

Stalls Under Stress: Harsh Realities of Selling Perishables on Thrissur Streets, Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Street vending helps the city economy by allowing everyone to buy goods and it gives thousands of people a job. Both the steady business and what is sold by street vendors in Thrissur can be at risk due to special challenges they encounter. This research looks at the different hardships these vendors experience, for example, a shortage of refrigeration, dealing with bad weather, limited space for storing products and uncertain rules set by the cities. When basic infrastructure and sanitation are lacking, food decays rapidly which ends with financial losses and wasted food. Competition by organized businesses, unexpected changes in customers' visits and increasing expenses add to the difficulty. From the interviews and by observing in the community, vendors endure obstacles to keep their families going and provide food to the community. The study points out that the government should introduce mobile cold storage, allow legal vending spots and include financial literacy training, helping the informal sector. Resolving these issues supports food safety, decreases waste and helps people living on the edge. The objective is to describe the conditions of Thrissur's perishable goods vendors, with suggestions on how to better support and improve their daily life and business environment.

Keywords: Street Vendors, Perishable Goods, Urban Economy, Food Spoilage, Challenges

INTRODUCTION

All around Thrissur, a busy centre in Kerala, you find exciting stalls displaying a broad range of fresh fruits, vegetables, seafood and other items that don't last long. The food supply chain is improved by roadside vendors, making it easier for locals to buy fresh, inexpensive and organic fruits and vegetables. The lively picture of these stalls covers up the fact that there is a lot of difficulty and fragility hidden beneath. Operating on the street, dealing with consumables is a very tough job, involving unpredictable weather, not enough storage, uncertain market prices and laws that are difficult to comply with. Should natural disasters, economic conditions or the government take action, things can go disastrously wrong for them financially. There are few things harder for these vendors than the fact their goods have an uncertain future. Because fruits, vegetables, milk products and fish can go bad, vendors who sell them face a constant danger of losing items. If they do not have refrigeration or a strong cold chain system, their items often sell fast or end up being wasted. Because of the tropical climate in Thrissur, foods spoil more rapidly and their shelf lives are shorter. Therefore, vendors have to sell their products cheaper or discard the rest which causes big losses each day. In addition, they often experience these financial issues alone, because insurance or help is generally not available to them.

Legal and infrastructural challenges further complicate their situation. A large number of vendors lack proper licenses and choose to set up in areas without permission which exposes them to the risk of removal or penalties. Although the government has created acts like the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act to protect street vendors, this protection is usually poor or hard to see at the local level. The growth of urban development and the need to manage traffic in Thrissur means less room for

informal traders, so those vendors are picking safer but congested areas. As a result, their businesses lose visibility and sales and they also face more risks like accidents, robbery and harassment. Things get even tougher for them because there is strong competition among informal traders. Profits for small businesses in such areas are usually very low because so many sellers behave similarly. They need to bring in customers through smart pricing, friendly relationships or strong will and all while facing the ups and downs of wholesale costs.

Sometimes, because they have little bargaining strength in sourcing markets, companies must accept unprofitable deals arranged by middlemen. Female vendors make up a large part of the work here and they often come across gender-specific problems, for example, not feeling safe and difficulties getting approved for credit. Selling quickly perishable goods in the tough streets of Thrissur requires perseverance from the sellers. Street food vendors are busy meeting the needs of people in the city and are also working hard to make enough money for their family. They should be paid more attention because their difficulties involve justice, not only the economy. Grasping what they face is the starting point to provide them with equal opportunities and build policies that prevent their earnings from disappearing due to unsold goods.

Statement of the Problem

Because of various obstacles, the livelihoods and health of street vendors who sell perishable goods in Thrissur are under constant threat. Although they are vital to providing food in cities, the conditions these vendors face are very uncertain, due to a lack of cold storage, bad weather, weak legal rights and not enough city services. Because their products spoil over time, they have to sell them fast, sometimes at low prices which makes their profit small and leads them to lose money often. Street vendors are further in danger when there are no proper vending sites, they may be evicted easily, victims of middlemen and with inconsistent enforcement of regulations. It underlines that informal worker are regularly overlooked which makes it urgent to fix the policies and other problems that keep putting these vendors at risk.

Objectives of the study

1. To find out the main problems faced by street vendors selling perishable goods in Thrissur.
2. To know if limited storage and infrastructure reduces both the quality and demand for perishable products.
3. To discuss ways and strategies that can better the jobs of street vendors handling perishable items.

Need of the Study

People who sell perishable items on the streets often make a big contribution but are sometimes overlooked in Thrissur and in many other urban centers. While they help to feed families and earn a living, food vendors go through daily difficulties that usually do not receive recognition or attention in policy talk. Because vendors must deal with financial issues, weak infrastructure and uncertainty in the law, the study is especially important. It is important to understand what vendors go through, the economic reasons behind their difficulties and the reasons behind the systemic challenges they face, when planning for urban policies. This research aims to reveal the economic and social landscape facing perishable goods vendors, as well as the dangers they deal with and the level of support they get. It works to highlight the problems of a marginalized community, whose members are important for the running of the city.

