fruit business can be analyzed through the 7Ps of the Marketing Mix.

For fruit sellers, these elements can be applied in the following ways:

1. Product

Fruit sellers must offer a variety of fresh, high-quality fruits, focusing on both seasonal and exotic options, as well as value-added items like pre-cut fruits or fruit baskets.

2. Price

Fruit sellers should set competitive prices while considering market demand, competition, and seasonality. Offering discounts, promotional offers, or loyalty programs can also attract more customers.

3. Place

Place involves choosing the right distribution channels, whether through local markets, grocery stores, or online platforms, ensuring the fruit is easily accessible to the target audience. A strategic location, both physical and online, plays a key role in reaching customers.

4. Promotion

Fruit sellers can use local advertising, social media platforms, and special promotions to raise awareness of their products. Free samples can encourage trial and customer engagement.

5. People

It refers to having friendly, knowledgeable staff who can assist customers with their selections and provide excellent customer service. Building strong relationships with customers

by remembering their preferences or offering personalized recommendations helps retain loyalty.

6. Process

It involves ensuring smooth and efficient ordering and delivery systems. For in-store customers, maintaining proper handling practices and high-quality control processes for the fruits is essential, while for online sales, fast delivery and hassle-free return policies are key factors.

7. Physical Evidence

It includes creating an inviting store environment or having a visually appealing website or online presence that reinforces the quality of the fruits sold.

Table 2 depicts the innovations that have been followed in the fruit business in Virudhunagar.

Table 2 Innovations in Fruit Business

Innovations in Fruit Business		Number of Respondents	Percentage
Value-Added Products	Selling	25	41.7
	Not Selling	35	58.3
Discounts Offered	Offered	29	48.3
	Not offered	31	51.7
Location of the Shop	Near temple	8	13.4
	Near school	14	23.3
	Market	14	23.3
	Near supermarket	9	15.0

	Within the town	15	25.0
Mode of Selling Fruits	Word of mouth	43	71.7
	Social Media	9	15.0
	Posters	2	3.3
	Television Advertisement	3	5.0
	Pamphlet	3	5.0
Dedicated Workers	Dedicated	46	77
	Not Dedicated	14	23
Quality Maintenance	Cold Storage	12	20.0
	Refrigeration	11	18.3
	Daily Procurement	37	61.7
Online Platforms	Selling	12	20.0
	Not Selling	48	80.0

Source: Primary data

From the above table, it is clear that,

- 35(58.3%) are not selling any value-added products.
- 31(51.7%) are not offering discounts while selling fruits.
- 15(25%) respondents' fruit shop is located within the town.
- 43(71.7%) are selling fruits through word of mouth.
- 46(77%) have dedicated workers.
- 37(61.7%) make daily procurement for maintaining the quality and freshness of fruits.
- 48(80%) respondents are not selling fruits through online platforms.

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE RESPONDENTS

Table 3 denotes the problems faced by the respondents while selling fruits.

Table 3 Problems Faced by the Respondents

Problems	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Faced	47	78.3
Not faced	13	21.7
Total	60	100

Source: Primary data

From the above Table, it is clear that out of 60 respondents, 47(78.3%) are facing problems while selling fruits, and 13(21.7%) respondents are not facing problems while selling fruits.

REASONS FOR THE PROBLEMS FACED BY THE RESPONDENTS

Table 4 denotes the reasons for the problems faced by the respondents while selling fruits.

Table 4 Reasons for the Problems Faced by the Respondents

Reasons	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Seasonal variations	13	27.6
High transportation costs	8	17.0

Lack of storage facilities	2	4.2
Price fluctuations	3	6.3
Heavy competition	6	12.7
More of Customer bargaining	3	6.3
Spoilage due to the perishable nature	4	8.5
Change in consumer demand	8	17.0
Total	47	100

Source: Primary data

Out of 47 respondents, 13(27.6%) respondents are facing seasonal variations, 8(17.0%) respondents are facing high transportation costs, 8(17.0%) are facing change in consumer demand for fruits, 6(12.7%) respondents are facing heavy competition, 4(8.5%) respondents are facing spoilage due to perishable nature, 3(6.3%) respondents are facing price fluctuations, 3(6.3%) respondents are facing more of customer bargaining and 2(4.2%) respondents are facing lack of storage facilities.

VII. SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions are given to the fruit sellers based on the findings of the study.

- ✓ To offer a discount on bulk purchases, so that the customers may buy in bulk. This will lead to an increase in profit.
- ✓ To procure seasonal fruits based on the customers' needs is essential to meet the competition. Hence, they have to procure the fruits based on the consumers' taste and preference.
- ✓ To reduce transportation costs, it is suggested to procure fruits from local farmers and to preserve the fruits through traditional practices.
- ✓ To increase sales, it is suggested to market the products online and to offer value-added products.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Retail trade is confronted by a serious competition from wholesalers. Therefore, the retail trader has to decrease competition, raise sales, and maintain customers. Innovation in the fruit trade is highly beneficial for the fruit vendors to raise their sales. The majority of the fruit vendors are confronted with problems such as seasonal fluctuation, intense competition, shifts in consumer demand, and heavy transport charges. Although the fruit vendors are encountering a lot of problems, the majority of the respondents are still content with selling fruits. Therefore, it can be concluded that the fruit vendors in Virudhunagar are adopting an innovative business model.

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