

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC ATTRIBUTES OF BUYERS IN A
VEGETABLE MARKET: A CASE STUDY OF
TANDAURMAR (HOSHIARPUR, PUNJAB)**

Anandvir Kaur Saini*

Khushvir Singh Saini*

Abstract

Buyers form an important component of vegetable marketing system. The present research work is aimed at highlighting the socio-economic characteristics of buyers coming to the vegetable market of TandaUrmar of Hoshiarpur District (Punjab). Nearly 50 to 100 buyers come to the vegetable market of Tanda daily for making purchases. For the present study a sample of 25 buyers was chosen randomly and interviewed using a structured interview schedule. The data was tabulated manually and the results were represented through statistical diagrams. The results showed that nearly $\frac{2}{3}^{\text{rd}}$ of the shopkeepers and street hawkers were non-Punjabis who have migrated to Punjab from U.P and Bihar. A large chunk of the interviewed buyers belonged to the young and mature age groups and more than $\frac{4}{5}^{\text{th}}$ of the buyers had either medium or large family size. The buyers with high monthly income mostly included the retail shopkeepers whose investment in this profession was high, since they bought vegetables and fruits in bulk and used horse-carts and four wheelers as means of transportation. The buyers in the lower income groups re-sold the vegetables and fruits as street hawkers. The migrants who have come from other states are continuously adopting this profession. There has been a great addition of migrant buyers into this profession in the last ten years.

* Ph.D. Research Scholars, Department of Geography, Panjab University, Chandigarh

Introduction

The process of vegetable marketing involves interaction among the vegetable producers (farmers), commission agents and buyers (retailers and consumers). Typically, a buyer in a vegetable market is a person who purchases vegetables and fruits from commission agents or wholesale dealers either for his domestic use or for resale. Buyers in a vegetable market are mainly of two types i.e. the retail shopkeepers/hawkers and domestic consumers. Retailers buy vegetables and fruits in large quantities from the wholesale dealers and then sell them to the end users in smaller quantities. On the other hand the consumers, who are the final users of the products, can also directly purchase the vegetables and fruits themselves.

Buyers form an important component of the marketing system. There is no doubt that the demand and supply of vegetables and fruits fluctuate daily and it becomes quite risky to make an investment in such a profession. The purchasing power of the buyers plays an important role in the smooth running of a vegetable and fruit market. Mahaliyanaarachchi (2003) studied the consumer behaviour pattern and its impact on the vegetable marketing system in Sri Lanka. The author found that a majority of the consumers (98%) considered good quality of the products and preferred the main market places for buying vegetables. Lemrise et al. (2009) made a geographical assessment of consumers in farmers market in Southern Illinois. They studied the various consumer dimensions including the reasons for shopping at farmers market and the places from where the consumers come to buy locally grown food. The present research work is aimed at highlighting the socio-economic characteristics of buyers coming to the vegetable market of TandaUrmar of Hoshiarpur District (Punjab).

Data and Methodology

The present paper is based on primary data. Nearly 50 to 100 buyers come to the vegetable market of Tandadaily for making purchases. For the present study a sample of 25 buyers was chosen randomly and interviewed using a structured interview schedule. The data was tabulated manually and the results were represented through statistical diagrams.

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Buyers

Out of the selected sample of 25 buyers, 8 (32%) were retail shopkeepers and the rest 17 (68%) were street hawkers. Most of the buyers were local and their service area was situated within a radius of 25 km from the vegetable and fruit market of Tanda.

