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RESEARCH ARTICLE

**PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF MARKETING OF PUJA MATERIALS IN TAMIL
NADU - A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SELECTED POPULAR TEMPLE
TOWNS**

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ABSTRACT

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Value addition is an expanding sector in the food processing industry. Value addition to fish and fishery products could be done depending on the requirement of different markets. So cooperatives can help develop a sustainable value addition infrastructure for the betterment of the entire fisheries sector in all the states including Union Territories. This article is an attempt to study the options and prospects of value addition in the fisheries sector of Puducherry Union Territory. Puducherry UT is capable of updating its fisheries technology with its committed and dedicated population of fishermen. The cooperative sector has to extend a helping hand for the overall growth and further string thinking of fisheries sector, especially by improved VCM practices as suggested above. It is for the policy makers to allocate budget funds and help create a world – class system of supplying quality stocks to the ultimate consumers living in interior parts of the country.

Introduction

It is believed that everything in the universe belongs to God. Hindus believe that God's presence and energy is particularly focused in shrines and temples the *devasthanams* where the Divine is honored every day. Temples strive to maintain a clear and are

entertained pure or *sattvic* atmosphere to ensure prayers, where offerings of pilgrims and has been the tradition for thousands of



years in Hinduism.* Similarly people at large belonging to Hinduism have to follow the religious practices everyday and or every occasion prescribed as auspicious in the relevant published hand book *Panjangam*^{†*}. For convenience, people follow those practices^{‡*} (No-moon day, Vijayadasami, Diwali...), as family units domestically. Within the family if anybody wanted to do separately, they are very much free to do it at their own expense in any part of the world they live. So there are two different sets of practices on Hinduism, of which one for the temples and the next belongs to individual social units called families in any village or town or city or metropolitan.

Social and Economic Significance of Puja

As a historical practice, puja in Hinduism has been modeled around the idea of hosting a deity and receiving their happiness and blessings. Paul Thieme suggests from passages in the *Ramayana* that the word puja referred to the hospitable reception of guests and that the things offered to guests could be offered to the gods and their dwellings. The rituals in question were the “five great sacrifices” or *pancamahayojna* recorded in the *Gahyasutra* texts. The development of puja thus emerged from vedic domestic tradition and was carried into the temple environment by analogy. A full home or temple puja can include several traditional *upacaras* or “attendances”.

The devotee proceeds to connect with the spiritual manifestation by meditating or chanting hymns and mantras, then personal

prayers follow. A quick meditative puja is sometimes offered by some Hindus without an idol or image. According to Hindu text allow flexibility and abbreviated puja according to occasional needs and personal preferences. Mother Goddess often symbolized by a tree and a Father God who appears in some Indus seals as a Bull, snake or a seated yogi. Besides them they also appear to have worshipped elements such as water and fire.

In Hinduism, puja is essentially a ritual suggestive of symbolic offerings of our selves. Our thought desires actions and things we owe to God, as a mark of devotion and surrender enjoying whatever that comes to us, a gift from Him. Puja is the most popular form of divine worship. It is performed by individuals or by groups and either directly by a worshipper or indirectly by a priest on behalf of the worshipper. For example, Marion o` Callaghan reports that the Hindus diaspora brought as indentured laborers to Trinidad by the British colonial government, suffered discriminatory laws that did not recognize traditional Hindu marriage, nor did the non-Hindu majority government allow pyre cremation or construction of crematorium. These Hindu rituals were considered pagan. Pujas offered a way for Hindus to meet, socially organize and petition their human rights. Over time, pujas became as much as social and community recreational event, as a religious event.

Every family will have a deity worshipped for generations. They follow a specific method of worshipping. This deity should be worshipped before doing any puja or even daily pujas. If any special method like *abhishekam*, *padayal*, etc., is there, the same can be performed at least once a year but definitely before any important occasions. This is true for all temples also. In this puja too they spend quiet a lot of money. This has been explained in page 8 so as to ascertain its implications the following some are some of the essential puja

*A document in use for annual calendar of Hindu rituals

‡*Some Hindu festivals



materials, which are unavoidable for a domestic and Temple pujas so as the case may be twice a week per family and

everyday in the temples. Please see Table 1 for average expenses incurred.