Scope of the Study

The study is about street vendors who sell perishable products like fruits, vegetables, dairy goods and seafood in the city of Thrissur, Kerala. Their economic, working, infrastructural, legal and coping situations will all be looked at. It will also analyse obstacles women in business may face and how market trends and rivalry affect these companies. Because the main location is Thrissur, the study is expected to show insights that hold true in urban areas across India. Information is collected through journeying to different places, interviewing vendors and researching papers to understand what challenges they face and suggest useful policies that protect and support them.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Scholars have paid attention to the difficulties that street vendors offering perishable items must overcome. In the paper, Bhowmik (2024) describes street hawkers in India, pointing out that those selling perishable products are overlooked even though they are key players in the city's food system. He points out that policy makers should ensure diversity in cities by acknowledging and preserving the help of all groups. Roever and Skinner (2024) also note that worldwide, the shortage of cold storage in developing countries causes low income and instability for perishable vendors. Rights-based urban governance should be used to ensure that informal workers are part of city planning. Kumar and Sreedhar (2023) analyze the problems experienced by fruit and vegetable vendors in India's cities, showing how lacking licenses, proper conditions and support from institutions harms their ability to earn an income. Likewise, Anjaria (2023) discusses the lack of legal clarity on street vending and points out that those who sell perishables are worse affected since their stock spoils quickly. Also, Patel and Bhatt (2024) discuss that daily losses for Gujarat vendors can be sent down if the government plans more storage units or regulates prices. Overall, these studies highlight the need for additional structural and legal help and infrastructure to sustain the businesses of street vendors under a lot of stress.

Research Methodology: The purpose of this research is to study and analyse the problems faced by people selling perishable goods as street vendors in Thrissur, Kerala. The research uses a descriptive method to gather details on the social-economic aspects, challenges encountered and methods of dealing with these challenges by these vendors. Data was manually collected to help gain a better picture of the problem.

Research Design: The study uses a descriptive research design which allows the researchers to carefully note the features and circumstances of the target population. It involves investigation to find other issues that are not always seen such as informal ways, stress and coping methods people use to survive.

Sampling Method: Purposive sampling was used to pick respondents selling fruits, vegetables, dairy products and fish on the streets of Thrissur. With this method, the researcher could focus particularly on the population of interest.

Study Area: Thrissur city was the research site and main focus was given to the busiest areas for vending perishable items. Different sellers in the city worked under different sets of conditions.

Sample: For the study, 82 street vendors were chosen from Thekkinkadu Maidan, West Fort and Sakthan Market which are popular for their street vending activities, within Thrissur city.

Data Collection Methods: The Primary Data was collected by giving vendors specific questionnaires for them to complete. Secondary Data was gathered from academics, government publications, policy statements and research; this data was then used to add further support and proof to the primary insights.

Data Analysing Tools: The collected data was checked using One Way ANOVA, Regression and T Test.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

To find out the main problems faced by street vendors selling perishable goods in Thrissur

(H₀): There is no significant agreement among street vendors in Thrissur that the identified challenges affect their work.

Table No: 1 One-Sample t-Test Results on Challenges Faced by Street Vendors Selling Perishables in Thrissur

	Test Value = 5					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Lack of Cold Storage Facilities	-54.549	81	.000	-3.84146	-3.9816	-3.7013
Poor Infrastructure	-110.062	81	.000	-3.91463	-3.9854	-3.8439
Extreme Weather Conditions	-49.732	81	.000	-3.80488	-3.9571	-3.6527
High Product Wastage/Spoilage	-37.828	81	.000	-3.69512	-3.8895	-3.5008
Harassment by Authorities	-29.287	81	.000	-3.56098	-3.8029	-3.3191
Limited Access to Financial Support	-60.053	81	.000	-3.86585	-3.9939	-3.7378
Health Hazards	-53.831	81	.000	-3.82927	-3.9708	-3.6877
Lack of Proper Waste Disposal	-42.318	81	.000	-3.70732	-3.8816	-3.5330
Unstable Income	-58.913	81	.000	-3.87805	-4.0090	-3.7471

Interpretation

The one-sample t-test shows that street vendors in Thrissur have mostly similar views on the struggles of selling perishable goods. Because a test value of 5 means the most agreement, each of the variables was found to be significant ($p < .001$), implying that respondents strongly recognize these problems. Poor infrastructure ($t = -110.062$), inadequate financial aid ($t = -60.053$) and unstable earnings ($t = -58.913$) are the main problems, as respondents agreed on them the strongest. The lack of good storage for cold food, unusual weather patterns, a lot of food loss, potential health risks, difficulty with authorities and unclearly managed waste were also discussed as main issues. As a result, multiple linked issues that affect how the vendors operate and feel find themselves are uncovered. The common view of the participants stresses that quick action is needed through supportive rules, better infrastructure, more access to finance and basic services for street vendors who sell perishable items in Thrissur.