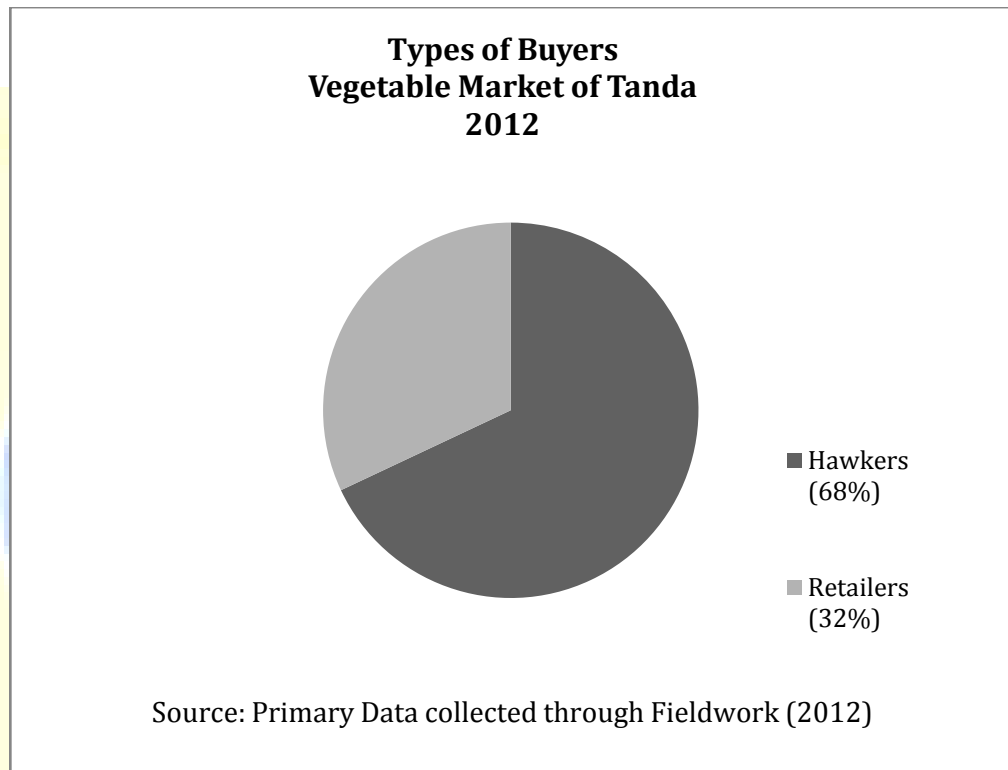


Fig 1. Types of Buyers

(i.) Ethnicity

Out of the total 25 buyers interviewed in the vegetable market of Tanda, only 10 belonged to Punjab while the remaining 15 buyers were migrants from other states who have settled in Punjab. In other words 60% of the buyers are non-Punjabis who have migrated to Punjab from U.P and Bihar. Out of the 15 non-Punjabi buyers, as many as 12 belong to Moradabad district of U.P. They migrated to Punjab almost 15 years ago. Their elders were also in this profession of selling vegetables at their native places. Therefore this group of 12 non-Punjabi buyers is quite familiar with this profession. The other 2 non-Punjabi buyers belong to the state of Bihar. After immigrating to Punjab, they initially worked as daily wage labourers, but

gradually in due course of time, they shifted to this profession of selling vegetables to the end-consumers. This occupation ensured them higher profit than working as labourers. The 10 Punjabi buyers interviewed in the vegetable market of Tanda belonged to the nearby places. Most of these native buyers had followed up the occupation of their elders.

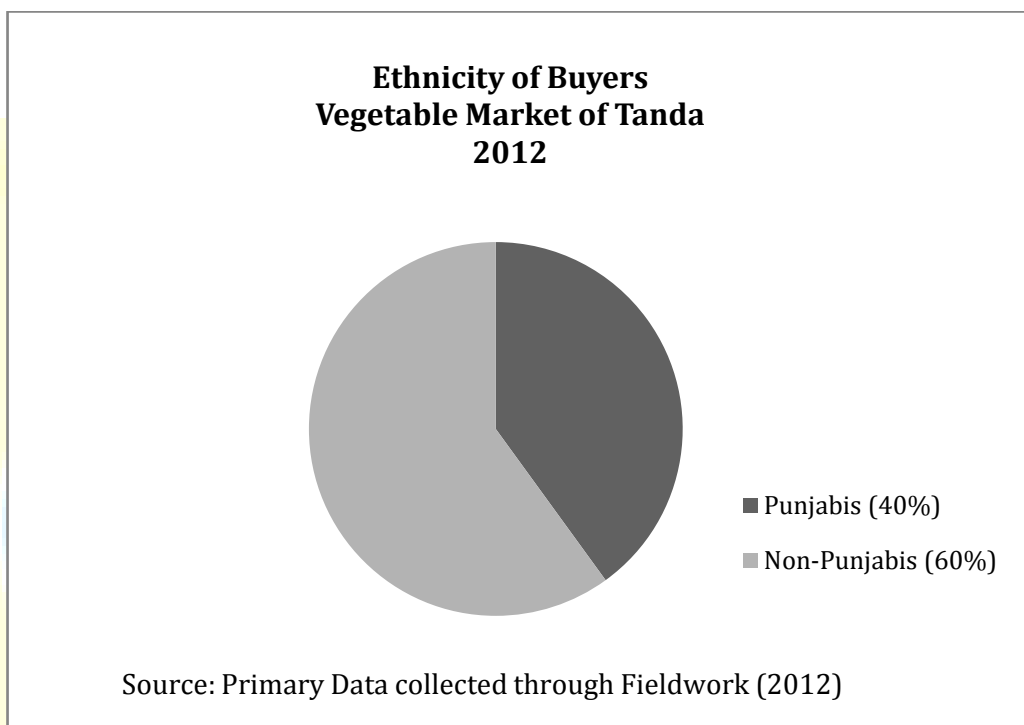


Fig 2. Ethnicity of Buyers

(ii.) Age groups

According to the age of buyers, they were put into 3 age categories, i.e. young age group (below 40 years of age), mature age group (40 to 60 years of age) and old age group (above 60 years). Out of the total 25 buyers interviewed, 15 were in the young age group, 7 were in the mature age group and 3 were in the old age group. There is no doubt that the selling of vegetables and fruits does not require much physical strength but still the buyers have to spend 2 to 3 very hectic hours in the early morning from 5:30 am to 8:30 am in buying and loading vegetables and fruits from the market. Thereafter they have to transport the produce to the end-consumers. This entire exercise demands much physical and mental energy, which the young and mature age groups have in abundance. This is clear from the fact that 88% of the interviewed

buyers belonged to the young and mature age groups while only 12% of the buyers belonged to the old age group.