Table 1
Minimum Expenses Incurred for a Puja (Estimated)

Sl. No	Household/ Domestic Puja	Approximate Cost in ₹ .	Temple Puja	Approximate Daily Cost in ₹ .
1	Betel leaves	2.50	Betel leaves	5
2	Areca nuts	2.50	Areca nuts	5
3	Banana	10	Banana	20
4	Flower	25	Flower	50
5	Oil	25	Oil	50
6	Cotton	2	Cotton	10
7	Coconut	10	Coconut	20
8	Incenses sticks	3	Incense sticks	10
9	Benzion	10	Clay lamp	25
10	Kumkum	10	Unavailable items Sugar candy	30
11	Sandal wood paste	10	Abhishegam items(Average)	150
	Total	110	Total	375
	Weekly Expenses per Family		Weekly Expenses per Temple	
	110×2=220 Rupees		375×7=2625 Rupees	
	Annual expenses 220×52=11440 Rupees		Annual expenses 2625×52=136500 Rupees	
	[other than Temple festivals and other special Pujas]		[other than major festivals & pujas]	

Note: The above calculations are found to be common in all places and states in India in general where the density of Hindu population is over 85 per cent. It could be seen from the above that there is a huge financial implication in these Pujas performed by every faithful Hindu family

Puja in Remote Villages and Hamlets

Most of these village deities have shrines on the periphery (border or out skirts) of the village as a representation of their village Guardian position. Hence they are referred as “peripheral folk Deity”. 21 associate deities and 61 servant deities are located in either the same premises or located in different places of the locality, for example Amman deities might have been

installed in the centre of the village, but the sonai, sudalai or the formless *Nadukkal* deities were installed close to graveyards (cemeteries or burial grounds and some times, also near memorial centres).

These village deities are either represented in the form of a huge, fierce statue or as a simple stone. Most of these temples are not closed premises but are simple and small worship areas. Weapons such as a trident or a lance or sickles are also associated with these shrines. The vedic and non-vedic people assimilated from each other. The vedic priests followed ‘Let knowledge come from all directions of the universe’ and the non-vedic priests followed ‘everyone is our own people and every land is our own’. Even though there are diversified characteristics between the vedic



and the folk traditions. Various communities inducted these deities in their spectrum, they created various *sthalapuranas* which emphasized the relation between these gods and goddesses from differing traditions.

Vegetarianism and Other Customs

In addition to the above, amongst these, the reason for not eating meat on some particular days excluding weekly days is purely religious. Killing of animal is considered as a sin in Hinduism, so people avoid eating meat atleast on those auspicious days to maintain sacredness of that particular days*.

There are many Hindu groups that have continued to abide by a strict vegetarian diet in modern times. Some adhere to a diet that is devoid of meat, eggs and seafood. Food affects body, mind and spirit according to beliefs. Hindu text such as *sandilya upanished and svatmarama* recommend *mitahara* (eating in moderation) as of the *yamas* (Virtuous self restraints). The *Bhagaved Gita* links body and mind to food one consumers (in verses 17.8 through 17.10). Some Hindus such as those belonging to the shanktism tradition and Hindus in regions such as Bali Nepal and Tamilnadu, Andhrapradesh, Kerala and Karnataka practice animal sacrifice. The sacrificed animal is eaten as ritual food. In contrast, the *Vaishnava* Hindus abhor and vigorously oppose animal sacrifice. The principle of non-violence to animal has been so thoroughly adopted in Hinduism that animal sacrifice is uncommon and historically reduced to a vestigial marginal practice†. However it involves monetary commitment on the part of the practitioners. Please see Table 2

Funeral and Post Death Formalities

After death, the funeral ceremony also requires Agni, God of fire. He is called upon to consume the body. The following day the family collects the ashes, to be scattered later in a sacred river or other

chosen place. Home rituals honor the departed soul on the 8th and 16th, 30th days after death and followed by yearly ceremonies. These rities help con-sole those loved ones and invite the soul to reincarnate back into the family in future. The expenses related to the above vary according to the economic status of the individual family.

**Table 2
Average Puja Expenses for Various Puja
Related Activities (Amount in Rupees)
A. Pujas Related to Women**

S. No	Ceremony for Women	Low Income Family Circle	Middle Income Family Circle	High Income Family Circle
1	Naming ceremony	Average 1000	Average 3000	Average 5000
2	Ear piercing and Nose piercing	Average 2000	Average 3000	Average 5000
3	Tonsuring	Average 500	Average 1000	Average 1500
4	Age ceremony (<i>Pubetry</i>)	Average 1000	Average 1500	Average 2000
5	<i>Grahaprave sam*</i>	Average 2000	Average 4000	Average 6000
6	Wedding	Average 2500	Average 4000	Average 8000
7	Funeral	Average 1000	Average 2000	Average 5000