(b) To understand if lack of proper storage and infrastructure affects the quality and sale of perishable products.

(H₀): Cold storage facilities do not have a significant effect on the spoilage rate of perishables

Table No: 2 Regression Analysis for Effect of Cold Storage Facilities on Spoilage Rate

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.890	1	1.890	23.218	.000 ^b
	Residual	6.512	80	.081		
	Total	8.402	81			

a. Dependent Variable: Spoilage Rate

b. Predictors: (Constant), Cold Storage Facilities

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.808	.066		12.305	.000
	Cold Storage Facilities	.240	.050	.474	4.818	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Spoilage Rate

Interpretation

A regression analysis was used to see if having cold storage rooms affected how quickly perishable items sold by street vendors spoiled. The results reveal that using cold storage leads to less spoilage, as seen in the coefficient ($B = 0.240$) and the t -value (4.818) with a p -value of .000, indicating significance at the 1% level. Having better cold storage facilities will raise the spoilage rate by 0.24 units as long as no other factors vary. According to the standardized beta ($\beta = .474$), cold storage facilities have a moderately strong influence on the rate of spoilage. The constant value (.808) reflects the estimated spoilage rate when there is no cold storage available. Here, it is made clear that having high-quality cold storage cuts down on the loss of perishable food items.

(c) To suggest possible solutions and support measures that can improve the working conditions of street vendors dealing with perishable goods.

(H_0): There is no significant difference in daily sales, access to infrastructure, and training level among street vendors based on the support they receive.

Table No: 3 ANOVA Results Showing the Impact of Support Received on Daily Sales, Access to Infrastructure, and Training Level of Street Vendor

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Daily Sales	Between Groups	5.021	4	1.255	28.582	.000
	Within Groups	3.382	77	.044		
	Total	8.402	81			
Access to Infrastructure	Between Groups	14.773	4	3.693	11.797	.000
	Within Groups	24.105	77	.313		
	Total	38.878	81			
Training Level	Between Groups	22.746	4	5.687	10.777	.000
	Within Groups	40.632	77	.528		
	Total	63.378	81			

Interpretation

Based on the ANOVA, support given to street vendors significantly affects the main factors influencing their company. Taking a closer look, the difference in daily sales ($F = 28.582$, $p < .001$), access to infrastructure ($F = 11.797$, $p < .001$) and training level ($F = 10.777$, $p < .001$) is statistically significant between the levels of support. Therefore, better supported vendors usually sell more products every day, access key infrastructure and have completed appropriate training. By demonstrating this, these results show that supporting street vendors helps their businesses do better and improves their overall lives, so we should keep providing them with special assistance.

FINDINGS

The street vendors in Thrissur unanimously admit they are often troubled by bad infrastructure, inadequate access to cold storage and lack of financial help, along with consistent income problems. They believe these problems are real and play a big part in their regular work and finances.

It is found in the study that having strong cold storage spaces helps to reduce the loss of goods that spoil quickly. Improved cold storage for vendors cuts down on lost products which helps their business succeed.

A lot of help from others allows street vendors to earn more sales, use the necessary facilities and get training opportunities. When vendors are supported by their community, they usually increase their sales, get better access to needed infrastructure and get more training.

Suggestions

Officials and groups in charge should aim to improve street vendors' workspaces by building proper marketplaces, ensuring good sanitation and improving the roads they use.

With low-cost and easy-to-use cold storage options, street vendors could prevent their goods from spoiling, reduce losses and prolong the lifespan of their products.

Street vendors could benefit from government and financial services giving out easy-to-get loans and grants right for their needs.

Programs about handling perishable goods, managing a business and hygiene should be provided to vendors so they can learn and improve.

Local authorities and NGOs should develop support that never stops such as legal advice and permit support, to address the challenges street vendors face.

Making sure people are aware of street vendors' value in society and involving them in city planning will boost their ability to get services and benefits.

CONCLUSION

The research uncovers that street vendors selling perishable products in Thrissur must face severe hardship because of different problems. No adequate storage, inadequate infrastructure, few ways to manage finances and irregular income make it tough for them to survive. The research shows that such difficulties cause greater product spoilage and make it tougher for vendors to operate their businesses efficiently. To support the vendors, get can affect their sales, access to important infrastructure and educational programs. Providing better infrastructure, additional cold storage, financial help and skills development programs is necessary to decrease their stress and make their lives easier. Dealing with these issues can normally steady the income of guild vendors and ensure that perishable items are smoothly moved in the Thrissur economy, benefitting many individuals.

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