(iii.) Family Size

On the basis of the family size of the buyers, they can be clubbed into three categories, viz. buyers with small sized families (upto 4 members in the family), buyers with medium sized families (5 to 6 family members) and buyers with large families (more than 6 members in the family). The data reveals that only 4 buyers belonged to the group of small families, 13 were placed in the medium sized family group and the rest 8 had large sized families. It is evident from the data that as many as 84% of the buyers had either medium or large family size. This may be due to the fact that most of the buyers are in-migrants from U.P. and Bihar and they generally have comparatively larger family size than the local population, because they need more helping hands in their families to earn their livelihood.

(iv.) Monthly Income

As far as monthly income of buyers is concerned the 25 sampled buyers can be divided into 3 categories i.e. low monthly income category, medium monthly income category and the high monthly income category. The low monthly income category includes those buyers who have their monthly income below Rs. 10,000. There are 9 buyers in this category. The medium income category includes those buyers who are earning a monthly income ranging between Rs. 10,000 to 20,000. There are 12 buyers in this category. The buyers having a monthly income of above Rs. 20,000 have been placed in high income category. This category includes 4 buyers. The above data reveals that maximum buyers belong to the medium monthly income category. These are followed by the low monthly income category and high monthly income category respectively. The high monthly income buyers mostly include the retail shopkeepers whose investment in this profession is high, since they buy vegetables and fruits in bulk and use horse-carts and four wheelers as means of transportation. The buyers in the lower income groups sell the vegetables and fruits as street hawkers. All the buyers are engaged in this profession on full time basis and they are quite satisfied with their monthly earnings from it.

(v.) Professional Experience

As far as the experience of the profession of selling vegetables and fruits is concerned, the buyers in the study area were placed in 3 categories i.e. the buyers with experience of less than 10 years in this profession, the buyers with 10 to 20 years of experience and the buyers with above 20 years of experience in selling vegetables and fruits. There were 13 buyers in the first category of least experience, followed by 8 and 4 buyers in the second and third category respectively. These figures reveal that the migrants who have come from other states are continuously adopting this profession. There has been a great addition of migrant buyers into this profession in the last ten years. Almost all the native Punjabi buyers were placed in the second and third category because they have inherited this profession from their elders.

(vi.) Modes of Transportation

Since the vegetables and fruits are extremely perishable in nature, therefore the buyers have to own good modes of transportation to transfer and sell their bought produce to the end-consumers as quickly as possible. The interviews with the 25 buyers revealed that they used various means to carry vegetables and fruits, ranging from bicycle, cycle-cart, rickshaw, horse-cart and four wheeler small automobile vehicles. Out of the 25 respondents, 8 used bicycle to transport their goods to their nearby consumer areas. As many as 12 of the buyers used cycle-cart or rickshaw as means of transportation. Most of the buyers using them were non-Punjabis and sold their purchased vegetables and fruits as street hawkers. The horse-cart and four wheelers were being used by 2 and 3 buyers respectively. Actually the buyers who used the last two categories of means of transportation were retail shopkeepers who dealt in the business of selling vegetables and fruits from their permanent shops. The retailers who ran their business in Tanda and nearby areas used horse-cart as means of transportation. The goods purchased by such buyers were bulky and horse-cart was quite suitable for transporting these bulky goods over short distances. The retail shopkeepers who came to Tanda market from the other nearby towns like Begowal, Miani, Dasuya, Srihargobindpur and Garhdiwala used four wheelers to transport their goods because they had to travel a distance of more than 10 km. The buyers using four wheelers were 3 in number. The above data revealed that most of the buyers used cycle, cycle-cart and rickshaw to transport their goods whereas a small number of buyers used horse-cart and four wheelers as means of transportation.

Conclusion

In the end it can be concluded that nearly $2/3^{\text{rd}}$ of the shopkeepers and street hawkers are non-Punjabis who have migrated to Punjab from U.P and Bihar. A large chunk of the interviewed buyers belonged to the young and mature age groups while only a few of them belonged to the old age group. More than $4/5^{\text{th}}$ of the buyers had either medium or large family size. This may be due to the fact that most of the buyers are in-migrants from U.P. and Bihar and they generally have comparatively larger family size than the local population, because they need more helping hands in their families to earn their livelihood. The buyers with high monthly income mostly include the retail shopkeepers whose investment in this profession is high, since they buy vegetables and fruits in bulk and use horse-carts and four wheelers as means of transportation. The buyers in the lower income groups sell the vegetables and fruits as street hawkers. The migrants who have come from other states are continuously adopting this profession. There has been a great addition of migrant buyers into this profession in the last ten years. The street hawkers and shopkeepers used bicycle, cycle-cart, rickshaw, horse-cart and small four wheeler automobile vehicles to transport vegetables and fruits from the market to the end-consumers.

References

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