B. Pujas Related to Men

S. No	Ceremony for Men	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income

* Hindu Festivals

* New House Entrance Ceremony



		Family Circle	Family Circle	Family Circle
1	Naming ceremony	Average 1000	Average 3000	Average 5000
2	Ear Piercing and Nose Piercing	Average 2000	Average 3000	Average 5000
3	Tonsuring	Average 500	Average 1000	Average 1500
4	<i>Punool, Upanaya</i> * for male children	Average 1000	Average 1500	Average 2000
5	<i>Grahapravesam</i>	Average 2000	Average 4000	Average 6000
6	Wedding	Average 2500	Average 4000	Average 8000
7	Funeral	Average 1000	Average 2000	Average 5000

Common Puja Materials

The Hindu worship called puja, literally “adoration”, is the central activity in most temples and Hindu households. The *pujari*[†] purifies himself, the sacred implements and the place of worship. He chants mantra in Sanskrit relating to the nature of puja. Through hand gestures (*mudras*)[‡] and mantras, the Deity to come and dwell in the image. Ringing a bell and intoning mantras and hymns from the ancient *vedas*[§] and Agamas, the *pujari* then offers precious substances to the Deity, including water, holy ash, sandal wood paste

* Wearing holy thread

† Hindu priest.

‡ Hand gestures.

§ Religious books of Hindu.

and *kumkum*^{**}. Some rites include a ritual bath, called *abhishekam*, in which water, sesame oil, turmeric water saffron, milk, yogurt, ghee, honey, limejuice, *vibuthi*,^{***} *panchamritam*^{††} (mixer of five fruits), coconut water and rose water are poured over the deity, some of the common puja materials are listed below the required quantity as the case may be.

- a) Turmeric powder
- m) Flower/ Garland
- b) Sandal wood paste
- n) Milk
- c) Incense sticks/ Agar Bathi
- o) Rose water/ *Panneer*
- d) Betel leaves
- p) *Abhishekam* powder
- e) Areca nut
- q) Benzion
- f) Banana
- r) Honey
- g) Coconut
- s) Ghee
- h) *Kumkum*
- t) Nine Grains (*Navathaniam*)
- i) Tender coconut
- u) Cotton wick
- j) Ash / *Vibuthi*
- v) *Gungiliyam*
- k) Oil
- w) Camphor
- l) Clay lamp
- x) Yogurt/Curd

Review of Literature

There are some pieces of literature relating to the puja materials, which deal with the aesthetic values of them. The commercial aspects like production, distribution trading at wholesale and retail levels are the main focus of the study. No literature is available which are dealing with the scope and purpose of the

** Kumkum is applied on the forehead. It is considered the blessing of holy God.

*** Holy ash.

†† Mixer of five fruits.



present study. However those reviewed by the researcher are listed below.

1. Harsh Saxena June 7, 2009 Paan Betel Leaves- "Basic and Economics in Indian Scenario".
2. Biswas Bc and Lalit Kumar 2010. High Density Planting: Success
4. Naveen Patnaik, The Garden of Life, An Introduction to the Healing Plants of India;
5. Naveen Patnaik, The Garden of Life, An Introduction to the Healing Plants of India;
6. Hindu pooja How Hindus Worship God (www.lotus_sculpture.com)
7. Kanchan Yadev, June 16,2016; Significance of puja and spirituals in Life

Research Gap

The practice of marketing of puja materials has been in force for more than a century now. In fact it is an organized and unorganized trade today. There are thousands of temples in every state and hundreds and more in every district in India. Even after decades of organized trading, especially in all temple towns and localities of shrines, this particular trade as well as marketing of puja materials has not been brought under any sort of regulation and control by the government. It is surprising to note that these marketing and trading units have not been brought under tax-net, either income tax or sales tax. Above all there is no single publication about the practice of production, distribution, storage and transportation, sales or marketing of puja materials in Tamil Nadu in India. So the research gap of the present study falls on the entire subject matter. More importantly, those journal articles and mini reports found online are relevant to the religious or ayurvedic nature of such puja materials. But definitely the researcher was not able to come across any single publication on the production and marketing aspects of the product under taken for study. So the focal

Stories of Banana Growers, Fertilizers Marketing, Vol. 41. No 6, Pp.3-10

3. Naveen Patnaik, The Garden of Life, An Introduction to the Healing Plants of India;

theme of the present study is production, distribution, transportation, storage and sales of puja materials by such of those manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers coupled with the consumers. The research gap is the need for a clear and comprehensive study of these potential partners of marketing of puja materials and their experiences and problems in their business activities. However, the researcher presented the review of certain literature collected.

Statement of the Problem

The present study is based on the research gap stated above. The marketing of puja materials in the selected temple town in Tamil Nadu is challenged by the following problems at manufacturer level, whole sale level and retail level as explained below. It is reported that "Temple sources said middlemen and local vendors had reportedly been deceiving devotees, particularly from other states, by selling puja items at exorbitant prices during festival seasons at major pilgrim centers. Sometimes, there were rampant irregularities in billing these items and the worst- affected were pilgrims from Kerala coming to palani hill temple. Vendors formed cartels and fixed exorbitant prices for puja items in all shops uniformly during festival season"¹. The researcher listed down various problems of the study as follows.

First, the manufacturers of the chosen puja materials are normally affected by problems of raw materials, shortage of labour inadequate channel members for distribution and limited storage at production centers, beside lack of adequate

¹ The Hindu, June, 2014.



finance. Either a few or all the above are the day to day problems faced by them are encountered by them. Secondly, the wholesale merchants of puja materials are affected by the following problems. Irregular and inadequate supplies by the manufacturers inadequate storage facility at the wholesale points and limited availability of secondary transportation between them and retailers, besides recurring shortages of finance for the purchase and sale of puja materials taken for the study. Thirdly, there are certain problems of marketing of puja materials at retail level, viz., financial losses due to perishability of many puja materials, poor handling and storage at retail level and absence of uniform prices of puja materials leading to poor or negative returns beside lack of support from institutional agencies for financing their business. Fourthly, all the problems mentioned above, impact the pilgrims and devotees with many issues like poor quality of goods, expire date on the products, high cost of puja materials, absence of inadequate availability of required materials and lack of consumer opinion.

Objectives of the Study

On the basis of the above problems the researcher brought out the study objectives as follows.

1. To study the significant problems of producers of puja materials in Tamil Nadu.
2. To analyse the problems and practices of wholesale merchants of puja materials in Tamil Nadu.
3. To study the problems and prospects of retailers in puja materials in the study area.
4. To bring to light the opinion of pilgrims/devotees in connection with the marketing of puja materials in Tamil Nadu based on their personal experiences.
5. To create a suitable model for marketing of puja materials in Tamil Nadu and to make recommendations

on the basis of the findings of the study.

Sampling Frame and Size

Judgment Sampling Method is chosen for fixing proper sampling frame of the study. The marketing of puja materials in Tamil Nadu consists of the producers wholesalers, retailers and consumers. There are above 33,000 temples in TamilNadu. "In Tamil Nadu, 113 *Murugan* temples, 437 *Siva* temples, 50 *Vinayagar* temple, 33 *Sakthi peedams*, 251 *Amman* temples, 243 *Vishnu* temples and 27 *Anjaneya* temples among others are under the control of the HR&CE Department"¹. However the researcher limited the study to popular temple towns in Tamil Nadu, based on their popularity and obviously by the total number of pilgrims visiting the shrine around 5000 a day, under the following heads and the sample size chosen is given below.



Sampling Frame and Size

Sl. No	Sampling Temple/Towns	Selected Producers	Selected Wholesalers	Selected Retailers	Devotees			Total
					Male	Female	Total	
1	Shiva Temple Towns	20	20	100	30	30	60	200
2	Vishnu Temple Towns	20	20	100	30	30	60	200
3	Amman Temple Towns	20	20	100	30	30	60	200
4	Country Deities	20	20	100	30	30	60	200
5	Other Prime Temple Towns (Ganesh-3, Murugan-3, Anjaneya-3 Navagraha-1)	20	20	100	30	30	60	200
	Total	100	100	500	(150)	(150)	300	1000

Limitations of the Study

1. There is no demarcation made between sample temple towns coming under the jurisdiction of HR & CE Board Government of Tamil Nadu and other Temple Towns in this study.
2. The sample respondents were chosen on the basis of spot judgment made by the researcher and not by any other method due to non availability of proper official records.
3. The opinion of sample respondent may vary from time to time; however, the researcher took maximum care in recording the original responses through clear discussion method.
4. The research ignored those chosen respondents who were not willing to share or disclose any information sought by the researcher and hence alternative respondents were met.
5. Due to time and money constraints on the part of the researcher, the study is limited to popular Hindu Temples only, based on number of pilgrims visiting every day.
6. The study of marketing has direct relevance sample temple towns and however the production of puja materials and a study of such producers belonged to where ever they located.

Chapter Arrangement

The thesis is proposed to be made of seven chapters. The chapter I will be Research Design. Chapter II is planned to study the problems of producers in marketing of puja materials in Tamil Nadu. Chapter III is planned to study the problems and prospects of wholesalers and Chapter IV will be a study of retailers of puja materials. Chapter V analyses the surveyed opinions of pilgrims/devotees. Chapter VI is a study of



the model proposed for marketing of puja materials in Tamil Nadu. Chapter VII is a summary of findings, suggestions and conclusion relating to the study.

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